

DESIGN

Think ROI When Designing Office Space

Can you picture a work environment where you feel productive, energized and creative?

Would you welcome a space where clients trust your recommendations, where your action plans move smoothly?

Believe it or not, this can happen after construction or renovation if designed with energy flow in mind. The problem is, most people are anxiety ridden over just the thought of renovating or building new.

Granted, the myriad decisions required to carry out and conclude the project are daunting. How business owners begin this process will determine if, in the end, the office feels renovated or devastated. For the best results, treat your project as an investment by matching the right people to your intended return. Once these people are in place, trust their recommendations.

First you'll need to consider why you are undertaking the project. What is the root of the problem? Is it additional space, staffing issues, legal compliances? Do you sense that something is not working right or does the decor appear outdated? You'll need at least two qualified professionals at this step before you proceed. The first will address acceptable financial returns; the second will help you address the human returns on your investment.

The accountant or financial consultant provides investment parameters. Attempts to renovate a space without a clear financial picture spell trouble. Knowing your financial limits is a must. A specialized space planner is the right person to analyze the existing conditions, both spatial and human, and to recommend an action plan, which can then be presented for bids to contractors.

There are two types of space consultants. One focuses on form and function. The other is concerned with energy flow. The first group is usually an architect or interior designer. The second is also a Feng Shui expert. While it



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may be rather well understood how an interior designer works, a Feng Shui expert may require more explanation to decide whether to add this service.

Feng Shui is a roughly 6,000-year-old art and science geared to balancing the environment through the use of ancient principles of energy. All Asian healing modalities recognize this energy as five elements represented by wood, fire, earth, metal and water that, when manipulated to produce the correct relationship, create a serene and balanced

feeling. These energies are not only present in the environment, they also exist within each living being.

The Feng Shui expert, for example, may determine through a special formula that the majority of staff members possesses an abundance of "metal" energy and that the environment, mostly greens and purples (wood and fire), is the culprit for the clutter, apparent lack of storage and general disorganization within the office. On the one hand, wood energy is causing feelings of being overworked and fire helps them feel depleted. A better color scheme for this staff would be in the yellow, beige and blue range. If the staff feels efficient and supported, the clients will reap the benefits.

There is no longer a need to prove that living and working spaces have a profound effect on physical and mental health. An environment created to support the specific energies of its users can make a powerful return on your investment. Confident in your design-to-outcome choices, you're ready for the final step, putting the plans in place.

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