

Oaktree Interiors

Our guide to effective office design & fit out

For those considering refurbishing, expanding
or relocating their offices



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1. Would you benefit from a fit out, refurbishment or relocation?

To see if a fit out or refurbishment of your offices will benefit you, your people and your organisation, firstly ask yourself, does your current workspace...

1. Support your plans for controlled business growth?
2. Reflect and define your brand?
3. Retain existing personnel and attract new talent?
4. Support your approach to sustainability?
5. Provide a cost-efficient solution?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'no', then your business would likely benefit from a fit out or refurbishment in order to optimise the workplace.

Alternatively, you might even want to consider relocating to give yourself the perfect space in which to flourish!

34%

of the workforce feel their workplace is toxic*

*Source: 2018 study conducted by Alan Hedge, a professor in the Department of Design and Environmental Analysis at Cornell University, USA

2. Benefits of a refreshed and uplifted office

A refreshed and uplifted office environment will:

a. Reflect your brand and company culture more closely

First impressions really do count when it comes to the space that represents your business. A carefully thought-out office refurbishment will really look the part and create a lasting first impression that sticks.

b. Inspire your clients and employees

A great looking workspace will help your consumer base feel confident that you can be trusted to deliver, and ensure your team enjoy coming into their working environment. The happiness and health of your people is essential, and good morale will have a positive impact on workflow and profits, so your working environment should be made as comfortable and healthy as possible.

c. Attract the best talent

New employees need to be inspired by the 'look and feel' of their future place of work. If you are looking to get high quality staff on board, how you look in terms of colour, layout, plants, (smell even!), will help those bright rising stars to come on board. Standout facilities such as breakout areas and chillout rooms create a lasting impression and can set you apart from competitors.

Focus on flexibility

Have a good honest look at the current layout of your workplace to help decide where space is needed or could be better utilised. With flexible 'hot desking' and home working, offices are used very differently compared with just a few years ago. By matching the layout with staff working practices and adding breakout areas for those quick 'ad hoc' team meetings for example, you can optimise your space for comfort, practicality and productivity.

Consider modern trends and office innovations

These days, the communication process in the office can be diverse. People need to interact to innovate in a culture that encourages the generation of ideas and importantly, the interesting spaces where new ideas come into being.

64%

of UK employees claimed their office environment had a negative impact of their health*

*Source: 2018 survey by Fellowes Brands



Top Tip

Our busy working lives mean that working in different spaces both in and out of the office can be appealing for employees. Make an effort to give your team options of different places to work.

3. Office space tips to get the best out of your employees

Here are a few ideas that might ensure the interactions between employees are effective:

79%

of ideas are generated away from desks*



*Source: 2017 survey, 'The rise and rise of Activity Based Working' by Leesman

Breakout areas

with soft seating (armchairs, beanbags and sofas), that facilitate the exchange of ideas and opinions, since an ordinary conference room is no longer enough.



Informal meeting zones by coffee and vending machines.

Places for holding quick **stand-up chats** with added soundproof screens for relative privacy.



Unusual furniture and 'off the wall' **artwork** or conversation pieces, which might spark an amazing train of thought.

Spaces designed for working in **small project teams** (both opened and closed off).



Internal cafes where the team can meet informally, take a break from their desks or work in a more relaxed environment, this will also increase the opportunity for collaboration over lunch breaks. These spaces, depending on their size, can also be ideal for company gatherings and meetings.



4. The importance of preparation

Fail to prepare, prepare to fail

If you are considering refurbishing, expanding or relocating your office, there are a few key points to consider for your plan:

What are your objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)?

Here are some examples of things to consider when planning an office refurbishment project relating to physical workspaces conducive to innovation:

- Type of space
- Furniture and equipment layout
- The size of the space
- Impact of the reception/meet & greet area
- Access to shared and sensitive equipment
- Impact on your teams' productivity
- Ergonomics and technology
- Natural light against artificial lighting.

Top Tip

Consider and agree relevant KPIs with your fit out partner as early in the process as possible. At Oaktree, where appropriate, we delve deep into your business to fully understand what you want and need from your office refit. Understanding your KPIs is key to our process and the success of the final outcome.



Understand the importance of a workplace analysis

It is only through an in-depth workplace analysis and complete understanding of the subsequent findings that the appropriate workplace solution can be designed.

Your carefully selected fit out partner will seek to learn as much as possible about your organisation. They will analyse your goals, people, culture, systems and workflows to establish the best solution to your workplace requirements. This process might include interviewing staff, conducting surveys or analysing productivity, all with the intention of becoming completely familiar with your working environment.

Because they will gain an understanding about the way you work, our team of professionals will be able to put forward creative designs and solutions that are aesthetically outstanding as well as exceptionally practical. These will take into consideration your requirements (how is the space to be used, e.g. closed rooms, open spaces, breakout areas, incorporating flexibility and functionality?).

How much can you afford, over what period?

By analysing your organisation in this way, the partner will be able to present a variety of creative, practical solutions with budget options for you to consider. They will also include a schedule (taking into account planning requirements, ordering materials, build time and IT/phone systems for example). Because they know the process, they will be able to plan in efficiencies and streamline ergonomics. With a solid understanding of your business, the solutions will be practical for your budget and timeline.

5 factors to consider when relocating

What to consider if you decide to relocate?

Finding the right office for your culture and future plans is key and should not be hurried – you've got a lot of factors to consider around the space itself, including facilities, location and how it affects your day-to-day operations.

Fitting with the brand image

Your office location should be an extension of your 'brand' image.

If you're a creative agency for example, prospect clients won't respond so well to a poorly lit rundown office. However, if you're a not-for-profit organisation such as a charity, spending too much on your office space sends out completely the wrong message.

Test fits

A key part of the relocation process once you have narrowed down your options is the test fit. This process will show you the potential of the spaces you have selected and also highlight any friction points that you may encounter.

Room to grow

High-growth companies are going to need space to expand. Think about your growth rate and find a space that will accommodate these plans – it might motivate everyone in meeting their goals too! When conducting the workplace appraisal, Oaktree will analyse your company's growth and assess how this will impact on the design of your space.



6. Sustainability and environmental impact

More and more companies across industries are committing to reducing their impact on the environment. From a business perspective, customers are more inclined to buy products from, invest in services from, and lend their support to companies with a proven record of social responsibility regarding reducing their environmental impact. If you are looking to make sustainability a key part of your refit, Oaktree can support you in doing this.



86%

of consumers want brands to help them become more environmentally friendly and ethical in their daily lives*

*Source: 2018 Futerra survey of over 1,000 US and UK consumers

Developing an eco-conscious organisation starts with your workforce, as it is crucial for your people to believe in your vision and practice environmentally-friendly habits in the office in order for your mission of sustainability to be accepted all day, every day.



Make green thinking a key part of your company culture

Include your employees in your environmental vision by getting them engaged and involved. Getting their input by listening to their ideas will allow them the opportunity to be part of your new mission and goals. This can apply to your office refit or relocation, as well as business initiatives that impact their day-to-day working patterns.



Conserve energy within the office and in your people

Investing in automatic lighting or smart solutions as well as turning off lights, heating and switching off electronic equipment outside of working hours will conserve energy. The wellbeing of your people is crucial to the healthy habits of your organisation and mindfulness is equally as important. Sustaining healthy and energetic employees is beneficial to the company's overall productivity. If this is a priority for your business, the test fit process can highlight effective solutions and ideas for initiatives that adhere to these goals.



Sustainable business decisions

Along with smaller initiatives running within your business, making key business decisions with sustainability at the core will have a huge impact on your corporate social responsibility. Examples such as paperless offices will impact the design of your space, as more technology-focused areas will be required.



Green government and corporate legislation

At the time of writing (November 2019) there is no legislation regarding sustainability and environmental impact. However, the UK Government has recently introduced the groundbreaking Environment Bill to tackle the biggest environmental priorities of our time.

This Bill signals a historic step to change in the way we protect and enhance our precious natural environment and will help ensure that we maintain and improve our environmental protections. It will build on the UK's strong track record and sets out a comprehensive and world-leading vision to allow future generations to prosper through measures to improve air and water quality, tackle plastic pollution and restore habitats so plants and wildlife can thrive.

7 Appointing the right specialist office design, refurbishment or relocation team

When selecting a design and fit out company, make a list of everything that each contractor will provide as part of their service, as well as things they don't. Objectively comparing companies on this basis will determine their fitness for purpose and true value for money.

Equally as important to an objective analysis are:

- How you feel about them?
- Is there good chemistry between you?
- Do you trust them?
- Do they 'get' you?
- Are they honest and transparent?
- What is your gut instinct?



However, there are several things that an office design and fit out company **MUST** be able to offer to help you transform your existing space or identify the new office space that will most suit your company's needs.

Do they:

- 1. Offer a full-service support system**
 - from Brief > Analysis > Design > Fit out > Post-launch care
- 2. Provide a workplace appraisal**
 - to identify how much space is needed and how it will work for your business today and into the future
- 3. Test fits**
 - these plans for your current office or short-listed new spaces will give you peace of mind that the space will physically work for your business
- 4. Give an indicative fit out cost**
 - to help you plan an accurate fit out budget. Knowing how much it will cost to fit out either your current space or a new one will help you decide to either stay or move
- 5. Create concept drawings and 3D renderings**
 - to enable you and your team to clearly see how the space will look
- 6. Undertake office surveys**
 - an office design and fit out company will help you with mechanical and electrical, environmental, asbestos and contamination surveys, to make sure you understand exactly what you are getting into if you decide to move
- 7. Provide post-launch care**
 - this is a maintenance programme to keep track of your company's needs as they change, incorporating the latest trends and staff contentment into your environment where necessary and appropriate.

8. Case Study Robert Half

About Robert Half

Based in more than 400 locations worldwide, Robert Half International is a global staffing firm that provides skilled professionals in fields such as accounting and finance, technology, legal, creative, marketing and administration.

Founded in 1948, Robert Half was an early pioneer of professional staffing services, providing the industries of the day with staff on a temporary or permanent basis. The company have appeared on Fortune Magazine's 'World's Most Admired Companies' list every single year since 1998 (most recently published in March 2017) and also appear on Ethisphere's 2013's list of the 'Worlds Most Ethical Companies'.

The Brief

Due to their upcoming lease expiry at their existing Reading office they had an active requirement to seek 3200 sq ft of alternative office space in the local area. After exploring their options they approached our Business Development Team and invited us to meet at their preferred destination at the 6th floor of Forbury Works in Reading to carry out a site survey. The Operations Manager at Robert Half wanted to create an environment that met the careful balance of an updated interpretation of the brand whilst not a complete departure from other UK based offices.

The brief includes: **create a commercial area** – enhanced customer journey for clients, **unite everyone** – central social hub, **include hot desks** – agile workers, **allow for growth** – expansion space, **represent brand** – up to date finishes, **attract and retain talent** – youthful, friendly, modern, energetic.



Reading



3,200 sq ft



7 weeks



The Solution

Having taken a detailed brief, Oaktree Interiors produced a layout and design that made excellent use of the limited floor plate, adding elements that were sympathetic to the newly refurbished and much sought after building; such as a curved wall offset from the building core, exposed services and a concrete effect floor.

Key was providing two distinct elements – a client facing area with interview rooms and high level meeting and presentation spaces with slab to slab partitioning that eliminates any noise travelling, and an open plan office for 26 staff that could be a home from home for local and international employees, using touchdown benches and soft meeting spaces to flex with the demands of the business. Beautiful items of joinery such as a curved seating area and walnut edged ceiling raft emphasise the quality and integrity that is inherent in the brand with the breakout and open plan areas being more fun and informal, including a darts board in the breakout area! The client told the Oaktree team that we 'nailed it'.

Contact

Oaktree Interiors

The specialists at Oaktree Interiors will create the perfect office space to inspire and motivate. We will really get 'under your skin' to get to know you, your employees and your organisation, to design an environment that totally suits your needs both today and into the future. We will manage the project with the least disruption, supporting you every step of the way.

So, if you've got a project in mind, we'd love to hear from you.
Call us on **0345 21 86955** or email us: **hello@oaktreeoffice.com**

We have offices in Berkshire, London, Hertfordshire and Kent and, of course, would be delighted to come and meet you.



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