

I nterior Design

The design of the workplace needs to be an effective combination of artistic beauty and operational functionality. Simply put the objective is to achieve a design that both looks good and works well. Interior Design is concerned with anything that is found inside a facility - walls, windows, doors, finishes, textures, light, furnishings and furniture. All of these elements are used by interior designers to develop a functional, safe, and aesthetically pleasing space for a building's user.

Facility Managers work with interior designers drawing upon many disciplines including environmental psychology, architecture, product design, and traditional decoration (aesthetics and cosmetics). They plan the spaces of almost every type of building including: hotels, corporate spaces, schools, hospitals, private residences, shopping malls, restaurants, theaters, and airport terminals.

The Facility Manager must be involved as early as possible in the design process preferably in writing the brief and certainly in validating the operability of the selected design. The design must take proper account of health, safety and building regulations as well as providing a proper cultural fit for the organisation to occupy the space.

The design of the working environment can have a strong influence on organisational culture. The move to a new facility is frequently the catalyst for a broad redesign of culture and workstyle environment. Because it is so tangible, a new office can be both the symbol and a key part of the reality of new ways of working. For one organisation this may be the opportunity to create a more collaborative culture with greater interaction between staff. Another organisation may be seeking to make a statement on quality and market leadership to impress new recruits or customers and to affect the attitude of existing staff. Particular designs can encourage certain types of behaviour, although they will never guarantee it. Of course, office space is also expensive, and savings resulting from decreased or alternative space often serves as a rationale for change.

Interior design is a somewhat faddish phenomenon, in part because no one knows exactly what factors affect worker performance, and how those factors interrelate. In the absence of clear evidence those who design workspace and furniture are free to make all kinds of claims about what works. The Facility Manager has a vital role to play in ensuring that the finished design meets all the needs of the organisation concerned.

There are many excellent books on workplace design. Of particular note are "The 21st Century Office" by Jeremy Myerson and Philip Ross (Published by Laurence King), "Tomorrows Office" by Roger Cunliffe and Santa Raymond (Published by Taylor & Francis) and "Office Space Planning" by Alexei Marmot and Joanna Eley (Published by McGraw Hill)