



Beautiful art need not just be for the rich, but can be found in a public garden, or a common marketplace. It rubs away the rough edges of our daily existence and makes us more caring and mindful of what is worthwhile around us. Built spaces and thoughtful landscaping are never just for our comfort, but to make the world a place where each person, living creature and beautiful object finds its rightful space.

JAYA JAITLY

founder | president dasthara haaf samiti



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A DYNAMIC FLOORPLATE

ifj examines the pros and cons of agile workspaces and the way ahead



Traditionally, agile working has been an employee-centric intervention with spaces designed to help workers collaborate, work across different types of seating and so on. Increasingly, however, organizations are understanding the advantages of flexible infrastructure that allows them use capital optimally instead of in a 'rinse and repeat' pattern that is no longer of service to future-ready companies.



schbang office, mumbai | ashleys, mumbai

photography :: sebastian, photographix india

Ar. Vistasp Bhagwagar, Founder & Principal Architect, Architect Vistasp & Associates, New Delhi, says, "Every day is not the same, it does not have the same activities necessarily, so why must one be chained to one type of workstation or assigned desk? It is this thinking that has led to the need for need-based or activity-based workspaces where you could be collaborating in the morning, having a formal training midway and then a quiet session in the afternoon, followed by a formal presentation in the conference room in the evening. All these require freedom to move and the choice to select appropriate workplace settings. That is the heart of an agile work environment."

A dynamic space, the agile office offers more with less. Ar. Bhagwagar says, "An agile office will have 20 per cent fewer workstations than a normal office; it will also have almost twice the number of typologies of workspace than a normal office. Agile offices need to cater to a varying demand of work types and thus need to offer a plethora of options such as: quiet work booths, sit-stand workstations, linear benching, and L-shaped stations for dual monitors. It is when the variety of options are available, that choice is available and true agility comes to the fore."



ensotique office, mumbai | hipcouch, mumbai

photography :: anuja kambli



cbre office, gurgaon | ava design studio, new delhi & bengaluru

elements

Limited floorplates make effective spatial planning crucial. Architects and designers invest a lot of time understanding the mindset of organizations and the hierarchies therein. Des. Sanjyt Singh, Founder, Sanjyt Singh Design Studio, New Delhi, adds, "There are many factors other than ergonomics that play a role. They are space planning and circulation, lighting (which can be broken into ambient lighting and task lighting) and flexibility, to accommodate more employees."

The reward of an architect juggling these parameters effectively is great. Ar. Sachin Shetty, Founder & Principal Architect, Int-Hab Architecture + Design Studio, Bengaluru, says, "Agile workspaces have a positive influence on office culture and foster innovation and creativity. An agile office achieves greater freedom of movement and maximal use of space by not assigning seats to employees and instead creates task-based workspaces. The layout design where leadership occupies the same space as

everyone else encourages open communication and trust amongst employees. Visually-connected flexible workspaces facilitate both privacy and collaboration."

There are many economic and cultural factors that prevail upon design intent, too. Pankaj Poddar, Co-founder, Hipcouch, Mumbai, says, "Office spaces in small towns, for instance, are different in how they are planned from an office in a city carrying out the same functions. These are things like more employees in the city, higher working hours, different employee behaviour etc. Design will always be influenced by function."

Ar. Dinesh Panwar, Principal Architect, Urbanscape Architects, New Delhi, emphasizes cultural intent, too. He says, "Cultural consideration for design of any workplace is important as that is one parameter which actually makes the employee relate to the place where he spends most of the time of the day. Cultural references in design add invaluable nuances."



photography :: sebastian zachariah

vedant dvestuff intermediates pvt. ltd., mumbai | kns architects, mumbai

FOCUS



photography : : kafnu

kafnu, bengaluru | office of cognitive design (ocd), bengaluru

challenges

However, the trouble begins at the programming stage itself. Often, clients do not understand that flexible space – while dynamic – is still a fixed amount of space. Ar. Akshat Bhatt, Principal Architect, Architecture Discipline, New Delhi, adds, “Hotdesking, re-densification, open offices, all come with their own challenges and merits. While the merit is re-population, re-densification, and a generation of social and work groups; flexible workspaces reduce productivity due to lack of privacy; zoning in and isolating yourself becomes a challenge because visual chaos and noise clutter within a space can make it function poorly as a productive area.”

Such office spaces sometimes generate too much noise. Ar. George John, Co-founder, Rapid Corp Architecture, Bengaluru, adds, “Socio-inclined agile spaces when plonked within a workspace can generate noise which could disturb the surroundings. The design should be such that noise levels are kept in check.”

Ar. Shetty says, “Getting the desk sharing ratio incorrect is possibly the biggest agile space planning mistake that can lead to a failure of the entire agile work program. The right sharing ratio for an evolving organization is a dynamic target and takes a series of adjustments. Ensuring there is enough variety and flexibility in workspace to cater

to a diverse workspace is definitely challenging. Integrating technology into workspace is another challenge one needs to tackle during designing.”

While technology is an important aspect of this future-ready workspace typology, it comes at a cost. Ar. John says, “Collaborative furniture with integrated tech, plug and play structures, privacy screens, flexible partitions, modular scribbling boards and TVs, however attractive, can be heavy on the clients’ pockets.”

Eliminating desk ownership means increasing the population associated with an office or building, and there are downsides. Ar. Alhad Gore, Managing Partner, Beyond Design Architects & Consultants, Mumbai, says, “Moving to an agile work environment is a massive cultural change for an organization. Asking people to change their ingrained habits might meet with resistance from some who need privacy for their work, others who feel that their status is undermined by losing their corner office, and those who may question where they will keep their personal items.”



photography : : deepak aggarwal

office in one bkc, mumbai | sanjyt syng design studio, new delhi



photography : : aaron leitz

canal street, seattle | heliotrope architects, seattle
spaces, mumbai | jtcpl designs, mumbai



photography : : phx photography



photography : audhya magdum

scapes india co-working space, goa | studio momo, goa

trends

Providing employees with a choice of workspace for different types of work gives them a sense of a freedom to explore the various ways of producing output. Ar. John says, "A global approach to workspaces, where the employee feels a connect with the design, brings about a switch in the dynamic culture from being in an enclosed cocoon to a collaborative mindset."

Designs that encompass the multi-generational nature of today's taskforce are popular too. Ar. John adds, "It is a kind of liberation for Gen X to experience the new agile workspaces. The well-being factor that these spaces address is very suitable for this generation which also prefers a feel-good style infused with lots of technology."

Pooja Ashley and Arbaysis Ashley, Co-Founders, Ashleys, say, "Contrary to the misconception that agile offices are designed for millennials, the real purpose of modern offices is inclusive and approachable working. Agile workspaces help in erasing hierarchical miscommunication. With interactive design at its core, agile workspaces help build a close knit work environment that not only improves employee productivity but also helps deal with work stress."

Emphasizing the importance of deep-diving into the professional relationships between Gen X and millennials, Ar. Siddhina Sakla, Founder & Principal Architect, The Arch Studio, Pune, says, "Relationships have become fluid due to better communication and concepts of emotional intelligence as practiced by millennials. Hierarchical clustering has become obsolete and open offices are believed to improve efficiency and productivity because of fluid conversations, hands-on problem

solving and collective troubleshooting. We believe in designing spaces that make everybody in the organization, regardless of hierarchy, stay invested in its journey. Gen X has always believed that they can find real answers by better communication with people on ground. But traditional office spaces do not encourage that conversation. Modern office spaces need to be designed to propel these conversations. If this specific intent of design is communicated effectively to Gen X, they will adapt easily. The lowered privacy can bond the employees and their leader by eliminating borders, yet still defining the space to identify who is inside."

Poddar calls to mind the death of the nine to five job as the trend that dictates office design. He says, "Round the clock work is possible due to advancement in technology around the globe. Offices are planned to accommodate this need, as a result, employees can choose which timings they prefer from the 24-hour days. And since employees are open to this change, more and more offices plan for such hours."

The "office" itself is no longer limited to a defined commercial space. Ar. Gore points to the growing trend of 'resimericals'. He says, "Resimerical amalgamates residential and commercial so that employees feel more at home. Another trend is the garage look where everything is raw and creates a positive environment which fuels creativity."

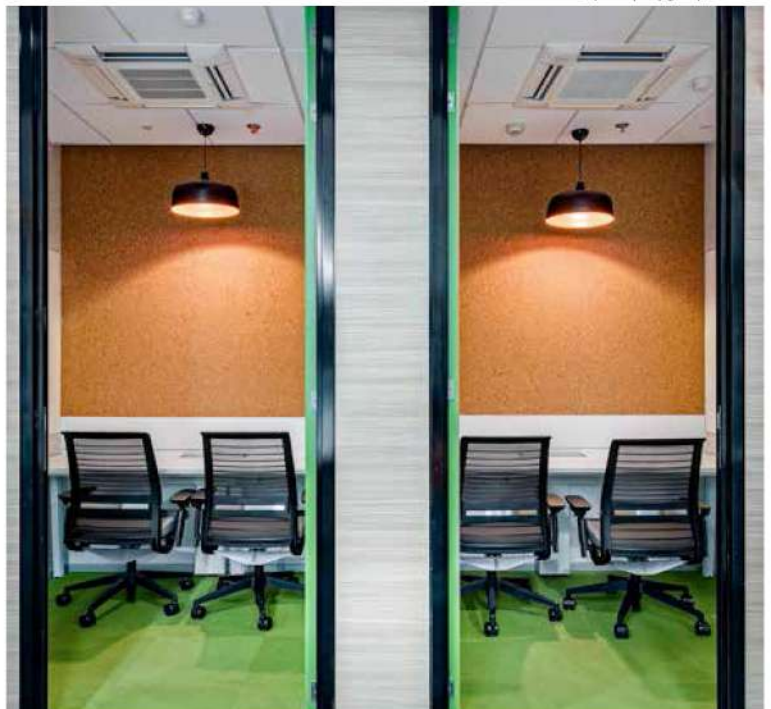
Des. Meetu Akali, Founder & Principal Designer, Studio Momo, Goa says that an overall push towards well-being is her favourite trend. She says, "Sustainability and wellbeing go beyond the realms of design. For example, many offices are designing sleeping pods so that the team members can relax and rejuvenate when required."

cushing terrell atx office, austin, usa | cushing terrell, austin, texas



photography : peter molick

mastercard, pune | anj group, mumbai





photography : : salient design studio

aesthetic office, kolkata | salient design studio, kolkata

the future of the workspace

Architects are unsure, going forward, whether open plan offices will stay as they are today or will build in contingencies for social distancing. Ar. Panwar feels office goers will undergo thorough bio-screening and sanitization, necessitating new systems in place. He says, "Meticulous systems of regular sanitization and cleaning protocols will have to be planned. Starting from thermal screening, and sanitization at the entrance to regular clean and purified air conditioning system – a lot will have to undergo alteration. Distance between workstations, high screens between cubicles and isolation chambers will see a rise in demand too."

Envisaging a possible step back to cubicles and a larger role for technology, Ar. Shresht Kashyap, Co-founder, KNS Architects, Mumbai, says, "Open office systems may go back to enclosed or cubicle workstations. You may see more department-wise segregation to minimise contact. Areas will have to be carved out for sanitisation booths, changing rooms if possible, storage for protective equipment and proper disposal systems for the same. Canteens and pantries will have to be used judiciously. Technology will be used to make things touch-free, like automated doors and face readers rather than thumb scanners; sensors for lights, phone apps for lift buttons, upgrading of HVAC systems to facilitate more air changes and so on."

here solutions, mumbai | beyond design architects and consultants, mumbai



photography : : mukesh.gajjar



photography : : phxindia

tas office, pune | the arch studio, pune



photography : : suleman merchant

bombay shirt company hq, lower parel, mumbai | muselab, mumbai



photography : : talier husain

the lawyer's office, pune | the arch studio, pune



common room, new delhi | architecture discipline, new delhi

No one can deny that tech is the way forward. Des. Meetu Akali says, "I also see workspaces turning into 'smart offices' that can collect and share data, enabling companies to understand better where and how different spaces are being used. This data can also be linked with smart lighting systems. The way we use technology will continue to grow and smart offices will soon become common."

Ar. Sonali Rastogi, Founding Partner, Morphogenesis Architects, Mumbai proposes that the physical workspace may make way for virtual collaboration permanently. She says, "Close collaborative spaces will make way for virtual workspaces where teams are connected through various digital tools that allow multiple users to work simultaneously. Packed offices will make way for offices with reduced capacity, further resulting in a reduced footprint. We will see the evolution of automated sanitised meeting pods for meetings with clients."

Apart from flexi-timings, companies are providing employees space to refresh and reboot their minds. Ar. Kashyap says, "Some companies have even gone to the extent of marking people in the negative if they work overtime and some provide meditation or yoga classes right in the premises to promote mental health. The

new mantra, which seems to have had a positive effect on productivity, is 'work hard, play harder'."

Ultimately, it's all about the human. Ar. Rastogi adds, "Today's office design is as much about human resources as it is about facilities management. It is crucial to develop a workplace people enjoy and that helps them be most productive. Many HR professionals are partnering with designers and architects to create spaces that promote employee wellness, culture, and provide a seamless employee experience."

Concurring and adding that technology extends beyond the electronic, to materials, Ashok Kularia, Managing Director, ANJ Group, Mumbai and Jay Kularia, Associate Director, ANJ Group, Mumbai, suggest a deeper, back-to-basics sensibility. "Human-centric environments, which differ from workforce to workforce based on their industry, legacy and aspirations, are key to achieving design that goes beyond the cosmetic, and is, instead, enabling, nurturing and meaningful. We will also find more ways to work around green materials like hempcrete, straw bale, rammed earth, fiber-cement, bamboo, wood, polyurethane, cork, stone, structural insulated panel, composite material, glass fiber, steel, recycled plastic, mycelium and green charcoal." ifj

here solutions, mumbai | beyond design architects and consultants, mumbai

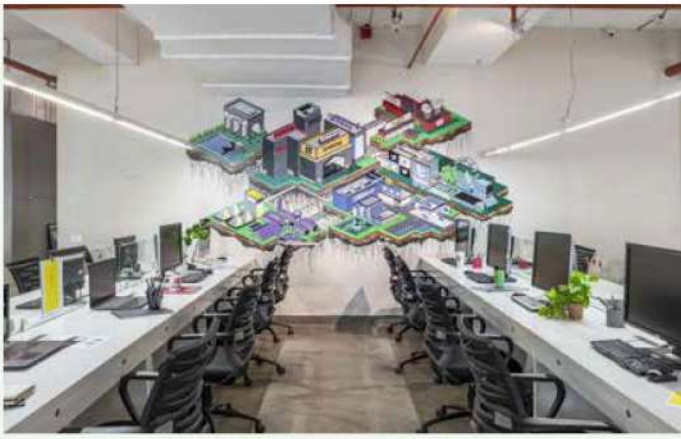


photography :: mukesh gajjar

grant thornton, new delhi | morphogenesis, new delhi



photography :: ramdhir singh and suraj datta



photography : : sebastian, photographix india



SCHBANG OFFICE, MUMBAI

Ashleys, Mumbai

Design brief and aim

To craft a design that resonates with the quirky work culture that inspires and motivates the millennial generation.

How this was accomplished

A fluid, open-plan layout encourages interaction among team members while the conference and meeting rooms are visually connected through a transparent reception lobby. Zoned into formal and informal sections, exposed workstations occupy the former area, while elongated built-in workstations along the perimeter of the office wall comprise the latter.

The co-founder's office is separated from the rest of the floor plan with bespoke interiors such as quirky hanging chairs and an extended visual connection to the outer environment. A multi-functional space accommodates professional events, while the cafeteria looks over the Mumbai cityscape. A solid yellow background was used for the logo display, contrasted by a white reception desk. Lounge seating is set adjacent to a bright mural, painted in grey and cool colors against the backdrop.

The office radiates with vibrant warm colors which spread across the reception, conference, and meeting rooms. White furniture on grey concrete flooring makes up the workstation area, while solid colors

break the monotony of grey concrete flooring. Eclectic furniture has been used in the 10,000 sq. ft. of the open-space plan.

A seven-foot-long mural created with bottle caps in various colors is the showpiece of the visual space. The 'flock of birds' art piece on the ceiling is inspired by the evening sky, which covers the exposed ductwork in a pop color palette. Bold contemporary art representing the digital world on a white background, is expressed as a cost-effective alternative for the traditional false ceiling.

A subtle material palette allows an improved user experience in the design; the rustic grey concrete floor is a counterpoint for the vibrant interiors. Customized sleek white lighting over the workstations adapts to the workability and minimalistic aesthetic of the office, while the hanging lights spread a golden hue into the conference rooms.