



## What Office Space Says About Company Culture and Employee Engagement

Over the last few years, the image of desirable office space has changed considerably. The goal of rising through the ranks to earn a big corner office is increasingly becoming a thing of the past, as many companies shift from designated offices and cubicles to open workspaces. This transformation reflects a growing trend toward work environments that are more conducive to open communication and collaboration between team members, as well as a focus on condensing office space to reduce rental expenses.

The new concept of office space isn't just taking hold at technology and marketing firms, or hip restaurants; more conservative industries such as banking and education are increasingly adopting this model. Despite all the benefits of this modern work approach, it's not for every company, nor for every potential hire. As the improved labor market prompts more companies to hire, more attention will need to be placed on what the office environment communicates about the company culture and employee engagement, and if these messages are being communicated effectively.

Believe it or not, office space, a seemingly minor aspect of work life, is growing in importance, so much that a recent article described a candidate who left a job interview, after catching a glimpse of his/her prospective workspace. "While this may seem like a rare or unlikely occurrence, this is the reality, especially when we consider the wants and needs of a growing Millennial population," says Suzanne Rice, director of U.S. Franchise Development. "This generation of workers, which the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

projects will make up 75 percent of the 2030 workforce, wants to immediately get a sense of the office energy, and most importantly, what the company culture says about how they will be treated once hired."

Baby Boomer executives are not immune to these changes. In many companies that prefer an open office environment, the C-Suite is also finding it must deal with smaller work spaces, if not complete elimination of designated office space altogether.

Ultimately, with retention and employee engagement being some of the biggest challenges facing employers today, office space is just a part of the message that organizations can communicate about company culture. Amenities, company-funded perks and team interaction, both inside and outside the office are additional

features that have the ability to tell a story about the cultural health of the organization.

It is no longer acceptable to dread coming in to work every day. Top candidates expect to work hard, but they want to have fun doing it, and enjoy the people with whom they work. "When employers include employees in the

development and maintenance of the company culture, this creates a real opportunity for them to connect with workers, making it clear that they want them to be active participants in shaping the future of the organization," adds Rice. "This is where true employee engagement starts, by interfacing with employees, facilitating ongoing, two-way dialogues and communicating this value in the marketplace. Further, this is what can make all the difference to top performers who have multiple job offers, and are faced with deciding whether to join or stay with a company."

