



How to Create the Perfect Working Environment in Your New Office

Choosing a new workplace is no easy decision. Uprooting your company is a little like moving house - how well do you know the area? What are the neighbours like? Will you be happy there?

It's a daunting decision, but it's the right one. A good workplace fosters positive company culture, helping your team to do their best work and facilitating higher levels of productivity. By deciding to move office, you've made an important decision to give your business, your team, and yourself the environment you need to support your company's future growth.

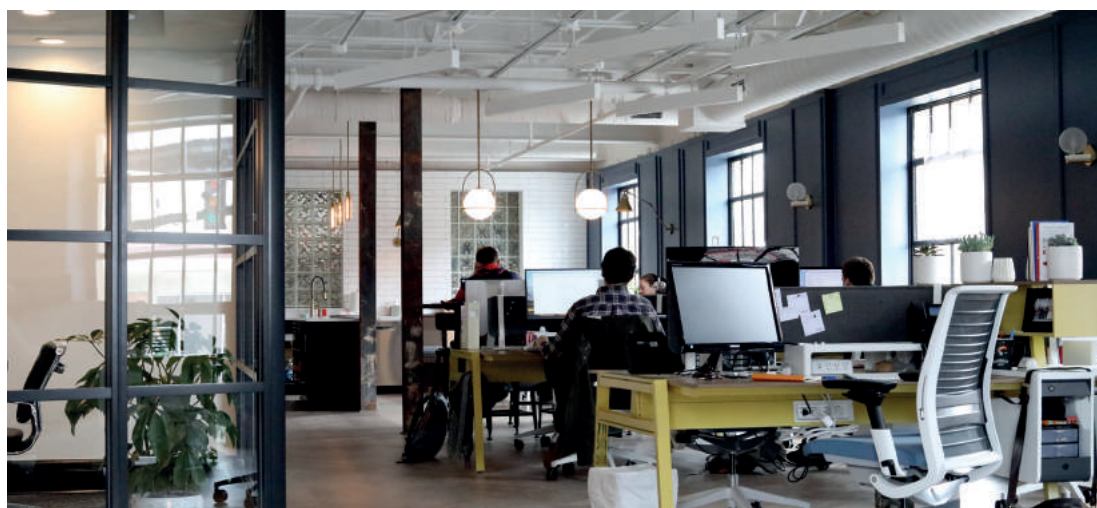
In this guide, serviced office experts UBCUK share their years of experience to help you feel at home in your new office, so you can hit the ground running and get to work with the minimum of fuss.

Let's get to work.



Agile Working: Maximise

Your Office Space



Advances in technology and wireless connectivity has created a huge shift in the way teams and individuals go about their working day. It has enabled greater flexibility at work, which means your workforce has more freedom to work their own way. Sales reps, for instance, can be more productive when they're out on the road by working online - such as replying to emails and approving shared documents - when waiting for meetings or simply sitting on the train.

This is a boon for your business and helps projects move along faster by reducing bottlenecks. But what happens to all those empty desks back at HQ?

One solution is to operate a hot-desk policy, where employees share workstations rather than being allocated a fixed desk. It's a great way to maximise your available office space and reduces the risk of paying for more workspace than you really need.

Tips for a Successful Hot Desk Policy

- **Manage change.** Communicate clearly with your team and set out your plans for implementing a hot desk policy. Give your staff time to get used to the idea and spell out the benefits; it's a cultural change and some people adapt faster than others. Offer benefits, such as the option to work from home, and maintain clear channels of communication to help everyone make the change.
- **Upgrade your technology.** To enable remote working, the right technology is essential. Invest in good quality hardware such as smartphones and laptops, and setup a secure private network that can be accessed remotely.
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** Online messaging channels and apps such as Skype and Slack are great for keeping in touch with remote workers, but you'll need to stay in touch on a face-to-face basis too. Schedule regular meetings when staff are in the office, or organise daily 'stand-ups' over teleconference or video calls.
- **Your people will make or break a successful agile working policy.** Their buy-in is essential, but they also need to play by the rules. Here's an overview of your employees' responsibilities to help your company move towards a flexible hot-desk model.



Employees should:

- Keep all desks **clean and tidy** and follow basic hygiene rules.
- Remove **personal items** and **company documents** from their working space once they have left the office for the day.
- Keep their personal items in their **bags or lockers**, instead of on desks.
- Eat lunch in the **kitchen/cafeteria** and not on desks.
- Use **meeting rooms** for important or confidential calls.
- Employees may have to make desks available to colleagues, if calls are expected to last long.

As a company, you will need to make certain provisions, including:

- **Enough desks** to accommodate all employees working at specific times.
- **Appropriate hardware** for all employees, such as laptops, to facilitate mobile working.
- **Workstations with shared amenities** - monitors, keyboards, mouse, and ergonomic furniture.
- **Secure lockers** in convenient areas so employees can store personal items.
- **Meeting rooms** and **common areas** that are easily accessible.
- Shared, **secure electronic storage systems** for company files and documents.
- Fast and effective **technical support** available at all times.

More information is available [in this guide](#), which also offers a basic policy template that you can tailor to your own company.

Depending on the size of your office, you may also consider creating “zones” for team members who need to sit close together when working on specific projects.



Do I Need Break-Out

Space?

The short answer is yes. The long answer is also yes. Why? Because whether or not you operate an agile workplace, employees need to take breaks during the day. Too much screen time is unhealthy; it can cause physical discomfort as well as mental fatigue and in severe cases, burnout.

By providing a communal, multifunctional break-out area, employees can take a proper break away from their workstation or use it to make calls or hold informal meetings.

Pino Catalano, Lead Designer at [Morgan Lovell](#), says: “Making good use of breakout spaces makes sound business sense. A room that used to be inhabited for a couple of hours a day can be turned into an efficient multi-use space, used throughout the day, combating rising space costs.”



How to Create a Break-Out Space

Multi-functional spaces should, depending on space, have different items of furniture for different purposes. Incorporate soft furnishings such as small armchairs and sofas, or if space is limited, add tall tables with bar stools. Round tables are best; they can seat more people and are much more collaborative.

Larger break-out spaces could incorporate 'zones', such as an informal coworking area containing a large table for informal meetings or group work; a kitchen zone with tables or bar stools; and a comfortable seating area with sofas and coffee tables.

The kitchen is the heart of the home, and your break-out space should include facilities for storing and preparing lunch, heating up food, and making drinks throughout the day.

Kitchen Facilities:

A large fridge for food storage

Kettle and microwave

Coffee machine

Cupboards or wall units

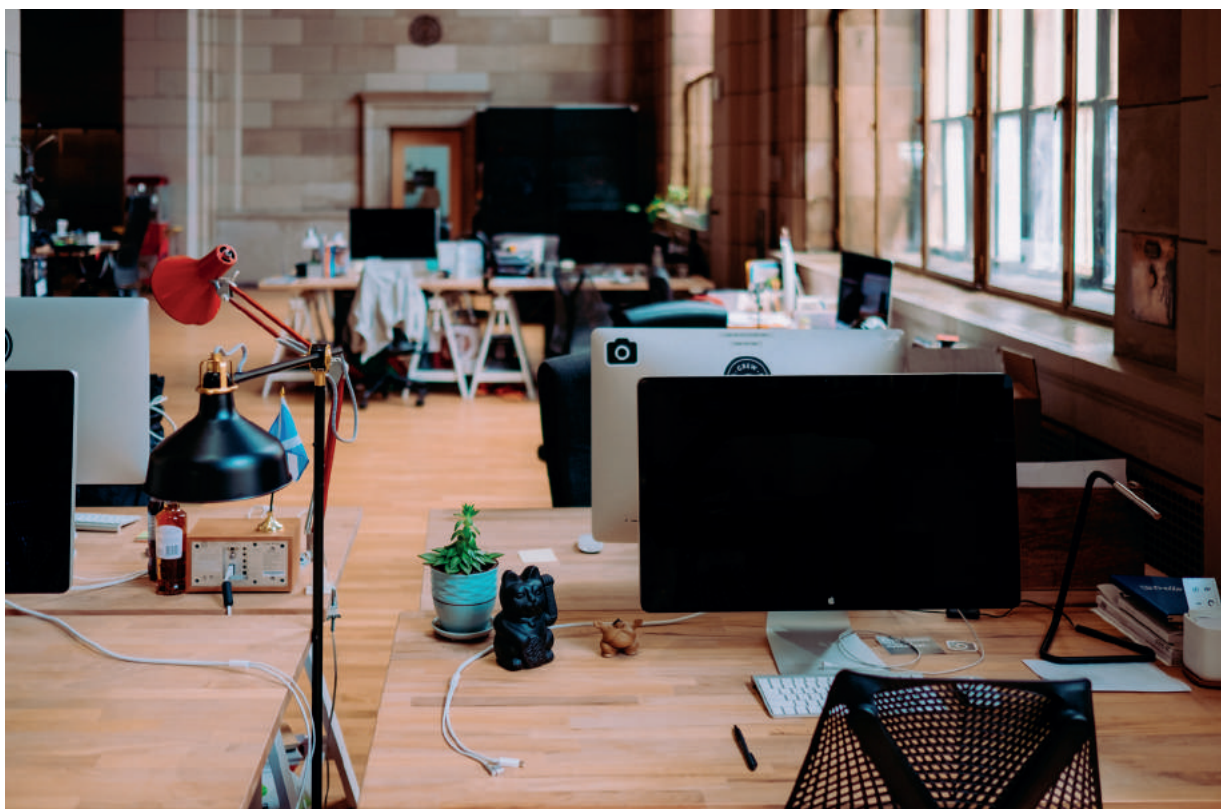
Ample worktop space

Bins for general waste as well as recycling bins for packaging

A sink for washing up with draining board and towels

Mugs and glasses, cutlery, plates and bowls

Five Steps to a Beautifully Designed Workspace



Just like moving into a new home, your new office is a blank canvas just waiting to be transformed into a great working environment.

Employees face a lot of cognitive demands in the workplace, so your focus should be on creating an inspirational workspace that helps them feel relaxed yet motivated. We recommend getting their input along the way, as their ideas and feedback could be vital to the finished product.

Step One:

A Blank Canvas

This is your chance to get creative. When tasked with redesigning or brightening up your office, the best place to start is your company brand. How do you want to incorporate your brand into your workspace?

For design company Coastal Creative, their advice is to ‘live’ what you’re selling. “When you design your company values into your office space, you are making a conscious decision to demonstrate brand integrity and adherence to company principles,” says managing director Joe Robinson. “Don’t let poor design detract from what makes your company unique.”

Your office space is a representation of your core values, and you can weave them through your choice of design. For instance, if environmentalism and sustainability are central to your company mission, incorporate reused and recycled materials into the design wherever possible.

While you’re at it, there’s no need to plaster your logo across the walls. It’s better to tastefully reinforce your brand instead of screaming it. You could deconstruct your logo into shapes and colours. Or let your products speak for themselves by displaying prints that showcase your work.

Step Two:

Colours

When choosing a colour for your workspace, whether or not you decide to incorporate your branding into your office design, be aware of the impact that colour can have on your employees.

Colour is such a simple thing, yet it can have profound effects on your team. After all, they're sitting in the office for 8+ hours per day. Office design experts, [K2](#), have found that certain colours can positively contribute to happiness, productivity, and even physical health in the workplace.

Colour can stimulate the senses in all sorts of ways -- both positive and negative -- so make your choice carefully. Here are some general guidelines from K2 on colour combinations in the office:



- **Blue** is a commonly used workplace colour as it can have a **positive impact** on productivity, and is frequently used in open plan work spaces.
- **Yellow** is viewed as an optimistic colour and can inspire **increased levels of creativity**. It can be found in a lot of creative workspace, particularly in areas designed for collaboration.
- **Red** is an interesting choice and can foster **increased efficiency**, but it shouldn't be used in vast spaces. It is more commonly seen in break out spaces and smaller meeting rooms.
- **Green** can have a calming impact. It is less harsh on the eyes, and as such it can help **reduce fatigue** during long days at work.
- **White** can make certain **spaces look larger** but use it sparingly, otherwise it can make the space look bleak and sterile.

Tones and textures are just as important as the colour itself. If you are erring on the side of natural or earthy tones in the workspace, you can **inject colour** and **personality** through lighting, furniture, desk surfaces and wall art. You can also add colour and texture through **soft furnishings**, if space allows.

Plants are a wonderful way to **brighten up** a workspace and 'bring the outside in'. Plus, they have therapeutic benefits and can even help to improve the air quality in your workspace.

Spider plants are great for high shelves and tall cupboards; their fronds hang over the edges and they thrive in partial sunlight or shade, which makes maintenance easy. Another popular choice is the lush and **leafy philodendron**, which is low maintenance and makes a **beautiful filler** for empty corners.



Step Three:

Furniture & Fittings

Serviced offices and coworking spaces provide furniture and office fittings as standard. Most office companies provide ergonomically designed chairs, or you can bring in your own furniture if you prefer. But what does it all mean? What comprises office fixtures and fittings? What is ergonomic furniture? And where do you store your files and records?

Fixtures and Fittings Defined

Generally speaking, 'fixtures' are items that are fixed to the walls or floor, such as electric sockets, radiators and kitchen units. 'Fittings' are free standing items like curtains, wall art, lamps, and free-standing fridges or microwaves.

Furniture

In a serviced office, your office furniture includes desks, chairs and some storage units. You may wish to bring in additional furniture such as tables, book shelves and soft furnishings.

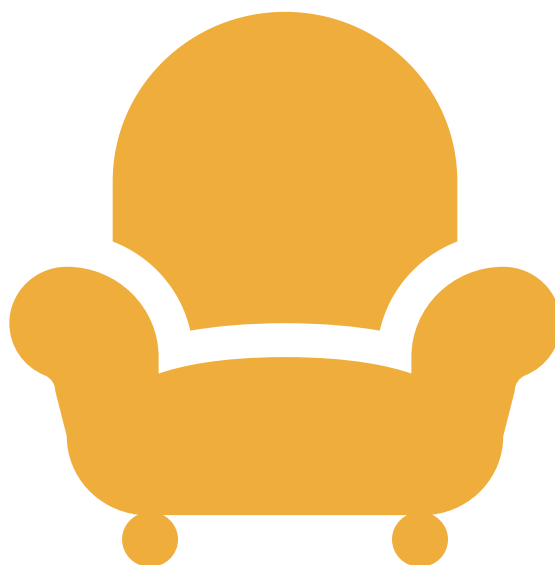
Serviced offices will generally provide storage with each workstation -- usually a drawer pedestal on wheels that sits under the desk -- but you may need to purchase additional storage units yourself. For design consistency and ease, we recommend ordering additional items through your office provider -- but first ask if there are any concessions available (for instance, UBC partners with Lyreco to offer discounts on furniture and office items).

Ergonomic Furniture

Ergonomics is the practice of designing products and environments with human anatomy and behaviour in mind. In the case of furniture, ergonomic office chairs are designed to accommodate long periods of sitting, but the best chairs aren't just comfortable and contoured to the shape of the human body -- they can also be adjusted to suit different seating positions.

Ergonomics is also about performance and unity between environment, task and equipment. As ergonomic experts [Posturite](#) explains: "An upright dining chair, for example, may not be considered ergonomic, but in the right environment, such as a rarely-used dining room, it fulfils its role perfectly. In an office environment in which people need to be seated for extended periods of time, the same type of chair could cause problems with its lack of lumbar support and the rigid, static angle."

Other examples of ergonomic furniture include adjustable height sit-stand desks, which enable office users to choose whether to sit or stand throughout the day and therefore generate more movement into otherwise sedentary workplace routines.



Office Storage

Most workstations include a desk, chair, and under-desk storage. You'll probably need additional storage for company files and records, and other items such as stationery.

Cabinets vary in height and often provide drawers with labelled sections. The filing cabinet is a long-standing office favourite

- but you needn't opt for the clunky, steel filing cabinets of old. Choose a modern version that matches your office furniture, or opt for a splash of colour to brighten up a dull corner.

Pedestals are often on wheels and can fit under desks or tables,

- which saves space and provides easy access for individual employees. They usually provide stationery drawers, a pen tray and a filing cabinet.

Some offices provide **lockable storage**, particularly shared

- coworking spaces, which can be used for safe-keeping of personal items.

Good storage isn't just a filing system. It reduces desk clutter, which keeps your workspace looking tidy and also helps avoid friction between office workers, particularly those sharing workstations. If you have ever shared a desk with a messy colleague, you'll understand the need for good storage.

In fact, hot-desking is becoming increasingly common and acts as a way for companies to save office space (and money) by taking less space than the number of people they employ, and balancing desk allocation based on who is in the office on any given day. This works best with companies that have a number of sales staff who are regularly out on the road, and those that offer flexible working benefits or the option to work remotely.

Step Four: Lighting

& Natural Light

Whilst office lighting is usually seen as a 'fixture', you can complement your lighting situation in a number of ways. Why bother? Because lighting is integral to a happy, healthy working environment; dark or dim working areas cause eye strain, fatigue and stress, while over-bright spaces can cause screen glare and headaches.

Natural light is equally important. In fact, a poll of 1,614 employees by HR advisory firm Future Workplace found that access to natural light and views of the outdoors are the top most valued attributes of the workplace environment.



Here are some best practice tips for making the most of available light in the workplace:

- **Maximise daylight:** Position your furniture so as **not to block natural light**, whether it comes through a window or glass partitioning.
- Make use of **adjustable blinds** to avoid excessive sunlight streaming in.

- **Task lighting:** Desk lamps can help with concentrated tasks, and the more adjustable the better. **LED bulbs** are usually best as they can be dimmed or brightened, and they last longer too -- which saves money and reduces your impact on the environment.

If you find yourself working long hours, particularly during the winter months when daylight is scarce, **go outside for a break**

- during the day. Go for a walk, stroll to the shops or take your calls outside. Humans gain Vitamin D from sunlight, which is essential for healthy minds and bodies.
- Choice of decor plays a role too. **Maximise your office light** by using light, matte colours and paint finishes on walls to reduce spot glare, which also reduces dark shadows and contrast.

Step Five:

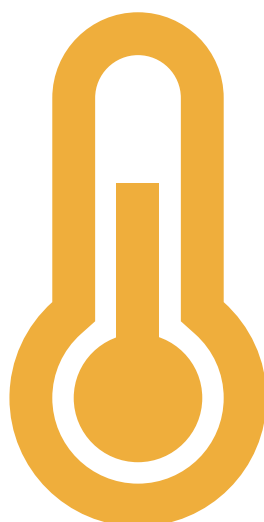
Temperature

Too hot? Too cold? Trust us, you'll never get the temperature just right for everyone. Different people have different preferences and while some feel the cold easily, others prefer chilly climates rather than warm stuffy rooms.

A recent study commissioned by [Andrews-Sykes](#), which questioned 2,000 UK office workers about their current working environment, found that around one quarter had taken up climate issues with management staff, whilst only 24% of people were comfortable with office temperatures.

The best office temperature for optimum productivity is around 22 degrees Celcius. That's according to a study performed in 2006 by Helsinki University of Technology and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory.

However, there's no real happy medium so in lieu of the perfect temperature, keep a stock of desk fans for warmer months and ask employees to wear layered clothing with sensible shoes during cooler weather. You may even consider providing small, mobile radiators for those who really feel the chill.





UBCUK has been providing service-led workspaces to business professionals since 2007. From flexible serviced offices with all the furnishings, to managed offices with bespoke design and branding, it's our mission to provide great working environments that optimise your productivity and support your business growth.

[Find out more at \[ubcuk.com\]\(https://www.ubcuk.com\).](https://www.ubcuk.com)