

Morgan Lovell

OFFICE DESIGN CHECKLIST

7 STEPS TO MAKE YOUR OFFICE DESIGN
PROJECT AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE.

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HOW THIS CHECKLIST WILL HELP

There's so much to think about when it comes to office design, it can be hard to know where to start.

Don't worry. Help is at hand. This useful step-by-step checklist will:

- Help you create a more effective and productive office for your colleagues
- Make sure you don't forget anything essential (like legislation)
- Stop you making some common – and costly – mistakes

STEP 1: BEFORE THE DESIGN PROCESS BEGINS

Before you even think about a design for your new office, take a quick look at how your current space works.

Carry out a utilization study

How is your office space currently being used? How much time is being spent at desks and in meeting rooms? How often are the break-out areas and kitchens being used? Have some people got too much space whilst others have too little? Are some parts of the office used a lot whilst other areas are hardly used at all?

By studying how your colleagues use the office space, you will:

- Save money in the long run because you'll get the right amount of space you need
- Bust a few myths. Do you really need all those meeting rooms? Probably not

Staff survey

Create an online survey and ask your colleagues (not just the managers) what they think about the current office layout and design. What do they like? What do they think could be improved? Does it help them to work? Or does it hamper their productivity?

By carrying out a staff survey:

- Your new office design will be based on feedback and evidence and not on 'gut feel'
- Your colleagues will buy into the new office design as they feel they've had a say

Use an independent survey tool like the Leesman Index. Or create your own survey with SurveyMonkey.

STEP 2: CREATE A ROBUST DESIGN BRIEF

A well-written design brief is one of the most useful documents you can have for your project. It should include:

- Your vision for your new office
- Your aims, goals and business needs
- Your brand values (work with the marketing department on this)
- Sign-off from senior management

To create a solid design brief:

Carry out a workplace appraisal

Look at how your business works now and think about how the company might grow in the future. Will certain departments need more space in the coming years? Or less?

- Carry out management interviews to find out what each department needs
- Calculate growth projections to ensure you accommodate future growth
- Look at work patterns to ensure the new office accommodates your company's way of working

Get a technology brief

Work with the IT team and find out what technology the new office needs to fully support the way your colleagues work. Think about computers, printers, visitor services, audio visual equipment, comms rooms, wireless networks and audio or video conferencing facilities.

It's easier to get your technology needs in place right from the beginning. Rather than trying to accommodate extra computers once the office design has been completed.

Perform a storage audit

Find out how much storage you really need. Not enough storage space can frustrate your colleagues and cause clutter. And too much storage could be costly when you consider how much your office costs per square foot.

Survey your new building

Take a comprehensive look at your new building. If you feel something isn't working the way it should, now's the time to negotiate with the landlord.

As part of your survey:

- Check air-conditioning, ventilation, network cabling and lifts
- Ensure there's a Fire Exit plan in place
- Check works access: If your designer can't get proper access for the office interior construction, the space will cost more to fit out
- Compare fit out cost between buildings: No two buildings are the same and costs can vary considerably
- Find out which way the building faces so you can assess how the space heats up during the day
- Check raised access flooring to make sure you can space plan how you want
- Get accurate floor plans to ensure you're getting the square footage you're paying for

- Look at usable space and fit factor: Odd shaped buildings give you less usable space.
- So calculate how many people you can actually fit into the building
- Get your office designers to do a theoretical test fit to see if your business can comfortably fit into the space

DESIGNER TIP:
 Download Morgan Lovell's Choosing the Right Office Space Checklist for a comprehensive look at all the things you need to consider when evaluating office space for rent or purchase.

Carry out a 'green' office feasibility study

If your business has a CSR policy, an office design project is a great opportunity for you to strengthen your 'green' credentials by gaining a BREEAM, LEED or Ska rating.

A good sustainability audit should include:

- Energy audit
- Accreditation assessment: What's better for your building? BREEAM, LEED or Ska?
- Natural light and thermal audit
- Sub-metering proposals
- Return on investment calculations

STEP 3: CHOOSE THE RIGHT TEAM

Getting the right team onboard is the difference between having a project that runs super- smoothly and one that gives you sleepless nights.

Pick the right internal team

Choose a Project Champion (this could be you) who will co-ordinate everything internally and be the point of contact for the design team and management. Pick the most organised – and calm – person in the office. You'll need someone who can keep everything on track.

You also need to involve a senior decision maker. You'll want someone at the top who can make decisions quickly and won't delay the project.

Choose office designers you can trust

When it comes to choosing an office designer you'll need to ensure they have:

- Experience: Ask about their previous work and have them give you a tour of their clients' offices. Get a list of all their previous projects, including sizes, budget and sectors
- Specialisms: Office design is a specialist skill and not to be confused with other design disciplines. Be sure your designer specialises in offices. This will save you time and money down the road
- A good reputation: Has your design company got a good track record? Don't be afraid to ask for customer satisfaction scores, net promoter scores and a client list. These are standard. A reputable design company will be happy for you to speak to their clients and visit completed projects

- **Accreditations:** Make sure your designer has the right accreditations. If you're going for a 'green' office, look for BREEAM, LEED or Ska accredited designers
- **Skills:** Look for a design team that has a 3D visualizer and a CAD technician. The 3D visualizer will bring your project to life before the build. And your CAD technician will ensure the designs can be built to your exact specifications
- **Financial stability:** Make sure you choose a financially stable company that will be around to finish your project. Download Morgan Lovell's Financial Stability Checklist to see what to look out for

STEP 4: SET A BUDGET

This is the part that will be of most interest to your finance director: What's it going to cost?

Agree on a budget

- **Get a fixed estimate before your project starts:** A good office design and build company will give you a detailed estimate before the project begins and before any invoices come your way
- **Ask for different estimates for each space you're considering:** Design and fit out costs can vary greatly from building to building
- **Investigate enhanced capital allowances:** Investing in energy saving equipment for your office can be more tax efficient. Check out the Enhanced Capital Allowances scheme through the Carbon Trust

STEP 5: ESTABLISH 'LOOK AND FEEL'

This is the fun bit. Work with your designer to establish how your office interior is going to look. Minimal, glossy, classic, white, quirky, fun, serious, traditional? Or something completely different?

Design the interior

- **Have a brainstorming session:** Discuss the problems you have with your existing office and come up with some creative ideas for your new one
- **Browse library images online:** With literally thousands of photos available it's worth looking at other companies' office designs to get a feel for the style you're after
- **Visit other sites:** Visit other offices wherever possible to get a good understanding of what works (and what doesn't). A good office design company will take you to look at their previous projects
- **Concept drawings:** Get your designer to do some quick concept drawings to show how the office might look
- **Mood board:** Have your office design company pull together a collection of samples so you can touch and feel the materials that will go into your new office
- **Photo real visuals:** Get your designers to create life-like computer visuals (stills) of the important areas of your office. These will show you exactly what your new office will look like
- **Animated 3D walkthroughs:** Have your design team create animated 3D walkthroughs. They're perfect for illustrating a journey from one part of the office to another

STEP 6: SPACE PLAN

Deciding who sits where and which area will be used for what activity needs to be carefully thought through if you want to maximise your space.

Space plan your office layout

With space planning you'll need to think about:

- Accommodation standards: There are standard measurements for corridor widths, tea point sizes, copy areas, meeting rooms, receptions and the amount of square footage someone needs to work comfortably. You'll find an experienced office design company will often have its own space planning accommodation standards developed through years of experience

Legal requirements:

- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations
- Building Regulations – Part B Fire Safety Volume 2
- Part M Access to and use of Buildings
- Part E (Resistance to sound)
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order
- Disability Discrimination Act (now replaced by the Equality Act of 2010)
- Part L – Conservation of Fuel and Power
- IT and telecoms: For your space plan to work, it must take into consideration access to IT, telecoms and small power. For example, does your office have raised flooring to make running cables easier? If so, you'll have a lot more flexibility with your office layout. If not, you'll have to space plan your workstations with access to a wall or ceiling with power and data
- Flexibility and growth: A well considered space plan accommodates the changing needs of your business. For example, a flexible space that can be used for either break-out or workstations will save you time and money in the future if your business needs change
- Consider dilapidations: Most office leases require you to restore the office to the condition in which you found it. That means you'll most likely be ripping out everything you put in. So consider this from the outset and save yourself hassle in the future
- Get your landlord's approval: Any changes within your space need to be approved by your landlord. A design package needs to be put together showing all changes, construction activity, workman access and disruptions. Make sure you plan enough time for landlord approvals, as they always take longer than you would expect

STEP 7: SPEC YOUR OFFICE

What's going into your office? Now's the time to choose your carpets, furniture, storage, ceiling tiles, flooring, blinds, fabrics and paint.

Pick tried and tested products

- Ask your office designers to show you tried and tested products that stand up to the rigours of an office environment

DESIGNER TIP:

Avoid ordering items from southern Europe in August as Mediterranean countries tend to shut down during this time and deliveries of specialised items are often delayed.

Choose your furniture

Your colleagues will rate their desks and chairs as the most important items in the office. So work with your designer to get this right.

- Browse library images: Look at images online to help you choose stylish furniture that matches your office design
- Visit showrooms: Try out desks and chairs for yourself
- Run employee workshops: Hold a 'try before you buy' furniture workshop and let your colleagues test the furniture for themselves
- Get independent advice: Make sure your office design company doesn't have ties to a specific furniture manufacturer

Go 'green' with your office design

In addition to the latest legislative requirements, going 'green' within your office will reduce energy bills and support your company's CSR credentials. See Morgan Lovell's Sustainable Office Design Checklist for a more detailed breakdown.

- Go for an environmental rating: A BREEAM, LEED or Ska rating confirms your office was designed and built to an environmental standard. It helps you prove your company is committed to providing an environmentally friendly office
- Choose 'green' office fixtures, fittings and furniture: There are hundreds of options now available. Choose products that are recyclable or contain high recycled content
- Be energy efficient: There could be a whole checklist just for office energy efficiency.
- But it's worth noting that it should be considered as early in the design process as possible. True energy efficiency takes into account systems, people, fixtures, fittings, furniture, daylight and the fabric of the building. Let your designer know you think it's important

- Incorporate energy monitoring: Include wireless energy meters throughout your office. This will enable you to track energy use floor by floor or on major assets, such as air conditioning and copiers, or by building. Energy monitoring will help you spot problem areas straight away and reduce carbon emissions
- Reduce, reuse and recycle: If you incorporate the three 'Rs' into your office design, you'll save money. For instance, is there furniture that can be reused in your new office?
- And finally, have working technical drawings for the construction drawn up. This is the final stage in the design process

DESIGNER TIP:

Furniture orders can often go wrong on delivery day, especially when a furniture company thinks of your order as small (less than a hundred workstations). So order your furniture through an independent and reputable company who has considerable buying power and will make sure your furniture arrives on time and is assembled properly.

Follow these seven steps to ensure your office design project runs smoothly. Or get in touch with the office design team at Morgan Lovell for more advice.

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