



Greening Your Office

Your guide for designing a workspace that
boosts employee engagement



ambius

Enhancing Interior Landscapes

Your employees spend a significant amount of time at work. Creating an office space where people feel engaged and excited to come to work is one of the first steps in ensuring employee health, well-being, and satisfaction.

If you're embarking on an office design project, Ambius is here to help. Whether you're building a new office from the ground up or simply taking on a light office refresh, this Greening Your Office Guide can help by providing how-tos, ideas, and research to help you substantiate your case.

If our design professionals can help you at any point, we're just a phone call away. Call us at 888.885.6806 to be connected with one of our expert Design Consultants for inspiration, creativity, recommendations, or action plans.

We look forward to celebrating your new office space with you!



To learn more or schedule a consultation, call 888.885.6806 or visit ambius.com.





WEEK 1 | Get the right people involved.

Getting the right decision makers on board early in the office design process can help move decisions along expediently. Having a cross-functional team collaborating toward your goals results in success that is widely celebrated – and most importantly, result in happier employees.

This list of key players includes decision makers that Ambius often encounters in our work. Depending on the size of your office, these are key team members you may want to consider involving.

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Human Resources Manager

WHY: These people-centered team members have a stake in ensuring employee satisfaction and retention. They are often the first to hear employee concerns and may have valuable insights to offer.

Financial Officer

WHY: Plants and design elements are inexpensive ways to make an impact in the office – but they do require investment. Involving a financial officer early on in the process can help with communicating the benefits and cost savings that can be realized, ensuring a positive return on investment.

Office or Operations Manager

WHY: These professionals typically have a strong understanding of the way an office runs on a day-to-day basis and can provide important information on maximizing productivity and efficiency. They will also be able to help with work scheduling to ensure the least amount of disruption.

Facility Manager / Maintenance

WHY: Installing plant or design features can involve the need to understand building plumbing, lighting, and structural systems. These experts can provide critical information during the design phase that can be useful in reducing costs and ensuring safety.

Sustainability Officer

WHY: These decision makers ensure an organization remains environmentally responsible. Their input is critical to a design project and they can provide insights to substantiate the need for change.

Owner

WHY: In smaller office environments, an owner may want to be on board with changes, even if they aren't in the office on a daily basis.

Your Employees

WHY: Employees are the ones using your space. They will have valuable input about what's working and what isn't.



WEEK 2 | Determine your primary goals.

There are many reasons that you may be considering a new office design – and the outcome can have multiple benefits. To realize success, it's best to have your primary goals outlined before beginning a design plan, so that you can evaluate how each design contributes toward your goals.

Ask each team member to choose their top 3 primary goals from the list at right. Then compare lists to see where you align and where you have differences. That will be a great starting point for discussion.

PEOPLE-ORIENTED

- Boost employee morale
- Improve employee productivity
- Reduce absenteeism
- Create a more collaborative environment
- Promote employee health / well-being
- Attract new workforce talent
- Support biophilic design principles

BRAND-ORIENTED

- Impress clients and visitors
- Strengthen our brand / corporate identity
- Help us stand out from competitors
- Be regarded as innovative
- Better reflect our culture

GREEN-ORIENTED

- Be more green / environmentally friendly
- Support our social responsibility programs
- Achieve WELL, LEED, and/or Living Building Challenge credentials

FUNCTION-ORIENTED

- Reduce noise
- Reduce odors
- To add art, texture, or interesting pieces
- Add privacy to our workspace
- Create a more open workspace
- Increase lighting in our workspace
- Modernize or add style to our office
- Improve wayfinding

Other: _____

NOW DOCUMENT YOUR GOALS BY WRITING THEM DOWN.

Our organization's Top 3 primary goals are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



WEEK 3-6 | Create an employee focus group.

Be sure to include employees in your design process. We recommend creating an employee focus group to gauge employee sentiment and needs.

Why a focus group? When end users of a space have a genuine say in what happens in their workspace, the effects on engagement and productivity can be magnified. This is especially true when end users have the final say, even if that say is a choice between options.

Here are a few guidelines for putting together your focus group.

Decide on the objective of your focus group.

- These objectives should align closely with your goals and drive the content of your focus group. For example, “To solicit ideas for a new office layout that contributes to employee health and well-being.”

Select a facilitator for your focus group.

- For best results, this person should be neutral. You may want to consider someone who does not have a stake in the design outcome.

Create a focus group discussion guide.

- List the questions you want to get answered.
- Make questions specific enough that they will solicit detailed feedback from participants. **See page 6 for sample discussion points.**
- Remember that your questions should all relate to achieving your objective.
- Create a method for recording the results of the your focus group and any resulting discussion. This could be video or having a designated note taker present during the session.

Choose your focus group participants.

- Include a wide variety of departments / functions, as well different physical locations within your office.

- Choose a mix of vocal and non-vocal team members.
- Choose a group that represents the diversity in your office demographic.
- Speak with department heads or other leaders within the company for suggestions on employees.
- Consider making participation voluntary.
- Have alternates in case someone can't participate.

Invite participants to be part of your group.

- Be sure invited participants have a clear understanding of what will be expected of them and of the group time commitments.

Hold your focus group.

- Encourage open discussion.

Analyze your results.

- Remember that your results may provide information that you didn't intend to get.
- Share the results with your design team. Include information that contributes to your goals, but also any other details that may impact the overall implementation or effectiveness of an office redesign.



Sample focus group discussion points.

Developing a focus group discussion guide is an important part of a focus group. But where do you begin?

Your discussion guide should be centered around your primary goals. However, these sample discussion points may help you get started in developing your own discussion guide.

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

Providing opportunity for your focus group to respond to “feeling” questions can elicit unbiased information. These can be provided in a written format for response, or in an open discussion group.

- In general, how do you feel when you are at work?
- What is your favorite thing about our office?
- What is your least favorite thing about our office?
- If you could change one thing about our office environment, what would it be?
- Have you ever had a problem in your work environment that you couldn't get solved? If yes, what was it?

TRUE/FALSE STATEMENTS

Questions that can be responded to with a “true,” “false,” or “Sometimes” (or yes, no, maybe) response may help you determine a baseline for the state of things in your office. Ask focus group

members to respond to these statements without over-thinking them.

- I get more than 30 minutes of outdoor time each day.
- I am proud to invite visitors or guests to our office.
- Guests or visitors comment regularly on how nice our office is.
- I am proud to work for this company.
- There is plenty of greenery in our office.
- There is artwork in our office.
- I feel connected to my co-workers and we work together toward common goals.
- There is sufficient lighting in our office.
- Our office smells fresh and clean, even at the end of a day.
- I can easily find space to do quiet, focused work in our office.
- Our staff is easily distracted by things happening in other parts of our office.



WEEK 6-7 | Build your case.

You've spent time getting the right people involved, determining your goals, and conducting a focus group. Now it's time to take the results you've gathered and make your case to decision makers.

STEP 1: Review your focus group results.

Combing through your focus group results is an important task. What are the 5 key takeaways? Are there any outliers that are especially concerning?

STEP 2: Compare your focus group takeaways with your goals.

Ensuring that your goals align with your focus group takeaways is important. If they do not align, document specific reasons that alignment may not be important.

STEP 3. Build your report or presentation.

Compile your data into a presentable format that will help your stakeholders and decision makers visualize the need for change. Use bright colors, charts, and call-out text to highlight your important action points. Back up your data with supporting research and facts (see the Substantiate your case with facts section of this Guide for help). Appoint a

spokesperson or spokespersons to help present the information.

STEP 4. Engage stakeholders and decision makers.

Now it's time for your designated spokesperson(s) to present the results to the people that can help move the decisions to action.

STEP 5. Research and select partners.

An office re-design is a tremendous undertaking and isn't something your maintenance or engineering staff can undertake on their own. Depending on your goals, you'll need to identify potential partners, get quotes, and perhaps get further approval from your stakeholders and decision makers on budget and spend. Your partner(s) can help you determine tiered levels with visualizations to present your case.



Substantiate your case with facts.

Backing up your design plan with proven facts can help convince decision makers that change is needed. Here are a few powerful facts that may help sway your audience.

Ambius conducted a survey of 1,000 office workers in the U.S. and U.K. to gauge office workplace satisfaction. A few of the eye-opening outcomes included:

- 35% of US office workers spend less than 15 minutes outside each day.
- 90% of employees say the environment of their office is important to their job satisfaction
- Half of office workers would not accept a job offer without looking at the workspace
- 40% of men and 34% of women said they have declined a job offer because they didn't find the office space attractive or appealing.

For additional findings from our research, please visit:

- **Building Design & Construction Network** - <https://www.bdcnetwork.com/flexibility-tops-office-workers-wish-lists-followed-healthcare>
- **Facility Executive** - <https://facilityexecutive.com/2018/08/bring-outdoors-in-workplace-design/>
- **Human Resources Consultancy** - <https://humanresourcesconsultancy.com/35-of-office-workers-spend-less-than-15-minutes-outdoors-each-day/>
- **Ambius Blog** - <https://www.ambius.com/blog/workers-spend-less-15-minutes-outdoors/>



Engagement and the Global Workplace, Steelcase / Ipsos Study, February 2016.

- This study surveyed over 12,000 workers in 17 countries and found that “employee satisfaction with their workplace is directly correlated with higher employee engagement.”
- Only 14% of U.S. workers feel “highly engaged and highly satisfied” in their workplace; in Canada, that number is lower at 11%. The global average was 13%.
- 93% of highly engaged and satisfied workers felt satisfied with the ambient noise level in their workspace, while only 22% of highly dissatisfied and disengaged workers felt the same.
- 23% of U.S. workers and 26% of Canadian workers do not like their workspace.
- 36% of U.S. workers and 44% of Canadian workers report that their workspace doesn’t allow them to feel relaxed or calm.
- In general, North American offices may not offer workers enough space for focused collaboration – only 58% of U.S. workers say they can work in teams without disruption, while that number is even lower in Canada at 52%.

The Relative Benefits of Green vs. Lean Office Space: Three Field Experiments, University of Exeter, September 2014.

- When added to a previously lean space, plants were shown to increase employee productivity by 15%.
- Employees completed tasks faster, and without any increase in mistakes.
- Employees reported higher levels of concentration.
- Employees reported higher levels of workplace satisfaction.
- Employees reported better air quality.
- Additionally, workplace productivity improved by up to 40%.

Windows and Offices: A Study of Office Worker Performance and the Indoor Environment, California Energy Commission, October 2003.

- An increase in daylight illumination levels from 1 to 20 footcandles resulted in a 13% improvement in performance in the ability to instantly recall and mentally reverse strings of numbers.
- Workers in a Call Center who had a view to the outside were found to process calls 7% to 12% faster versus those with no view.
- Office workers were found to perform 10% to 25% better on tests of mental function and memory recall when they has a view of the outside versus no view.

Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

- Indoor air pollution, often referred to as indoor air quality (IAQ), contributes to 40% of absenteeism.

University of Vermont

- Rooms filled with plants were shown to have 50 to 60% fewer molds and bacteria in the air than in rooms where no plants were present. These, and toxins, both are absorbed in the soil, and into plant leaves.
- Visual exposure to plants helped to reduce blood pressure, and to lessen stress within five minutes.
- A small indoor plant hedge around a workspace can reduce noise by five decibels.

VIA University College, Denmark

- Through the process known as transpiration, plants cool their surrounding environment slightly. With each additional plant this increases and therefore a green wall, with hundreds of plants, can reduce the temperature of a room by anywhere from 3 to 7°C.



To learn more or schedule a consultation,
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