

The Top Hybrid Design Trends We Are Seeing During the “Return-to-Office”

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As we're all witnessing, companies who are still working remotely across the country are preparing for a return to the office. Google, Meta and Apple have each added millions of square feet in expansion space to their portfolio during the pandemic in anticipation of their team members being back at least a few days a week, if not more. And what are these companies hoping for? A study by BambooHR revealed that 61% of respondents said, “more in-person collaboration.” A *New York Times* article also relayed that employees report being excited to regain a sense of mentorship and camaraderie as they return to the workplace.

These are just a few of the many factors that have many corporate leaders re-thinking their office environments. While some companies never shifted to a fully remote environment, those that have been remote for the past two years are adopting innovative design trends, and in the process, creating office spaces that are well worth returning to!

One overall trend is a shift from using the office for full-time, focused work, to making it a place for culture, creative sessions, collaboration and connectivity. This means team members can still perform focused work from their homes but return to the office at least a few days a week for the tasks that are nearly impossible to replicate at home, such as spending time together as a team, brainstorming during in-person meetings, and strategizing on big picture concepts that are difficult to connect on via Zoom!

For these activities, here are seven design priorities we've seen companies implement while bringing their teams back to the office:

1. Large, Residential-Style Kitchens

Large kitchens with plenty of room for gatherings offer the



perfect place to bond with teammates! This might mean utilizing high-top tables or other innovative seating options that get the team together to create an ambiance that's warm and inviting. Another benefit? This space can double as collaboration space for team meetings!

2. Access to Multiple Conference Room Options

We've seen a greater emphasis on conference room options of varied sizes that are suitable for internal meetings, ensuring they are AV-equipped for hybrid in-person/call-in meetings for those team members who are working remotely or at another office location.

3. “Hot Desks” or Hoteling Stations

Open concept workstations that allow teammates to dock their computers and work in the office, when necessary, then “check out,” are becoming increasingly more popular.

4. Zoom Rooms

Technology-enabled soundproof, private rooms with attractive backgrounds that teammates can use for video meetings are a very new development in the post-pandemic world!



5. Lounge Space

We are seeing more and more casual lounge spaces, furnished with comfortable seating, rugs, pendant lights, plants, engaging colors and artwork. These spaces create a cozy atmosphere for connecting with other team members, and help teams feel right at home!

6. Natural Light

This element can be a game changer in any office. Wherever possible, flood your spaces with natural light, being mindful to minimize any glaring or heat-producing sun rays.

7. Outdoor Access

Outdoor space can be difficult to achieve, particularly in urban settings like a downtown high-rise, but are one of the most in demand amenities given the emphasis on clean air and good circulation. A balcony, terrace or courtyard are great amenities to consider, with seating, tables and WiFi to make it even more functional. If your building doesn't offer access to private outdoor space, not to worry! We've seen companies encourage holding meetings outside the office and emphasize taking walks on breaks to get fresh air!

It's not always about getting the *most* square footage, but getting the *right* square footage for the needs, preferences and comfort of the team. We are proud to be helping companies across the country find the perfect spaces for their teams to thrive in this ever-changing environment. As working-from-home has become an attractive option for many, companies who want to encourage returning to the office can compete by providing best-in-class space, outstanding company culture and a supportive team atmosphere. After all, nothing can take the place of camaraderie, team spirit and fulfillment like in-person connection! □

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