

Setting up a physical office is as simple as ABCD

Work spaces are a reflection of a company's culture, especially its thirst for innovation and attitude to employees. Organisations have to perform a fine balancing act between budgetary considerations and graduating to a friendlier and more tech savvy workplace. By creating the right environment companies can enhance productivity, collaboration and out of the box thinking.

While particularly true for businesses with cross border teams and younger workforces, surveys show that a well-designed and thoughtful workplace can improve employee well-being and productivity from anywhere between 10% to 40%.

The logistics of setting up this new age office may seem intimidating, but by addressing tasks systematically one after the other, key decisions can be faster and the process more effective.

List your needs

One company's 'ideal office' could be another's disaster. While the industry and size of business operations may dictate a few choices, organisations will have to factor in the type of employees who work there, the nature of work and other 'intangible' drivers. Speak to key managers and employees and understand their aspirations, too. Use these inputs to create a list of all the must-haves (location near clients, remote office connectivity) and nice-to-haves (cable TV connectivity in the office).

A: Location

For companies in many sectors, the office location is not just about convenience but sending the right message to stakeholders. An address in the central business district offers an impression of being at the heart of the action, well-established and perhaps even prestigious. On the other hand, an office in a suburban area may signal out-of-the-box thinking and a focus on minimising needless cash-burn. Since the decision has major financial implications, a number of considerations are involved: so factor in and rank criteria such as being in the commercial hub, staying close to clients, ease and availability of transportation and availability of telecoms infrastructure.

B: Layout

While an office is a functional area designed to be productive, it should reflect a company's ethos and suit the type of business conducted. Open plans are ideal for organisations with fresh graduates and relatively inexperienced employees. Closed offices suit businesses that handle sensitive or confidential information like legal and accounting firms. Some offices tend to go for a mash-up between the open and the closed plans, using modular workstations that offer a limited amount of privacy.

C: Furniture, equipment

It's equally important to populate the space with the right kind of furniture, equipment and technology. Furniture needs to align with the company's image – for example, an advertising agency can opt for very modern, creative design while a will-writing business might opt for a reassuring, solid look. Equipping the office with the appropriate technology is critical, like providing laptops or other portable devices to mobile and remote staff. Decisions on using a central server, cloud-based networking and types of peripherals

(scanners, photocopiers, printers, conferencing equipment) should be driven by growth plans, budget, security and levels of usage.

D: Connectivity

With flexibility being the norm, offices need to look at connectivity solutions that support BYOD and remote employees/branches. Solutions like wireless EPABX free organisations from having to locate close to fixed line infrastructure, as they work off the ubiquitous mobile network. Using solutions like interactive voice response systems (IVR) can help maintain customer service standards, regardless of where the employee is. Mobility and internet connectivity are also paramount in the modern workplace, for seamless collaboration and deployment of digital business tools.

While there is no shortcut to the physical effort of identifying an office space and designing it, there are many easy-to-install, low maintenance and scalable enterprise connectivity solutions including from market leaders like Tata Docomo Business Services, that help employees connect and work from the moment the shutters are up.