

# The Interior Architect's Guide

A modern office interior with people sitting on a curved sofa, a man sitting on a bench, and a yellow chair. The scene is bright and contemporary, with large windows in the background showing a cityscape. The furniture is a mix of neutral tones and bright yellow accents.

to Office Furniture,  
Interiors and Fittings in 2020

[image source]

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[image source]

Office furniture continues to inspire in 2020 with new designs focused on ergonomics and sustainability throughout the interior design shows of Stockholm, Milan and Clerkenwell in London.

Furniture and fittings for the workplace now inform many design themes thanks to their beautiful, natural forms designed around wellness and aesthetic interest.

Technology, unsurprisingly, continues to play a major part in office interiors – both how it

integrates into the workplace and also where it needs to be removed or invisible for those who need to disconnect.

In contrast, and as a remedy to increasingly disruptive technology, nature now fills an equally important role in terms of colour and material of office furniture, theme and décor.

This guide looks at the headlining office furniture and fittings of 2019, and the important points to consider when sourcing and partnering suppliers and fit out companies.

# Office Furniture: The Must-Haves and Nice-to-Haves



The message was clear throughout the furniture fairs and shows of 2019: an office designed without considering ergonomics, wellness, diversity and sustainability is not one that fits in 2020 and beyond.

It's about innovating for health and the environment, both of the office employee and the planet.

With that in mind, here are a few of the essential and coveted office furnishings and fittings that have emerged as key trends for interior architects in the coming months and years.



# Ergonomic Solutions

Office ergonomics now considers much more than the employee's workstation. The Interior Designer must now look to movement, lighting, air quality, sound and mind – the entire psychological and physical impact of the office environment. With that expanded brief comes the opportunity to truly innovate with office furnishings.

## ERGONOMIC Must-Haves

- Height-adjustable sit/stand desks, like the Actiu Mobility Desk, which has been based on extensive studies into occupational health.
- Self-adjustable office chairs, like the automatic, weight-sensitive Humanscale Smart Chair, which mould around the body.
- Acoustic panels, booths or pods for privacy and concentration.
- Flexible task-lighting, monitor arms, laptop stands and keyboard systems to allow each individual to achieve a comfortable, healthy position at their desk.

[image source]

## ERGONOMIC Wish-List

- Human-centric lighting to emulate daylight in line with the body's natural circadian rhythm, for improved health, performance and wellbeing.
- Balance boards and saddle stools (active seating) to encourage gentle movement and core stability while working, to minimise the effects of sedentary working.
- Air purification, to remove dust and toxic pollutants from the office environment.

# Office Desks



[image source]

In addition to the ergonomic features of office desks, office furniture must now be flexible to meet the needs of mobile workers and open office environments.

Multi-functional, modular and mobile work surfaces and seating that can be manoeuvred dependent on task is something that works equally well for the small office as it does for the large, agile office environments.



[image source]

## OFFICE DESK **Must-Haves**

- A choice of sit and stand desks throughout the workspace.
- Easily configurable work islands that make optimal use of space and can adapt to the needs of the people, like the simple and affordable designs from Sinetica and Edit Office.

## OFFICE DESK **Wish-List**

- Multi-purpose desks that can rotate to double-up as whiteboards, walls or screens, as seen in the innovative ranges from both Actui and Ergotron.
- Low-VOC, solvent free desks to minimise toxins in the office, such as the highly flexible system from Komo.

# Office Acoustics

If there's one topic that has surfaced more than any other in office furnishings throughout 2019, it's office acoustics. With countless studies showing the impact of noise pollution on the productivity and wellbeing of employees, acoustic solutions are now an essential aspect of office design.

At certain times or during specific tasks, employees need to be able to escape environmental sounds and disruptions, or relocate for privacy and focus, which can be difficult in the typical open office.

[image source]

[image source]

## OFFICE ACOUSTIC Must-Haves

- Acoustic dividers to zone work areas and shield from ambient sound, including desk screens and free-standing acoustic partitions.
- Sound absorbent panels to reduce low and high frequency waves, such as the artistic wall and ceiling panels from acoustic innovators, Hush.
- Acoustic floor tiles to reduce echo and the impact of airborne and surface noise pollution, like the sustainable office flooring from Interface.

## OFFICE ACOUSTIC Wish-List

- Phone booths and meeting pods for privacy while in meetings and on calls. The modular, moveable Smart Office Solutions from Mikomax are becoming a popular feature of coworking spaces and flexible office environments.
- Hooded or high-backed chairs, which screen off surrounding noise, such as those seen in Danish brand, Soft Line's new collection of comfortable and functional acoustic seating.



# Office Storage and Personal Space

With many employees now working in varying workspaces, including an increase in remote working and home working, personal storage has never been more important. Staff still want a place to call theirs – especially if their desk is shared by others.

Today's office storage furniture is multi-purpose in that it provides personal space and a sense of belonging and security, whilst keeping offices clutter-free. It can also be used and integrated to form dividers and work zones in an open office.

[image source]

## OFFICE STORAGE Must-Haves

- Secure lockers for individual employees to store their personal belongings.
- Flexible, configurable storage that can be adapted to move as employees do, such as the magnetic, modular storage solution from Bisley that can be twisted and clicked into multiple configurations easily.
- Under-desk storage to keep desks free of clutter – on castors if agile working is a requirement.

## OFFICE STORAGE Wish-List

- Noise dampening filing cabinets from Bisley, with soft bump stops and silent door closing.
- High-density filing and archiving systems that maximise floor space and light.



# Collaborative Furnishings and Meeting Furniture

Whilst there is still a place for the more traditional meeting room set-up, collaborative workspaces are now commonplace in coworking spaces and forward-thinking open office environments like Google, throughout the world.

Successful collaborations are achieved when employees are inspired by their surroundings, with furniture that allows group members to spark ideas and have fun while working. Whether these zones are pop-up in nature or permanent features of the office, it's important to choose the right furniture and fittings to facilitate that way of working.

## COLLABORATION

### Must-Haves

- Colourful, comfortable furniture – particularly seating – is important for creativity. Whilst these won't necessarily fit in the more traditional client-facing meeting spaces, these pieces should be introduced to more fluid break-out spaces where pop-up meetings and brainstorming occurs.
- Chairs with fixed arms for tablets and note-taking, to remove the need for desk barriers in presentations and idea sessions. The range from Edit Office is filled with pops of colour.
- Flexible, stackable chairs that maximise on space without compromising design, such as those seen in Luxy's collection.

## COLLABORATION

### Wish-List

- Collaboration booths that accommodate several people for pop-up discussions, without disrupting nearby workers. The Hive and Tryst from Connection provide straight or curved, acoustically-sound, banquette-style booths with built-in ergonomic benches, screens and desks.
- Sofa-desk systems, which provide multi-functional office furniture that encourage individual working and spontaneous group discussion within the same space. The Actui Longo is a modular system ideal for managerial offices that comprises desk, comfortable sofa and sound-absorbing panels.

# Biophilic Features

The health benefits of bringing nature into the office, a.k.a biophilic design, are well documented. With so many options covering all budgets now available to interior architects, there really is no reason why plants and natural features shouldn't feature in every new office refurbishment.

Biophilic design and greenery improves air quality, reduces fatigue, enhances mood, boosts productivity, increases creativity and provides a beautiful backdrop to today's tech-driven office environment.

## BIOPHILIC Must-Haves

- Office plants. Big or small, wall-mounted, on the floor or sat on desks (space allowing). There are different plants to suit different environments, with some hardier varieties specifically suited to darker office environments. Don't discount artificial plants too for their visual appeal.
- Suspended plants. When hung from the ceiling near skylights, plants and leaves can create shadow and dappled light similar to being outside, which enhances a sense of wellbeing.
- Natural light. A view outside to green space and sky can create the same psychological effect as indoor plants and walls.
- Natural colours, shapes and materials. Using natural materials that echo the outside rural world also contributes to wellbeing. Use woods, shades of green and brown, and shapes that emulate natural form such as trees and organic objects.

## BIOPHILIC Wish-List

- Soundscaping. The sound of water from water features and fountains has been used in interior design for many years and continues to offer a sense of calm – although now it has become much more sophisticated. Plantronic's Soundscaping technology, for example, floods the office with sounds of water whilst their waterfall screens act as room dividers.
- Living walls and moss walls are a Pinterest favourite. These striking interior features are easy to maintain and make a large green statement in the office.

# Front Office Reception

As every interior architect knows, front-of-house design can make or break first impressions to clients, suppliers and potential hires. It's the space where a designer can unleash their creative flair to reflect the company brand in numerous ways.

There are, of course, important considerations that must be made for the wellbeing of reception staff and the comfort of waiting visitors.

## RECEPTION

### Must-Haves

- Ergonomic reception desk. The wellbeing of reception staff can sometimes be forgotten but being stationed at a desk for many hours can impact on health. A longer, curved configuration as seen in Sinetica's collection is both stylish and functional, promoting movement and comfort at the same time.
- Accessibility. Reception areas need to be accessible to all. Adding risers to reception desks for wheelchair visibility is easily achieved with today's modular furniture from brands such as Edit Office.
- Comfortable seating is an obvious one, of course, but these pieces can make a statement on arrival. Flexibility is key, and many brands now offer highly configurable solutions that can be moved around easily to suit guest needs. Vold by Edit Office offer a playful range of soft furniture whilst the Actiu Badminton provides high-back privacy chairs for guests who want to speak on their phone.

## RECEPTION

### Wish-List

- As with the main workspaces, the reception area can offer a glimpse into what lies beyond and should encompass all the must-have and wish-list features from the offices. The front office is the perfect space to showcase living walls, water features, acoustic solutions and innovative ergonomics.





# Finding the Right Suppliers and Fit Out Partners

It has never been more important for the commercial interior architect to establish strong relationships with office suppliers and fit out companies. With so many options available, it helps to have a checklist when seeking out new office furniture partners:



[image source]



# 1. They are ahead of the curve in today's office design

Whilst traditional office design will continue to be favoured by some, the job of today's interior designers is to educate their clients on the benefits of new innovations in terms of ergonomics, design and flexibility. An office furniture supplier that understands this balance will be best placed to source and recommend products that tick all the boxes in terms of form, function and style – which will make your job much easier.

# 2. They understand the importance of workplace wellness

Look for an office furniture company with a range of furnishings and fittings that directly meet today's wellness requirements and standards. From standing desks to acoustic booths, it can save a great deal of time working with a single furniture supplier who is already well-stocked with office furnishings that promote workplace wellbeing.



### 3.

#### **They'll lighten your workload - not add to it**

An established office furniture supplier can deal with a lot of the details you don't have time to manage. They'll be able to work directly with the client on all loose furniture, providing furniture layouts within your plans and specifications. They should also be able to take the project to fabric and finish sign-off with minimum time required from you – if you need it. Equally if you want to be more involved in this process, an established fit out provider (furniture supplier) will be flexible and experienced in facilitating the various project stages with the full team, providing as much information and management as you require.

### 4.

#### **They have proven expertise and experience**

Any supplier you recommend and integrate into your office designs will need to be reliable. Your reputation is at stake unless they deliver and install to the standard you have set and agreed with your client. Look for suppliers with project histories, industry reputation, strong trade relationships and proven expertise.

# 5.

## They can save you time and increase your margins

Ideally, your office furniture supplier will handle negotiations, sourcing and fitting on your behalf, leaving you to focus on the concept and theme. Through their trade relationships, they'll be able to pass on cost benefits to you too.

# 6.

## You click

Most importantly, you need to click with your supplier. A good relationship will mean that your supplier gets your vision for the project. As experts in office furniture and fittings, they'll complement your natural instinct for design, and be able to offer insight and ideas you may not have considered, that can enhance your scheme further and avoid issues further down the line.







If you would like to learn more about the products and brands mentioned in this guide or need to speak to a reputable office furniture supplier who understands office ergonomics and workplace wellbeing in today's office, please get in touch with the M2 Office interiors team at [sales@m2.ie](mailto:sales@m2.ie) - we'd love to help.



[image source]