

Small is Beautiful

Even with smaller personal work spaces for each employee, interior designers and office-furniture makers say good solutions aid employee retention, recruitment, productivity and creativity.

By **Crawford Frazer**



Herman Miller "Intersect"

As companies embrace technologies such as social networking and upgrade laptops with software like video conferencing, their employees are becoming as mobile as today's information. It's not only that massive offices are falling out of favor; dedicated workstations of all kinds are shrinking, and in some cases, disappearing altogether. As a result, modern office design is taking a decidedly public turn.

While a number of factors influence today's office space and design, including company culture and environmental concerns, the starting point is no surprise: money. But where that takes each company is less predictable, with some firms still favoring some private office spaces for higher-ups and others moving almost entirely to open office plans with lots of unassigned collaborative space.

"One thing we're seeing is collaborative areas that have almost a residential feel. The idea is to create a loose creative atmosphere to exchange ideas."

Tom DiRenzo
architecture and design director
for CRI Inc., one of California's largest
Herman Miller furniture dealerships



Herman Miller "My Studio"



Herman Miller "Resolve System"

The design of the personal workstation depends on what the company and employee need. In this station (above), the glass panels open and close so workers near to one another can open them to collaborate and close them for private work.



Steelcase "C:scape"

“The footprint of workstations is getting much smaller. Technology makes the transition easier because laptops are capable of so much more than in the past. You no longer need that corner piece dedicated to the bigger screen.”

Brian Wilson
workplace consultant for Steelcase Inc.,
an international workplace solutions firm



Steelcase “C:scape”



Steelcase “Media:scape”

The current business climate “is no longer just about the individual, but about socialization and laddering ideas,” said Wilson, who encourages his clients to look at a range of we spaces.

“The convergence of office space to a more collaborative experience [is all about better communication]. We’re dealing with a generation now that is used to instant interactions with people.”

Jim Kastner
co-owner of Unisource Solutions Inc., a statewide integrated facility
service and office-furniture provider that represents Haworth



Haworth “Patterns”



Haworth “Patterns”

The square footage of employees’ personal cubicles is sometimes half its traditional size. “We were looking at 65 to 80 square feet [per workstation]. Now we’re seeing 40 square feet.”

Jim Kastner