

how your office refurbishment affects staff retention and attraction



Summary: The Importance of the Working Environment

It is obvious that people are affected by their environment. The tenant in a cold bedsit with peeling wallpaper and a dual carriageway outside the window is affected by his or her environment to the point of feeling depressed. Give this person chance to move to a warm and well appointed flat of the same size and he or she will probably jump at the chance. Very few people would disagree with this proposition.

The same chain of cause and effect can be witnessed in the work place. Assume that our bedsit dweller works in a badly designed office interior. The walls are drab, the furniture merely functional, the workstations increase the likelihood of backache and if he or she wants a coffee then it has to be drunk wherever there is a free space. Our employee is unlikely to feel much affection for his or her place of work. If another job becomes available and he or she goes for an interview and finds a modern, well designed and comfortable office space to work in, then the chances are he or she will take up the new job, even if the pay is much the same.

A Waste of Time and Money

This represents a dead loss for his or her employer. Any money spent on the former worker's training is now going to the advantage of his or her new employer. There is also a vacancy to be filled; time and money must be spent on advertising for a replacement, interviewing those who apply, and training the person eventually selected. If the office environment remains resolutely uninviting then this will have an effect on the quality of the applicants. It will also continue to work its disquieting influence on the rest of the staff, who will be proportionally eager to find somewhere else to work.

The subjects of staff retention and staff attraction are serious ones and office design and office redesign are subjects that should occupy the mind of business owners. To pursue our analogy, it behoves the business proprietor to act in the same manner as a caring landlord. The miserable bedsit can be changed into a comfortable and cheerful bedsit. The drab and depressing office interior can be refurbished to become a place where work is pleasant and pain free.

Basic Improvements

Put so simply, the importance of the office interior is obvious. Employers troubled by staff retention problems and who have difficulty in attracting new recruits should consider their places of work and whether or not they would benefit from office refurbishment. They should suppress the natural inclination to say that office redesign is a low priority. Even small improvements in the office interior can create considerable benefits. If we return to our hypothetical employee for a moment, let us imagine the result if a comfortable seating area is installed in a part of her office. Now he or she can drink her coffee and chat to her fellow workers. Leaving aside the purely social benefits that will result (and these will be considerable and impact on the matter of staff retention – people will be less inclined to leave a friendly workplace) this will also result in improved dialogue between employees. Information and ideas will be more readily exchanged.

One result from this very simple piece of office refurbishment might be that our employer learns that the installed work stations are causing back pain. He or she might decide on a further venture into the field of office redesign and address the problem. If he or she did this then the result would be a happier and more efficient workforce, less prone to sick-leave and absenteeism and less likely to want to move elsewhere.

Bringing in the Experts

These are, of course, very simple examples of how office refurbishment can help a business retain and attract staff. In reality the defects are likely to be less serious but the effect of a poorly designed office is no less real. The employer plagued by problems of staff retention or attraction should, as we noted earlier, give serious consideration to the matter of office refurbishment.

It is, however, not easy to organise such an office redesign. The employer will be dealing with a matter that is probably outside his or her experience and his or her field of expertise. He or she probably will know that any major operation in the office is liable to be extremely disruptive. It could, effectively, close the business down for a period of days. How is he or she to organise such an upheaval in the office interior while keeping the negative effects to a minimum? This is when the sensible employer will enlist the services of a specialist office refurbishment company who will be able to manage the change with the minimum of inconvenience.

A specialist office refurbishment company will be able to help create an environment liable to help with the problem of staff retention. Not only will the grosser type of defect mentioned in the examples above be identified and remedied, but also more subtle changes will be made as part of a plan to create a working environment which not only offers comfort but also helps to instil loyalty in those who work there. If we consider the matter of office redesign as a factor in setting the morale of the workforce then a professional redesign is bound to lead to a significant improvement.

In Conclusion

Let us conclude this short introduction to the subject of office refurbishment by returning to the hypothetical worker who we encountered in the first paragraph. Then, back in the bad old days of the bad old office, work was something to be endured for the sake of a wage. Now, following the success of the seating area and the improved stations, his or her employer has retained the services of a specialist office design consultancy company, who have planned and executed a full office refurbishment. The new office interior is a pleasant and stimulating place to work. Our employee does not want to leave and indeed tells friends that she works in a good environment. Among the friends, perhaps, is just the sort of person who the business wishes to take on. Staff have been retained and attracted by office refurbishment.

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