



Seven Smart Design Moves to Optimize Space in the Workplace at Little or No Cost

By Lois Goodell, IIDA

Two of the highest costs for any organization are people and real estate. In the current economy it makes sense to maximize the return on your facilities by making sure that your space supports your staff and your long-range goals without incurring substantial costs.

Lois Goodell, IIDA, who heads the largest interior design practice in Boston at CBT, shares seven easy-to-implement changes that will improve morale, productivity, and position your organization for the post-recession future at little or no cost:

Reconfigure: If cutbacks have emptied workstations and created dead zones in the office plan, reconfigure the space to increase the density. Fill empty seats and arrange workstations to improve workflow and visibility, which improves communication and morale.

Redeploy: Increase the density of workstations to open up other areas on the floor. Use “found” space to create room for collaboration. Keep the furnishings, redeployed from across the office, simple to encourage informal meetings.

Readjust: As individuals take on additional work when staff is reduced, they may require more filing space or different surfaces to support their new responsibilities. See what’s needed to be effective and adjust the workstation components accordingly.

Rethink: Senior staff responsibilities are increasing, too. Configure private office furniture to facilitate communication, mentoring, and accessibility. With travel budgets slashed, it’s time to have IT install a webcam.

Restack: More costly than re-planning a single work area or even an entire floor, the investment in restacking several floors to achieve more effective adjacencies delivers surprising paybacks. Improved communication across business units addresses shifting demands—speed-to-market, new products and services, or streamlined operations.

Reinvigorate: Take advantage of the public spaces to raise visibility. Multi-function rooms, cafés, and conference rooms can be used to bring people together for training, to host events for clients, colleagues, or community.

Refresh: For a small investment paint provides a big return. Used strategically, color can bring a professional polish to the office or just refresh spaces that are showing “wear and tear.”

Whatever changes you make now should anticipate further change. Evaluate your resources holistically—your facilities, your inventories, your requirements, and your budget. As Goodell notes, “Smart moves today provide positive, short-term impact, and the opportunity to position for the long-term.” Focusing on improved efficiencies, flexibility, and cost-effective solutions for your facilities fosters a workplace culture that is agile, collaborative, and sustainable.

