

10 Renovation innovation

things to think about when reconfiguring your office space

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1 Develop standards

- As you're thinking about renovating/reconfiguring your space, consider longevity and cost of maintenance. By developing standards for various components such as carpet and paint, later upkeep/refresh activities will be simpler.
- For paint colours specifically, try to limit your palette to three to five colours – expanding beyond this number might make it difficult to implement standards and maintain consistency.

2 Details

- Beware buyer's remorse! Trendy details become outdated quickly – it's easy to spend valuable budget dollars on items at the height of interior style, but these details may quickly date your renovation and require replacement ahead of their lifespan.
- In our busy construction market, expensive high-end or custom details, such as door hardware, artwork or handmade fixtures, typically have a long lead time – select these items at the outset of the project to ensure that they are in place when you host your "office warming" party.

3 Code compliance

- With the recent changes to the BC Building Code, evaluate the existing space to ensure current code upgrades are in place, such as seismic restraints for ceiling systems.

4 Employee well-being

- Increasingly employers are motivated to make changes to ensure the well-being of their employees. Before embarking on your renovation, consider engaging staff in solution creation and decision making. Re-evaluate individual storage requirements, how

people work and what can be improved to increase productivity and effectiveness.

- Staff rooms hidden behind closed doors are prehistoric – in the office of today, employee spaces such as cafeterias and break rooms, with fun and comfortable furnishings and accessories, are located within prime real estate.
- One of the primary factors for employee well-being is the air quality in the work environment. Ensure that your design criteria includes a complete evaluation of the building's air system.
- Consider the amount of time your employees spend at their desks – investing in good ergonomic chairs is an incredible commitment to their health and comfort.
- Green renovations in commercial office facilities are now becoming more common place and are proving to be quite cost effective when compared to conventional renovations – and provide end users with healthier work spaces.

5 Vertical real estate

- With greater demands for footprint and storage space and often the lack thereof, employers are required to consider solutions that take advantage of the "vertical real estate" available. This includes considerations for storage areas above desks and cupboards.
- Furniture systems should be assessed for their ability to stack and expand in an upward fashion so that often wasted space can be harnessed and maximized.

6 Furniture systems

- Purchase a system that best supports your office function – survey your staff and make use of the resources that furniture supply companies make available to help you think about your office's function and needs.
- Do you re-configure frequently? If so,



Sweat the details: Sally Mills



Consider your flooring options: Lori Billson

you would want a system with fewer parts and one that can be re-worked by in-house personnel.

- If you have a high-technology requirement, there are systems available that are designed with high power/data/voice cabling capabilities.
- If your office function is centred around team oriented activities, there are systems that specifically support this purpose.
- Creative and innovative furniture solutions can be reached to deal with dense floorplates, and the allocation of space to each team member, maximizing each person's allocation, will foster well-being and efficiency.

7 Flexibility

- Be realistic and flexible about requirements, budget and schedule.
- Consider the use of multi-functional, changeable areas and furnishings that can help you maximize your space and functionality. For example, moveable walls can enclose or open areas tempor-

arily, while mobile furnishings such as pedestals on castors with seat surfaces combine storage with utility.

- Carefully and honestly assess your needs for meeting spaces – devices such as moveable walls, pod-style mini-meeting spaces, informal congregation areas and café-style meeting rooms may satisfy your need for private, contained meeting places while giving you the flexibility to use the real estate in other innovative ways when not supporting the meeting function.

8 Walls

- Wall colours and coverings add aesthetic appeal and set the tone for your new space. Bear in mind the functionality of the wall and its location – areas receiving great volumes of traffic require more durable treatment. White board surfaces are a new trend; a wall covering is now available with a writable surface that can be applied to any wall.
- With the increasingly high cost and limited inventory of office space, the current trend is to enhance the functionality of tenant space and improve flexibility and efficiency in workplaces.

Options to consider include movable wall systems instead of the standard drywall partition. Consider using existing walls to hang additional storage rather than acquire more real estate.

9 Flooring

- The floors in a new office space are possibly the most used finish. Consider the wide variety of materials available and match purpose and practicality with aesthetic requirements.
- There are also a wide variety of newer materials available that offer environmentally sensitive solutions such as carpet tile, linoleum and rubber.
- Install flooring solutions first; this allows for maximum flexibility should wall locations and traffic patterns change.
- Consider carpet tile as an option when renovating. It is much faster and easier to install in an existing office environment and contains very little adhesive to augment fumes.

10 Lighting

- A combination of general light, task lighting and accent lighting makes

for the ideal lighting solution. It creates interest and is more “power smart.” Investigate the existing quality of the natural light in your space, survey your staff to determine task lighting requirements and consider which areas or features of the space require accent lighting.

- Lighting is one of the most essential elements of an interior renovation, evidenced by the abundance of lighting fixtures and finishes on the market today. Consider clever design techniques such as non-conventional lighting to bring attention to a focal point of the space but be mindful of how quickly the cost of these items can erode your budget. ■

Source: Omicron is an integrated design and construction firm providing total building solutions to clients in the commercial, institutional, retail and renewal sectors. Omicron's interiors division, led by principals Sally Mills and Lori Billson, focuses exclusively on interior assignments delivered primarily in a design/build format.



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