

# Six ways to foster innovation through workplace design

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Facilities Planners + Architects (FP+A)'s **GARRY BRINTON** shares six ways to foster innovation through workplace design.

Innovation is the way to supercharge an organization's growth – it is the 'secret sauce' of business success. But, how do you make it happen? The right workplace environment can facilitate innovation. The design of a space has been shown to be an important driver in improving the speed and outcomes of innovation efforts.

Recent studies have identified the following six design strategies that support, inspire and enable innovation:

1. Make the space flexible
2. Make the space inspiring
3. Make the space collaborative
4. Make the space a hard-working tool
5. Make the space a reflection of culture and brand
6. Make the space social

## 1. MAKE THE SPACE FLEXIBLE

Innovation spaces need to be reconfigurable to support spontaneity. They need to be easily switched between different work modes, different types of information, different tools and different team structures.

Design considerations include:

- a mix of fluid and fixed architectural elements, such as movable partitions and semi-permanent walls
- a flexible hub for group activities, both large and small
- individual configurability through mobile furniture, and
- use of enclosed private areas for audio and video conferencing.

## 2. MAKE THE SPACE INSPIRING

Employees charged with product and service development need stimulating and engaging spaces to jump start and sustain their creative thinking.

Design considerations include:

- maximum exposure to natural lighting and views
- use of natural elements and materials throughout the space
- careful use of color (to excite or soothe)
- settings that are casual, informal and comfortable, and
- use of meaningful objects and artwork.

### **3. MAKE THE SPACE COLLABORATIVE**

Innovation teams require a common understanding. Individual insights need to become group learning and memory quickly and easily.

Design considerations include:

- group areas for informal brainstorming and information swaps
- maximum visibility of individual workspaces by positioning them around group spaces
- enabled collaborations around computers that involve both co-located and virtual team members, and
- interactive displays that allow users to actively engage with information, such as whiteboards, tackable surfaces and projection surfaces.

### **4. MAKE THE SPACE A HARD-WORKING TOOL**

Individual and group spaces need to support all modes of work (focusing, collaborating, learning and socialising.) Every square foot – both horizontally and vertically – should be efficiently planned to facilitate new ideas.

Design considerations include:

- vertical surfaces (walls, panels, freestanding whiteboards) to organise and display information that can link group processes
- layered storage for materials
- active and stored work tools that are easily accessible, and
- a responsive IT infrastructure.

### **5. MAKE THE SPACE A REFLECTION OF CULTURE AND BRAND**

The identity and culture of an organisation provides reassuring context and meaning to innovators. The workspace can be a means to underscore important values and processes.

Design considerations include:

- reinforcement of tone and culture, authentically and uniquely, in the workplace design
- displays of products and achievements that inspire pride and risk-taking, and
- allowance for team customisation and personalisation to reflect ownership and identification.

### **6. MAKE THE SPACE SOCIAL**

Trust is crucial when teams are doing intense work. Areas for informal conversations that build social capital are critical components for successful innovation spaces.

Design considerations include:

- convenient access to food and beverages
- comfortable lounge seating, tables and other furniture that invite mingling
- casual collaboration areas near work areas to facilitate interactions and exchanges, and
- welcoming areas for guests that enable unobtrusive views of work in progress.

Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2015.

<http://www.fmmagazine.com.au/blog/building-management/six-ways-to-foster-innovation-through-workplace-design/#.VUw4Nf2JiM8>