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**INTRODUCTION**

Office spaces can exist in different forms. It can be office space for a retail store manager; a doctor’s office space for consultations with patients and office space for the owner/manager of a bed and breakfast. There are also office facilities that we most often think of as “offices “such as the business offices of major corporations, advertising agencies, accounting firms, and law offices.

Since the purpose of every office is different, the designer should consider the needs of the office space before designing it. The designer needs to find out from the client his or her main purpose and design the office to suit the business it is designed for.

HISTORY OVERVIEW

Offices have always existed from ancient times until now. They existed as spaces where businesses are conducted between two people. Over time, offices became more formalized as the professions became specialized. The industrial revolution also drove the impact and change in the design and makeup of offices. The shift from agricultural to industrial economies also influenced the design, build and shape of the offices. This in turn led to the need for offices and office furniture and equipment often with one room and manager.

During the nineteenth century, the closed plan was the design pattern used. This involved housing the clerks and managers in bigger rooms whiles the other workers are seated at a desk, or chair with lamps.

During the twentieth century, office designs started to expand and change. This was to accommodate the increasing labor and women. The invention of typewriters, telephones, and other machines affected the design of office spaces. After World War II, the interiors of commercial buildings and offices saw significant changes.

Other things affected the design and planning of the offices in this period. Mostly only one company owns the whole of the building. This in turn affects the architecture of the building since one person informs the design of the building. The space of the offices also evolved from closed spaces to open landscapes, which encouraged communication amongst the workers. The arrangement of the furniture is based on the work relationships between individuals and work groups. The furniture used is a movable open landscape. One example is the action office workstation that was intended to be for private offices but coincided with the open landscape style. The ergonomics of office furniture and seats continued to change in the 1970s. New office concepts deemphasized the use of cubicles. Later on, better light fixtures like task lighting and spotlights were introduced. These tech changes in client and worker communication. The invention of laptops and cell phones has also allowed for the creation of mobile offices.*(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M.Piotrowski page 123-125)*

MUTIGENERATIONAL OFFICES

These offices take into consideration the different generations working closely in the office. People from the baby boomer generation may prefer closed offices to open offices. Whiles those from Gen X will want more freedom and flexibility, therefore, requiring general open spaces that require communication and close working. These factors must be considered when designing offices for people of these generations.

*(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M.Piotrowski page 126-127)*

COLLABORATIVE OFFICE SPACES

In some or most offices, collaboration has become the way to share ideas and come out with products. Therefore, the cubicles and static offices are done away with and replaced with offices that foster collaboration and idea sharing. They must share the expertise and knowledge to problem solve. For many of these collaborative projects, maintaining their basic workspace may not be practical, requiring them to travel to and from wherever the group meets. Conference spaces or gathering spaces are inserted into the space plan now so that these groups can more easily meet without having to wait for a conference room to be reserved. The designer needs to consider the acoustical controls and plan where collaborative areas are located so that the group does not distract nearby workers.

Collaborative work areas likely contain these spaces:

* Common areas that include the cafeteria
* Project rooms can be dedicated spaces for long-term projects.
* Pods / Bullpens will be clusters of individual workstations.
* Individual workstations
* Informal meeting areas

*(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M.Piotrowski page 125-126)*

CUBICLE FREE

In a cubicle-free office, the concept of an open landscape approach is made by providing opportunities for common areas. The space allows for more collaborative work groupings than cubicles. This space normally has a low ceiling for a serene environment. It also has conference rooms also known as war rooms, which require higher-height panels to stack up documents or fix marker boards.

The workstation may not always take on the open look offered by the 1950s version of the closed cubicle.

COWORKING SPACE

This type of business allows a business address and “face” for clients. This does not mean the entrepreneur shares the same office with other entrepreneurs, but rather they share copy machines, a conference room, a receptionist, a break room, and other spaces in the building. Some interior designers choose to design such offices for coworking with private offices. Coworking can be organized by a business, and brainstorm even more solutions to their businesses. *(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M.Piotrowski page 129-130)*

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

With the advent of technological products like smartphones, tablet computers, digital cameras, the internet, Wi-Fi, and numerous software and hardware choices to conduct business, the design of the office had to be transformed to match the new trends.

Technology has changed how office spaces are planned and the products that are used. Most employees work remotely rather than at the office every day; they are less in need of a desk, chairs, and other furniture. Do other businesses also use virtual platforms like Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, iChat, or other similar programs?

Other furniture needs like credenzas and standardized desks affect the design setup of the room. The interior designer has to consider the ergonomics and aesthetics of these materials and how they affect the design of the room. Sometimes the clients have to use older buildings as the office. The interior designer has to factor in the type of electrical and nature of the room when designing it. The challenge of upgrading the electrical system is very important. Because of the increasing nature of using more and more technology, the use of buildings as physical offices = is lessening. Most current offices have moved to the concept of the knowledgeable worker than the seated office worker. The knowledgeable worker uses his acquired skills or information effectively to work b pondering, problem-solving, and researching the information needed by the business. *(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M.Piotrowski page 130)*

**TYPES OF OFFICE SPACES**

Office space can be described as the space in which a person works or numerous spaces used to conduct professional and business activities.

Businesses that utilize a more collaborative team organization are likely to use an open plan methodology, sometimes referred to as an open landscape. How an office space is designed can be based on the operational organization of the business. When the plan is to predominantly partition walls to create offices, it is also called a closed office plan. It can also be called conventional office planning. This is normally required by businesses that require some sort of privacy like lawyers, accountants, and medical professionals.

Offices that require the workers to collaborate a lot during work have movable furniture and partitions or walls. This is known as the open plan methodology. This is focused on the team as a group, not individual workers. Instead of the term office, these places are referred to as workstations. So, some of these workplaces have semi-enclosed panels or partitions.

Other main types of office space are as follows with additional details:

* *Executive Office/Suite:* An office space generally reserved for the highest ranked individual in a closed private office with a separate reception area and receptionist.
* *Other Executive offices*: Office space for upper-level management positions with a secretary outside the office and a waiting area.
* *Small business owners or managers*: Usually have their versions of the executive suite, being given more space in premium locations.
* *Department managers' offices and workstations*: These are normally located near a department area or on the same floor. It usually houses the staff in charge with less attractive furniture as compared to the executive office.
* *Supervisors’ offices and workstations*: These are positioned near the subordinate’s working area. The furniture in this office too is smaller than a department manager's office and less impressive.
* *Workstations for general office job descriptions:* Workstations for various types of production employees, such as sales representatives and computer programmers are designed with furniture specifically designed for the job or task or the type of job.
* *Ancillary or Support spaces*: These are various types of spaces that are required to support basic office work. Except for the primary reception room, ancillary spaces are designed and specified with utility rather than aesthetics in mind.

*(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 145-148)*

**OFFICE INTERIOR DESIGN ELEMENTS**

According to data from Interior Design magazine, fees for corporate interiors amounted to 36 percent of all design fees. A second design application will outline design guidelines for a generic office using primarily office systems products.

For many office environments, space and functional requirements have not changed much over the past 25 years. Innovative space planning designs that accommodate a diverse workforce, and appropriate furniture products are all part of today's office environment. A second design application will outline design guidelines for a generic office using primarily office systems products.

PLANNING AND DESIGN ELEMENTS

It is quite the practice amongst small offices that getting the employees who need to work near each other will help that office work more effectively. For some businesses, the work areas need to be private, with full-height walls for privacy and security.

The open-plan office environment allows for easy interaction and collaboration. This might be a grouping of workstations-each one somewhat open, providing only enough separation to accommodate storage shelves. The group might include collaborative spaces with a table and chairs or even a lounge-seating group, where employees can meet to hash over questions someone might raise. *(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M.Piotrowski page 154-155)*

FEASIBILITY STUDIES

It is common for clients to hire a design firm to help them determine whether the office space to be leased or built is sufficient for their needs. The designer will need to research the following:

* Employee's work relationships and adjacencies
* Communication patterns
* Furniture requirements
* Privacy needs
* Technology needs
* Space requirements for conferencing
* Allowance for office storage and filing
* Support areas such as employee lunchrooms

This can be achieved by carefully interviewing the employer with thoughtful questions and predesigned questionnaires completed by the employees.

The results of the feasibility study become part of the programming research undertaken to begin the design project in earnest. Programming information developed from the feasibility study will also help determine furniture needs. Information regarding codes and regulations, safety, and preferences will also be obtained during programming. *(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 155-157)*

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

The carpeting, window treatments, and construction materials can be recycled for other uses. Recycling is the easy solution to a greener office. Tactics such as encouraging employees to use beverage cups that can be washed rather than thrown away are another easy solution the client can implement.

The interior designer can consider the use of new products for any kind of project, to think sustainably. The designer can utilize the three Rs: reusing, refinishing, and reupholstering products. With this in mind, the designer could create an effective and efficient office space.

When designing offices that seek to look at sustainable solutions, here are some tactics to apply.

* Specify energy-efficient devices and lighting to conserve energy.
* Use water-saving plumbing fixtures for water conservation LEED credits.
* Specify products that come from renewable sources.
* Eliminate the use of products that add toxic chemicals to the interior environment.
* Prepare space plans that better utilize daylight in the interior spaces of the office.
* Position offices, conference rooms, and support spaces that need full-height walls at the core of the building rather than along the perimeter. This allows daylight into more areas of the office.

*(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 158)*

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Depending on the type of business carried on in the facility or office, security measures that go beyond building codes, and accessibility regulations, with floor plans and specifications, are required. Other companies would want a security consultant for advice on designing sophisticated monitoring systems.

Some companies have security guards right outside the facility monitoring the ins and outs of traffic and visitors. Furthermore, it is most prudent on the part of the designer to accommodate a security officer behind a desk having telephone equipment, monitors displaying security cameras, storage cabinets, computers, and printers to print out visitor’s badges, and other needs specific to the particular cooperation.

Visitors are generally not allowed to wander around the building or offices, so a reception designed to receive visitors helps check the traffic. The workers placed are quite observant in checking who comes in and goes back and forth to the facility. Some of the sensitive places where financial records are kept have card access passes and in government buildings and corporate research areas, retinal scanning devices are required. If the partitions are made with wallboards, then the designer should reinforce them with steel and blockwork. *(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 158-159)*

CODE REQUIREMENTS

Office buildings and professional services, such as accounting, law, and medical (not housed in a hospital) strictly are considered business occupancies. An office with 50 occupants is required to have one exit. It will require two exits if it has more than 51 occupants. The exits will increase as the number of occupants increases in number.

The building codes also affect the size, number, and locations of egress doors; the size of corridors and aisles; and the permissible lengths of corridors. Specification of architectural finishes. The office plan must meet the ADAs accessibility design guidelines. This includes issues such as:

* The size of the Corridors.
* The location of areas of refuge is multistory and has very large one-story buildings.
* Heights of reception counters.
* Flooring specifications.
* The design of public toilet facilities.

*(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 160-166)*

SPACE ALLOCATION AND CIRCULATION

The decision to use a closed space or open plan affects the kind of furniture to be used and allowances in the room or space. Large businesses have predetermined allowances for many job functions depending on the job function, and the type of support needed. For example, typical corporate standards might be 250 square feet for vice presidents, 200 square feet for senior managers, 150 square feet for managers, 1oo square foot for supervisors, and 48 square feet for secretarial and clerical staff.

In a case where the designer has to design and allocate square foot allowances and is not controlled by corporate policy, then the onus lies on the designer to allocate spaces to the spaces based on the functions of each. The kind of furniture to be used also affects the space allocation. The square footage of allowance is also affected by the office methodologies, such as teaming versus individual work assignments. All these affect the office layout. Conference rooms or areas, places for storing files, copy machine locations, coffee areas, and other spaces.

Major circulation paths when provided moves people into and out of the general office space. Creating this is crucial to the safety and movement of people in the building. This may be a major fire-rated corridor from the elevator around the building core providing access to one or more office suites on the floor. These paths also need to meet certain special design elements, such as refuge, wheelchair turnaround space, and maneuvering alcoves. The space allowances for workstations or offices and support spaces comprise the net area required to plan the facility-in other words, the space needed for offices, support spaces such as conference rooms, and internal circulation space.

In addition, when designing office spaces, careful thought and planning for the disabled ones should be considered. Places, where they can enter, exit, and travel through the work areas, should be accessible to the disabled. So requirements concerning accessible routes, and door sizes should be considered when planning. Other areas of accessibility are the size of corridors and aisles, floor surfaces, elevators, drinking fountains and water coolers, toilet stalls, lavatories, water closets, urinals, grab bars in washrooms and toilets, counters, alarms, and signage.

*(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 166-168)*

FURNITURE

When it comes to choosing furniture for the office space, function takes over the aesthetic or visual appeal of it. Yet because there are many alternatives to it, it is relatively easy to combine functional needs with creative design. Other things like the cost of the furniture, and the type of material affect its longevity of it. Buying a quality material to furnish the space might be expensive but it will be a long-term cost also referred to as life cycle cost, that factors maintenance and replacement.

The most expensive ones, however, survive the wear and tear far better, resulting in less frequent replacement.

SEATING

The configuration of furniture for a particular employee depends on the position of the employee in the chain of command. The higher up the employee, the bigger and more spacious the office with the highest quality of furniture. The chief executive will have the largest office and the highest quality than the middle manager who probably will own a small space with lesser quality furniture.

Normally an office worker requires a desk chair. This seating piece is called desk seating, a posture chair, an ergonomic desk chair, or a variety of other names created by manufacturers. The requirement for office chairs is comfortable and supportive ones. Other types of office seating are available for different employee needs. They can be the side, guest, and conference chairs used in the office. Others too are called secretarial, executive, stacking, operational, management, stools, high back executive, stacking, sled-base, and others options.

The other type of furniture is called systems furniture or open office furniture. This type of furniture is used in a company that wants to use the open plan system. Workstations have attached the panels equipped with shelves and countertops being used as work surfaces.

There are different styles of systems furniture for office projects. These are:

*Vertical divider panels*: This normally works with the open plan system where divider panels are used -with the use of overhead shelves in combination with the freestanding desks and shelves.

*Case goods product*: Generally, components are attached to and supported from the sides of panels. This furniture has the look of conventional furniture using the open plan.

*Modular component systems*: This involves monolithic vertical panels that support a wide variety of components anywhere along their height. Components are cantilevered from the back panels, not the side, and are generally adjustable.

*Frame and Tile*: A steel frame is the basis of the layout of stations. Horizontal tiles and components create the station and finish the exterior surface, giving a more architectural look to the system's furniture.

There are different types of systems of furniture designed and marketed by various manufacturers. The styles are flexible and accommodate changes in workstation configurations. However, they have advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages

* Workstations usually utilize less square footage of space than built closed offices.
* Since fewer full-height partitions and mechanical construction systems are required, construction costs are lowered.
* The cost of tearing down workstations and reconfiguring the spaces for new ones is less.
* Since it is quite easy to configure to meet the individual employees’ tastes, it becomes very flexible.

Disadvantages

* Lack of privacy since there are no private offices.
* Open plans can be very noisy.
* Since there are mostly workstations than closed offices, there is no privacy.

*(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 169-178)*

MATERIALS, FINISHES, AND COLOR

To add value to the building or office, improvements are supposed to be done all the time. When a company rents a building as an office, then there is a reluctance to improve the value. However, the owner of such buildings also gives an allowance in the form of building materials to improve the value of the building. Therefore, if an interior designer’s plans will go beyond the allowance for the building, then the client may approve the upgrading of materials.

Materials used for the flooring, walls, ceiling, and window treatment must meet the applicable building codes. Architectural finishes must be commercial-grade products to stand up to heavy wear and maintenance.

Carpeting is largely used in the flooring of offices because of its calm and its acoustic control. Utilitarian areas in the office have hard flooring to avoid wear and fade of the carpet. Resilient materials are used for the heaviest traffic areas, like entrance lobbies, public corridors, and restrooms. Some executive areas will have specific materials to avoid slipping. These can be portions of wood, ceramic tiles, or stones for flooring. Some of the surfaces also require more cleaning and maintenance to keep looking good.

When designing wall partitions, most designers build them on-site using materials to form dry walls. These are constructed with either metal or wood studs. These building materials follow the codes and standards for the area. The drywalls used for exits are of higher quality than the partitions used for the office. Some of the clients also use demountable partitions. These are built to specific dimensions in a factory. It is usually mounted and suspended by a grip on the floor and a bar in the ceiling. It can be finished with drywall and vinyl or fabric.

Ceilings in commercial office facilities are suspended ceiling systems using fiberglass tiles. These are installed in a metal ceiling grid suspended from the structural ceiling above. These fiberglass tiles are made in standard sizes and are either 2 by 4’. Between the structural ceiling and the acoustical ceiling, which is called the plenum, is where the HVAC cables, telephone, and data cables are most often installed. The ceiling also provides space for plumbing for fire sprinklers. Some clients like to eliminate the acoustical ceilings and get a rustic appearance by exposing the structural ceiling. Even though this reduces costs in the building, it also creates more noise, since the ceiling controls 60 percent of noise in the office building. The flooring and the furniture too help control that too.

When handling the windows too, designers should take note of fire codes. Since some areas would prefer blinds to flammable fabrics. Building owners would want to maintain a uniform look of windows from the outside, and this can be achieved by maintaining either vertical blinds or horizontal ones.

Since color can have a calming effect on the occupants, designers have to choose carefully the materials for the office with the color patterns associated with the building. Some designers use the annual forecast of the color-marketing group that dominates fashion, interior design, and other products and services related to consumer and commercial industries. Some businesses may have color standards for their offices. These standards as well as general color preferences expressed by the client must be honored. A good workable color scheme and good lighting can increase productivity and worker comfort. *(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 178-182)*

MECHANICAL SYSTEMS

The designer may provide lighting design services or a specialist lighting designer may be retained to plan the lighting from the floor plans and equipment drawings. This needs to be specified by an architect or electrical contractor. The designer to show the locations of switches, telephones, data units such as computers, and other basic components can provide an electrical plan. This is required especially when an open-plan system is being used. Even though another professional plan the mechanical system, the interior designer should understand how this system works and are part of the overall office design.

LIGHTING

When dealing with clients with light fixtures, the designer should find the purpose of each room. This enables the designer to plan on what fixtures, types of light, and at what positions to be placed to achieve the desired illumination. When the client does not own a facility, the designer will need to carefully with colors, materials, and textures to help achieve that purpose.

In the office, lights from the windows reflect on the monitors, which forms a glare and in the process causes eye fatigue for the user. Same as lighting fixtures placed on the ceiling in the office. Due to this sophistication of monitors, the designer should specify general and task lighting with great care beyond the specification of the fixture.

Ambiance lights are used to help move safely in the office. It can be a general light fixture that spreads across a wide area. Sometimes ceilings reflect some lights to create an ambiance when specific lights are positioned in a specific position. Task lights like desk lamps are often used to supplement the work in the offices. In a larger office, spotlights can be focused on artworks in hallways, receptions, or lounges. Accent lights too may be used.

Daylighting has become a more critical form of office lighting with the new interest in energy saving and sustainability. Natural lights are allowed into the office through strategically placed windows, surfaces, and skylights. This limits the number of artificial lighting used in the office, therefore, saving much energy. As part of the trade-off when using daylight, surfaces and furniture must be protected from the heat and increased glare from the sun.

*(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 182-184)*

ELECTRICAL, TELEPHONE, AND DATA COMMUNICATIONS

It becomes very challenging for designers when handling the wiring of open office systems than closed ones. Yet the interior designer must still follow the electrical codes or standards set by the local authorities about wiring.

The interior designer should locate the office equipment needing electrical service, such as a small refrigerator in the design of the floor plan. The company providing such services should review the plans of the interior designer regarding data cables and others.

Regarding the use of power, modern buildings rely on a two-phase system rather than the old single-phase system for older office buildings.

ACOUSTICS

Noise can be created in the office by machines, telephone conversations, business or casual conversations, or from workstations. The designer must limit the number of intelligible sounds to certain areas in the office, especially in an open office plan. This must be reduced to at least 10 percent so that it does not distract work.

Interior designers and acousticians do not try to make an office as quiet as possible. They rather minimize distractions. The source and path of the listener can be controlled by carefully zoning the workgroups, especially in an open-plan project. High-value acoustic panels too can be used to help curb the noise made by people with loud voices. Facing workers away from each other too helps control the sound that spreads. The specific choice of flooring and ceiling also controls the noise level in an office. The carpet alone reduces much of the noise than a regular hard floor. In areas where strict silence is needed, soundproofing between the panels is used or the partition of the wall is allowed to go through the false ceiling to meet the base of the next floor. This ensures that noise is carried from the other rooms through the space in the false ceiling to other offices. Wrapping the walls with vinyl is more effective in controlling noise than painting alone. Another way of controlling noise is by masking the noise so that the sound level is decreased in the office. This can be achieved by playing undistracted music in the background in the office so that it distracts attention from the noise made in the space.

*(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 184-189)*

**DESIGN APPLICATIONS**

The different system's designs require different space needs and product needs. It can be influenced by the business type or specific job function.

**CLOSED OFFICE PLANS**

Most officials in management positions prefer closed office plans where partitions are full height from base to ceiling especially for business executives to indicate status, prestige, or the office occupant.

ENTRY LOBBY

This is normally the first space to welcome visitors and serves as an entry point for employees. It often has little furniture except for a security desk. It may sometimes have very soft seating to welcome guests, who may have to wait for a short period. The security desk is accompanied by stools and normally reaches above stool height to make room for the legs of the worker when seated.

Because of the large vacant walls, large artworks or wallpapers are often hung to decorate the space. The entry lobby also has signage to direct visitors to facilities and elevators. Flooring is designed to meet specific requirements because of the high level of foot traffic. Slip-resistant materials are used to avoid accidents at doors. Some office buildings may allow small coffee spaces to be in the entry lobby.

RECEPTION

Reception or waiting areas are often identified as the gateway to the office. It normally reflects the image of the company. The interior designer has to make the reception area depict the image of the company. The larger the company, the bigger the reception, the smaller the office the reception normally has some few chairs located near the door.

The station receptionist should face the entrance of the building and the elevator for security reasons. The receptionist is equipped with a desk and a few printers, a telephone, monitors, and a computer. Receptionists are normally given armless chairs so that they easily pull up close to the desk and farther from it since they move a lot. Some receptions have a glass covering with small openings for security reasons. Receptions also have major corridors leading to major offices. Some facilities have a waiting room, personnel offices, and training rooms adjacent to the reception, which restricts the movement of the guests into the facility. Most receptions have seats that well represent the facility or company. These seats are mostly hard ones. The reception also has a small place where the company’s products are displayed. *(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 191-193)*

EXECUTIVE OFFICES

The larger the business, the more likely an executive office suite will be planned for the CEO ad vice presidents. This is mostly designed to impress the guests.

An executive office is almost located in the prime area of the building. It is also a closed-plan design. It could be at the top floor or rear end with its reception, dining area, and private elevators. It may have a reception and a receptionist who can also be called an administrative assistant. The area is smaller but well-designed than the main reception area. The executive suite could also come with a boardroom, which is designed to display the image and status of the company, and hold meetings. It is usually stocked with very comfortable chairs and quality wooden tables, marker boards, projector screens, and cabinetry for beverage service.

The executive office might normally have 250 square feet for smaller businesses while s larger corporations have about 400 square feet of space. It is equipped with a large desk, comfortable executive chair, and at least two guest chairs at the desk; a soft seating group of club chairs; loveseats, settees, or sofa and club chair arrangement.

Furniture arrangements too are important in executive offices. a desk is placed to face the door, with guest seating in front of the desk which when shaped like L or U settings makes it conducive for casual conversations. The colors used too are neutral avoiding large patterns and strong colors. *(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 193-196)*

PRIVATE OFFICES FOR MID-LEVEL MANAGEMENT

Mid-level management is mostly also placed in full-height walled rooms in the office. They mostly also have administrative assistants who are placed on a desk or cabinet right outside the door. They have computers and cabinets that hold all records of staff in cabinets. The office size for mid-level management is often approximately 144-250 square feet.

Mid-level management is given desks smaller than that of the executive offices. They also have in addition credenzas that are placed almost at the rear end of the room. There are chairs provided for extra seating but not soft seating like sofas. The fabrics of the chairs used in the mid-level management offices are quite different from the executive. The chairs used can be fitted with double wheel casters and swivel to ease movement. The chairs too are ergonomically designed for comfort. Some companies would want to change the fabric used on the furniture to suit their needs.

OTHER STAFF OFFICE SPACES

In traditional offices, many of the staff positions under other staff spaces are done in open areas using casing goods desks and return units or systems furniture. The workspaces are normally file cabinets used in the general filling area. It could have extra storage shelves for binders. It is also equipped with posture chairs.

CONFERENCE

Conference rooms are typical ancillary spaces in a company. They normally serve as boardrooms. These conference rooms have a very graded quality chair for use. These are normally higher than that of the employees.

The room can be small enough to contain about four participants (30 feet) and large enough to accommodate most of the workers. It is usually large enough to accommodate credenzas and space for easy movement and circulation. The room should be sufficient to take the chairs, tables, and circulation spaces for presentation.

Conference rooms are furnished with chairs and tables. The table could be round for a small group of people. However, bigger and longer for many people in a company. It is designed mainly so that many of these people would see each other's faces well. They are equipped with chairs with swivels to ease movement too.

Some of the equipment required for the room setup includes:

* Writing surfaces, chalkboards
* Projection screens
* Audiovisual equipment
* Screens and equipment to provide for teleconferencing, including cameras, sound equipment, and monitors.
* Cabinets to store supplies of various kinds
* Small sink and refrigerator
* Speaker’s podium and sound system.

Some manufacturers have designed tables that incorporate teleconferencing and imaging tools. The conference room should have very good acoustics, lighting, and audiovisuals.

*(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M. Piotrowski page 196-200)*

ANCILLARY AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SPACES

Depending on the functions of the company and size, other support spaces like employee lunchrooms might be needed. This might have a counter with a coffee maker and maybe a microwave. It could also be fitted with a table and some chairs. A storage room may be required. Same as copy rooms or where copies are made. Some are called copy stations. In this case, the designer contacts the manufacturer of the copy machines and sees the size and appropriate space required to fit or be situated.

Storage of hard copy files remains a necessity for many companies for decades; hence, the provision of storage rooms with vertical cabinets is strong enough to take many loads. More recently, most of the data or information stored in files has been transferred unto discs for storage. *(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M.Piotrowski page 200-202)*

**OPEN OFFICE PLANS**

The biggest difference between the closed-plan office system and the open-plan office system is the reduction in full height stick–built partition walls in an open office project. The wall panels also come in different sizes and can determine the outcome of the office plan. This being the case, the designer will need information and guidance from the manufacturer's representatives on the best way to plan to use the product. The circulation space between the corridors is essential. This is created by a height of 69 inches of divider panels. Aisles too are created within the furniture and partitions. Wider circulation spaces give a more open, spacious feeling.

The open plan also has a reception and a waiting area where visitors are greeted. The receptionist is equipped with a desk that has fitted on it a computer for monitoring, a work surface, and a telephone it has waiting for seats or sofas or benches for seating guests. It has other accessories that make the image of the business appear.

Private rooms in open-plan offices have demountable walls as dividers or panels. Normally has ergonomic furniture with a small conference table and chairs. It also includes two or more guest chairs. Most open-plan offices have most of the space taken by the staff. They are put in spaces often described as cubicles. These cubicles have furniture and components that maximize the use of space. Almost all the components are repeated in each cubicle. This makes the company save much more money than acquiring different types for other cubicles. These are called typicals. Other workstations are left unoccupied for new workers who come and go.

The size of workstations is affected by the nature of work or the rank of the occupant. It is normally between 64-120 square feet. The desk and work surface and other components are designed to fill in appropriately. It could be an open or partially closed workstation created by the use of vertical panels. The divider panels are low about 42 inches. The desk and the employee's work surface are attached to the divider walls.

Lower walls allow much communication amongst the employees’ whiles the high walls give much attention to privacy. Lower walls also allow for much more daylight to penetrate the building.

The divider walls for panels come in different furnishes, which can be fabric, melamine, wood laminates, or other finishes. However, they should all match the requirements of the Class A fire codes and those available. Colour and pattern too can be introduced by using fabric for seating, introducing tack boards, shelf covers, and seating. Work surface finishes can distinguish between the lower staff and the senior staff by the change in veneer or another adhesive for the panels. These panels are low enough to help workers collaborate amongst themselves. Because of this, lower walls are used to divide the spaces. They are also provided with ergonomic chairs that easily move to each end of the space to work. Teleconferencing tools are also provided to enable collaborative working. Other spaces are provided for collaborative conferencing, gathering, and interaction of a group of workers who are often working on the same project to generate ideas and solutions outside their specific work group. This conference room setup can be a conference room style or lounge seating.

Most employees or staff want to customize their space and so this brings up the challenge of having the same or similar designs for cubicles and having the same wall panels. Some company owners also prefer using the higher wall panels to the lower wall panels to help the employees to concentrate and be productive. The lower walled sections are left to spaces where discussions and collaborative work are needed. So most companies have come to the realization that combining both collaborative spaces and privacy has its advantages. *(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M.Piotrowski page 202-206)*

**DESIGNING SMALL, PROFESSIONAL OFFICE**

Some professions like lawyers, accountants, consultants, real estate brokers, insurance agents, and even architects will need small, professional offices. These offices are normally not more than 3000 square feet even though they vary in size. They might represent the branch of a company or an entrepreneur who had started a business. This type of office normally includes:

* A reception/waiting area
* One or two secretaries.
* Business owner /Principal of the company
* One or two additional employees
* A small conference room may be needed
* Space for storage supplies, a copy machine, file cabinets, and refreshment supplies.
* An accessible unisex toilet facility.

An office like this also requires a waiting room, which serves as the reception for clients. A space of about 144-180 square feet is to be allowed for the reception area. A limited number of shelves or cabinets might be in order when designing the waiting room. It can be influenced also by the owner's desire. The worker at the reception is also equipped with a desk, monitors, and cabinets to work with. The receptionist is positioned to see the entry.

The small offices usually have a corridor that leads to other offices in the suite. This meets the accessibility regulations as well. The small office also includes space for a copy machine, coffee area, and even a wireless printer shared by all. These can be put in other small rooms too. In designing the most appropriate or required size of space, the designer will need to work with the client to determine the square footage of this office in coordination with other spaces in the office suite. The placement of the secretary or receptionist's desk is also discussed in here. Some want it placed where it faces the client visiting seated, whiles others prefer the seats of visitors facing the windows if any. The secretary's office is normally small compared to the owner or boss.

Conference rooms are usually smaller and hold about four to six people. The style and size of chairs affect the shape of the conference room. Chairs with casters are not advised. The type of chairs and colors with upholstery is carefully discussed with the client since most small offices run with a budget.

The main mechanical systems in a small office rely on the architecture of the building. So inbuilt lights are relied on. The designer can also influence the lighting of the room with ceiling lights during the building stage. Desks use task lights often.

The code and restrictions should also guide the designers in making the suites. Usually, standards for finishes are higher across all rooms since the office is small, but could be altered for particular offices per the owner's request. A light good carpet glued to the floor is best used. Some owners also upgrade to using sustainable materials in making upholstery. The choice of paints too could be nontoxic, the same as the glues used. *(Designing commercial interiors -3rd edition by Christine M.Piotrowski page 206-211)*

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