

5 Reasons Your Office Has Changed

Office construction and remodeling numbers are up in the United States. An office renaissance is underway and changes are happening fast. Steelcase designers and researchers offer insights into five key reasons we're seeing changes now.

Somewhere between Dilbert and The Jetsons, our workplace changed. We went from private executive office suites and rows of cubicles to open floor plans and a mobile workforce. And, the pace of change has only continued to accelerate. Recently, business leaders began moving the success conversation from wealth to wellbeing. And, as a result, offices are seeing a renaissance and changing again to support the new way work is done.

The focus is all about you. Cafes are coming to life, becoming hubs of conversation. Multi-media rooms are transforming previously static spaces to allow for real-time interaction with remote workers. And, quiet spaces are being reimagined to support rejuvenation and ideation.

Office construction numbers in the United States support the underlying feeling that changes are happening. According to the United States Census private general office construction increased 19.9 percent in one year from June 2015 to June 2016. And, those numbers have continued to rise throughout 2016. IBISWorld's recent market research report showed the commercial property remodeling industry is benefitting from large increases in demand. In the last five years, office rental vacancies have decreased and consumer spending on office remodeling has gone up.

What is causing so many companies to decide to rework their space? Steelcase designers and researchers exploring this office renaissance point to five key forces accelerating this change:

1.

WHERE AND HOW WORK HAPPENS HAS CHANGED

Rapid advances in technology allow people to work anywhere, anytime—which led to people working everywhere, all of the time. It's clear that the old paradigm, one person working almost exclusively in one individual workspace, does not support the ways people are working today.

2.

SHIFT TO CREATIVE WORK

New pressures to compete and grow businesses shifted organizational emphasis toward work that requires creativity and a new innovation process. "Breaking rules and breaking patterns is where new ideas come from," notes Bruce Smith, director, Steelcase global design. Many workplaces were designed to support an outdated process, and did not make spaces for creative collaboration a priority.

3.

THE WAR FOR ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TALENT

Employees with coveted 21st century job skills, who can help organizations innovate and grow, are a limited commodity. They often choose organizations that offer the most meaningful work, and the best working conditions, rejecting anything that makes them feel like a cog in the wheel of industry. This is true for both attracting new employees as well as retaining existing ones.

4.

EMPLOYEE DISENGAGEMENT

Over one-third of workers in 17 of the world's most important economies are disengaged, according to [Engagement and the Global Workplace](#), a study conducted by Steelcase and global research firm Iposos. The study found a positive correlation between workplace satisfaction and employee engagement; the most highly disengaged workers were also the most unsatisfied with their work environments. They did not feel a sense of control over where and how they work. Workplaces designed with a strong focus on uniformity don't empower people or give them a range of diverse spaces to choose from. This creates a crisis for organizations that need to be agile and resilient.

5.

THE PROMISE OF TECHNOLOGY

Consumer technologies are a game changer for the office. People leave smart homes and drive smart cars into offices that, for the most part, offer little in terms of technology to help them work and feel better. The internet of things, a concept in which essentially anything electronic - home appliances, cell phones, headphones, watches, wearable - is connected to the internet and other devices, is something people have come to expect in their personal lives and opens new possibilities at work. [Technology](#), thoughtfully integrated in the physical environment, holds the promise to make people's work experience more human centered.

These forces are all converging to cause both individuals and their organizations to recognize that something fundamental has to change. So, close your eyes. Think back to what your office looked like five, even ten, years ago. If it's changed, changing or needs to change, you're not alone. What we do and why we do it is different and our environments are adjusting to support us.

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