

Office Design Trends for 2019

The office - the place where most office workers actually spend their time in life. Working from early in the morning to late at night, for many the office becomes more than just a place of work. Instead, it acts as a second home and this is why more and more workers are choosing a workplace in which they feel comfortable. If they're spending so much time at work, why should they work in an office that just isn't enjoyable?

If we look back to even just twenty years ago, the most common office would be a simple space with desks and chairs evenly spaced out (perhaps into rows or columns). In some offices, each worker would have their own cubicle. However, the average worker has changed and therefore the office has undergone a transformation too. Today, in this extensive guide, we want to explore the office design trends expected in 2019!

1. Office Experience

We thought it was wise to start with 'office experience' because this will be important for many of the specific trends we discuss. If you're unsure what we mean by this, it essentially means that the office needs to contribute to a positive experience for all who enter through the main doors. As well as your employees, this could be a potential candidate for a vacancy, clients, suppliers, or even just visitors. We've broken down why the experience is so important for the main stakeholders you're likely to encounter;

Employee - In truth, this should go without being said because it's more important than ever to keep employees motivated and this can be achieved through office design. We appreciate that not everybody has the money to create a wacky office like Google, but even the smallest additions will have a powerful impact so remember this in 2019. How about a pool table in the break room or a chilled workspace with comfy sofas and footstools?

Client - Whether it's a prospective client or an existing client, office design is important here too. As a customer yourself, would you rather do business with a company that has a coffee machine, a comfortable waiting area, and a quiet space away from the buzz of the office or a company that has to move paperwork off a broken chair while you feel like you're in the way of staff? Hopefully, you would prefer the former so it's important to think about what you want as a customer...and then you can translate this for your own office.

Interviewees - Although this follows the same lines as the 'employees' section, you want all potential employees to be impressed when they walk through the front door and this can be achieved by following some of the trends we are going to offer today.

Visitors - Finally, it's always good to welcome visitors in the right way. Even if it's just some family members of your employees, they can still get a good impression of your office (they could even recommend your service to their own friends and family!).

2. Biophilia

What on earth does biophilia mean? Don't worry, we were a little confused when we first heard the word too. Ultimately, the term actually goes back to a hypothesis introduced by US biologist E.O. Wilson. Essentially, he believed that all humans had a tendency, conscious or otherwise, to look for close connections with nature and other life. Therefore, the term now refers to the practice of filling an office with greenery.

While pot plants have always been used to 'spruce up' the appearance of an office, it's no longer rare to see dedicated sections of the office with astro turf and other greenery. Elsewhere, some have covered their walls with moss while others have plants and bushes hanging from the ceiling. Luckily, there are plenty of companies that can help with this if you have no idea where to start.

Why biophilia? First things first, since this is a guide offering aesthetic tips for offices, greenery in the office can look sensational when done correctly. If we look at Amazon as an example, they've recently updated one of their offices so it contains 40,000 plants. Designed much like a rainforest, company leaders believe the appearance will boost creativity and allow employees to feel the connection they need to nature (without feeling trapped, as many do in a normal office).

Before you worry about the plants or grass changing in appearance and eventually looking terrible, this doesn't have to be a concern because you can go as authentic or as artificial with the whole idea as you wish. If you want to go 100% artificial, you'll get all the benefits of the stunning appearance but without having to employ a gardener just to keep everything watered.

While on the note of biophilic designs, it's also extremely welcoming for all visitors. With astro turf and plants around the office, it can also be a sign of your environmental efforts - it shows you care about the environment and are putting in the hard work to reduce the company's carbon footprint.

3. Storage wall

With the tips we've provided so far, you're probably thinking 'how am I supposed to do any of that when we just don't have the space in the office?' and this is a fair point. For many, space is a limitation and it can be tough to keep up with the trends. Therefore, we're going to make one of our 2019 trends a solution to this very problem. If you're fed up of tripping over filing cabinets and squeezing past one another to get to the kettle, you need Storage wall.

Just as the name suggests, Storage wall takes advantage of every single square inch you have available and utilizes areas you wouldn't even consider important for storage. Why have storage cabinets protruding from the wall when you can have it all built in?

With a high-quality provider like Abox, you'll have a professional visit your office to assess the space and discuss potential ideas for improvement. If built-in wall storage isn't an option, there could be other solutions that still allow you to make better use of the space you have available. After the site survey, you'll be provided with CAD drawings and you can see what the finished office will look like if you choose to go ahead with their suggestions.

These days, it's easy to choose a finish that suits the rest of the office; in theory, you could choose a nice wood finish or a green to match the biophilic theme if you choose to combine a number of the tips we provide here. Either way, taking advantage of clever storage solutions provides two benefits at once; not only does it mean you can get rid of those old storage units where the drawers stick (all offices seem to have them!), but you can also give your employees more room to work.

4. Collision of Old and New

Have you ever noticed that the same toys you used to play with as a child eventually come back around? In truth, this cyclical nature can be said for most things in life. Not only do we see returning songs making a comeback, we see this cycle with haircuts, fashion, films, furniture, and much more. Since we're focusing on office design, our attention is on the Old Meets New trend that seems to be sweeping the country.

Whether your office building is old or new, this trend will work for you and it's easy to find inspiration probably within a few minutes of where you live. Every year, we see deserted factories and old warehouses being given a second chance. Although they were once in disrepair and forgotten by the community, a company comes along and gives them a new lease of life.

Depending on the age of your building, you'll need to decide whether you need to bring life with modern furniture or take advantage of a modern building with antique textures. With a quick search online, you'll find plenty of resources relating to this particular trend as well as some examples of how the seemingly contrasting ages can actually create an office full of character and life.

5. Abstract and Unique

As we explained in the introduction, both workers and offices have grown alongside one another in recent years. The younger your workforce, the more you'll need to do something exciting to match. In some of the examples we've provided, you'll need to make an investment so it's time to provide an affordable way to keep up with the 2019 office trends - a lick of paint.

If you're in your office right now, look around and what do you see? If you're like the majority of offices in the UK, you see a plain white or grey wall? Of course, there'll be all sorts of marks whether it's a splash of tea from where two colleagues collided in the corridor or black strips from the

accounting team holding races on the office chairs at the Christmas party. Despite these little stories, the walls are likely to be blank...and boring. Why not add a little colour?

In 2019 and beyond, geometric forms and abstract patterns are very much 'in'. If you don't want to take too much of a risk at the beginning, why not treat certain rooms or locations of the office as accent designs to the main office? For example, sprinkle some colour into the break room, kitchen, reception, or any creative spaces you have. While some choose black, white, and grey (as an accent), others choose a combination of warm and pastel colours.

Especially in offices where employees are expected to be creative, we think this small adjustment shows a lot of creativity itself. It shows the personality of the company, and encourages employees to be bold in their decisions. If you look in the right places, you'll find an abstract or unique design that really matches the character you want to convey for the business. Just because we've said 'abstract', 'unique', and 'colour', this doesn't mean you'll take away from the professional nature of the business.

6. Relaxation and Recreation

Yes, the office is the place of work and you want to encourage the employees to do as much work as possible in the time they're in the office - this is the dream for all businesses, right? However, we're now just one year away from millennials accounting for half of the workforce (one prediction). For millennials, they have more of a focus on enjoying work and feeling valued in the workplace and this leads to our next trend; recreation.

Within the office, employees need a space where they can just unwind for a short while and allow their batteries to recharge for the longer half of the day. Rather than having staff eating at their desks, in their cars, or even going elsewhere, why not provide them with a nice space? After dedicating a room or area to breaks, you can add character with large cushions, bean bags, coffee machines, mini fridges, and even foosball or pool tables (for the larger companies among us!).

As more workers spend some time working remotely, the lines between work and home are becoming more blurred so lean into this in 2019. Can you offer your team an area to unwind after a stressful morning?

7. Transparency

Ever have a manager that wanted their office door closed constantly, and to be left alone as much as possible? Well, there are very few of these remaining and this is great news from a design perspective. For the improvement of company image, more businesses are starting to embrace transparency across the office and this means glass. Rather than having intrusive walls, there's an opportunity to take advantage of natural light and really open the office up with glass panels instead.

If you still want private offices and meeting rooms, there's nothing wrong with this and the glass screens can provide secluded spaces. However, there's a real feeling of togetherness with transparency and it shows that nobody is ever isolated. Often, employees feel as though their supervisors and managers are more approachable in this kind of environment and this is the kind of environment we should be promoting.

With so many options out there, feel free to continue your research after finishing our guide. Whichever you choose for your office, the transparency, much like the biophilia, quickly becomes a reflection of the company itself.

8. Natural Light

Although mentioned briefly in the previous point, we believe this one deserves a section of its own because it can make a huge difference to any office. Instead of covering windows or using a layout in the office that requires lots of artificial light, it's time to make use of the natural light that comes streaming through the window each day.

The more natural light you can provide, the better atmosphere you'll be able to create in the office. This is where it's beneficial to combine the tips we have here, because glass screens will allow you to bring in as much natural light as possible. For years, certain windows will have lit only one room.

With glass screens, the light from said windows will stretch much further and it creates a brighter appearance for the whole office.

Of course, don't go too far the other way either because you'll be a little disappointed in the winter when the sun starts to go down mid-afternoon. During the summer months though, this could even be a great way to save money on electricity bills. Why spend all that money on artificial lighting when you can open up the office and make use of our solar system's giant torch (the sun, of course!).

9. Reflecting the Company Personality

Although this isn't quite a design tip, it is an overall theme we're starting to see across the UK. Rather than following a set format, businesses are looking to impart their own personality on the office and this gives all who enter an idea of what the company is about. Just like a website has to reflect the personality of a business, the office has also now become an extension of the business entity. To tell your story, we recommend sitting down with your team and getting some ideas onto a piece of paper.

If your team needs to be creative at times, allow them this creative space away from their desks where they can really be free and let the ideas flow without judgement. If your team needs to collaborate, make sure they have a space to come together. Rather than a boring meeting room, perhaps you can offer comfy bean bags or soft seating. If they feel more relaxed, almost as if they're at home, they may just find it easier to work with one another. Let's face it, sitting round a meeting table can be a little awkward and terrifying.

If done correctly, all visitors to the office, including employees, should understand the goals of the business as well as its personality just from the office design.

Summary

For many years, the office design scene was predictable and boring - 'we're looking for a grey or white theme with simple desks and some cubicles so the employees don't distract one another'. Now, it's a fantastic niche with plenty of options for all businesses to show their character and really appeal to prospective employees.

If you walk away with one piece of advice from this guide, allow your company to be itself. Don't feel as though you have to splash all sorts of yellows and funky patterns on the walls if it isn't going to be appreciated by anybody. While some tips, such as Storgewall, will be beneficial for everybody, others will only apply to certain types of business.

Also, feel free to talk to your employees and get their ideas on what they want from the office design in 2019. You might just be surprised at the insights you receive!