NEIGHBORHOOD

The Ultimate Guide to Office Renovation

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Opting for an office renovation is a big decision, and it's one that business owners should consider seriously before they take action. Office renovations are significant undertakings that require careful planning, orchestration, and execution. Yet, when done successfully, they can offer a company a myriad of benefits. Here, we'll examine all aspects of a renovation including:

- How to determine if a renovation is necessary
- How to decide the scale of a renovation
- How to manage the schedule of a renovation
- How to keep a renovation under budget
- How a business will improve because of a renovation.

Project Spotlight: Burgess-Norton Manufacturing

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Signs a Business Needs a Renovation

There's a difference between workspaces that require a few minor updates and those that need a top-to-bottom office renovation. Understanding that difference could save a business thousands of dollars and untold amounts of stress. Below, we'll share four signs that will let business owners know it's time to consider a renovation.

Poor Space Utilization

Poor space utilization is perhaps the most common sign that it's time for an office renovation. Poor space utilization does not necessarily mean that employees are "crammed in like sardines." Rather, it means that space is not being effectively used — on both a functional and aesthetic level. Poor space utilization can occur in a number of ways. It could be that small offices are not optimized for employee collaboration. Or perhaps a business's layout isn't conducive to quality customer service.
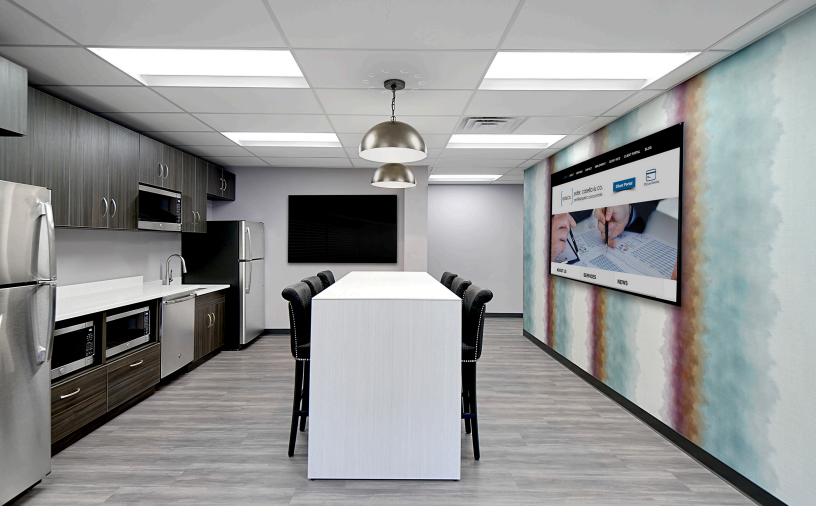
Outdated Appearance

How an office looks shouldn't be a secondary consideration for business owners. It's a primary function because it directly and indirectly influences many aspects of a business's viability, from employee morale to customer retention. A worn-down office sends a bad message to employees, clients, and visitors. A company's office is, ideally, a physical manifestation of its culture and ideals. If it's anything less than that, a company has a problem.

Unneeded Energy Consumption

Many offices bleed money each month because of inefficient lighting and HVAC systems. An office renovation can help alleviate operating costs. Depending on the specific details, business owners may even find that an office renovation pays for itself by helping them save on utility and energy bills. An eco-friendly office renovation may prove the perfect solution for businesses that value sustainability.

Recruitment & Retention Struggles

Office design can have a big effect on an employee's decision to stay at a company or leave it for new pastures. Modern professionals spend a lot of time in the office, and if they don't feel comfortable on a base level, they're unlikely to stay for longer than strictly necessary. Low retention rates could be a sign that your office design is letting you down — and driving your best team members out the door.

Renovation vs Redesign

To the untrained professional, "renovation" and "redesign" might seem like interchangeable phrases. However, there's actually a significant difference between the two. Below, we highlight some tips that will help business owners clarify whether an office renovation or an office redesign is the right play for their situation:

Reasons to Opt for an Office Renovation

- Wanting to make significant changes to work areas and/or specific rooms, such as meeting rooms, conference rooms, etc.

- If a business faces no obstacles acquiring all required permits, and there are no zoning laws that would derail or delay the process, a renovation may be more beneficial than a redesign.

- A suitably-sized budget. Full-scale office renovations will generally cost more than a redesign, reorganization, or office-space optimization.
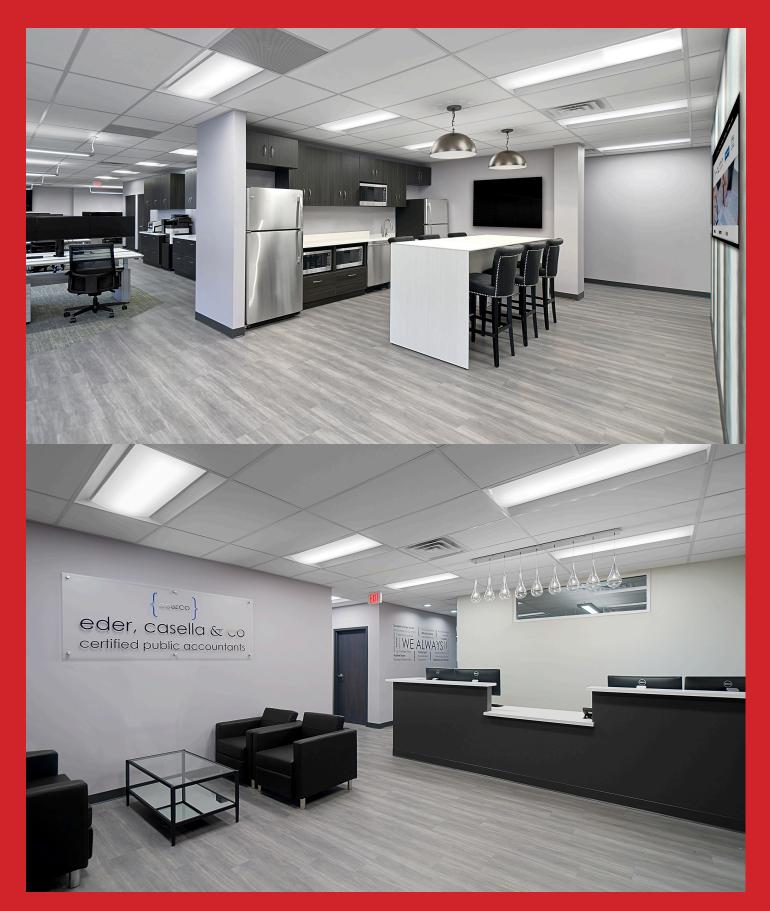
Reasons to Opt for an Office Redesign

- A business doesn't want to change structural aspects of their business, but would rather focus on smaller aspects such as wall coverings, furniture, flooring, lighting, etc.
- A business wants to make an immediate, transformative impact on the office environment.
- A business has a relatively smaller budget to work with (compared to one that would be sufficient for a larger office renovation).

Other Important Considerations

Some businesses mistakenly believe that an office renovation requires extensive downtime or causes lasting disruption to employees or customers. However, this is not necessarily the case. Provided that the work is carefully planned (i.e. by expert interior specialists), it is certainly possible to carry out an office renovation with minimal disruption. This also applies to an office redesign, which can be scheduled to take place during off-hours, weekends, etc. Or if work must be scheduled during business hours, it can be executed in stages.

In the next section, we'll explain how businesses can effectively schedule office renovations so as not to disturb normal productivity.

Project Spotlight: Eder, Casella & Company

Scheduling an Office Renovation

In business, timing is everything. When a business chooses to schedule an office renovation can have a big influence on how employees perceive it and how positive the changes prove to be.

Therefore, scheduling a renovation must be done carefully and meticulously. Only after researching options to identify all relevant factors will business owners be able to determine the optimal time to schedule an office renovation.

With this in mind, here are some of the factors that business owners need to monitor and prioritize in the office renovation process.

- Planning and design
- Budget frameworks and limits
- Material lead times
- Building permit requirements
- Engineering issues
- Lease stipulations
- Building code standards
- Weather considerations
- Potential tenant disruptions

And then of course, there are potential staff or customer service disruptions that must be taken into consideration. For example, if customer traffic in an office spikes in the spring, then all else being equal, it would be better to schedule an office renovation for the summer or fall. In addition, business owners may consider when they're best able to accommodate their staff in other facilities while an office renovation occurs.

Ultimately, scheduling an office renovation must be based on a realistic and robust schedule; that time frame has to be supported by contingency plans and ready-to-implement workarounds if issues arise, like severe weather for example.

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How to Keep an Office Renovation on Budget

For many business owners, budgetary concerns are top of mind when implementing an office renovation. Fortunately, there are ways professionals can ensure a renovation goes smoothly and, crucially, doesn't go over budget.

Work Backwards

As with any big task, keeping a goal in mind at all times will help a team to focus. Plus, by tracking progress against an ultimate goal, business owners can create a realistic time frame for project completion.

Run a Systems Check

Before a design professional can begin to address issues like the aesthetics, layout, and furniture in an office, they must first examine the most pressing and basic issues in a workspace. A few of these systems include (but aren't limited to) electrical, lighting, HVAC, networking, and security. Do some homework and identify what steps are needed to take before and during the office renovation. This will give professionals a more accurate idea of the costs associated with a renovation.
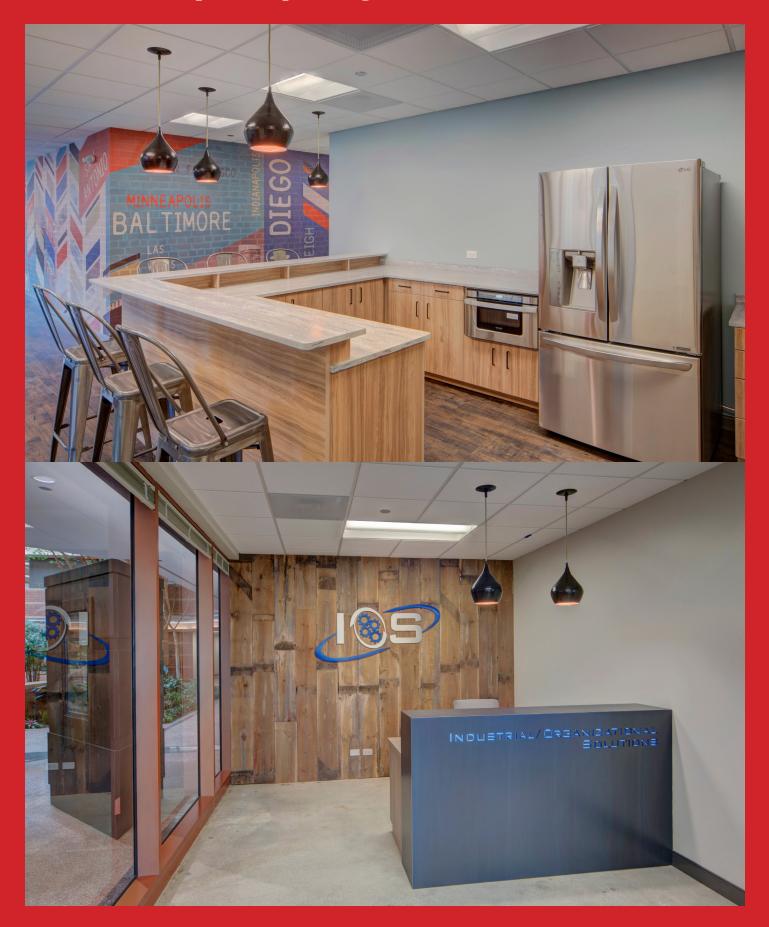
Be Realistic

Time is perhaps the biggest factor that causes office renovations to go over budget. Savvy business owners should perform due diligence on their building and set a reasonable schedule for renovations to be completed. Forcing professionals to work overtime to complete a job will inevitably lead to higher costs and will often contribute to mistakes in the process, which in turn will also serve to increase expenses.

Partner with a Professional

A dedicated office design professional can prove invaluable to a business seeking an office redesign. In a perfect world, a design pro (or design team) should be able to do all of the following:

- Manage a project from initial design through to completion — and have the experience of managing similar projects in the past.

- Deliver a full range of services, including design-build, architectural design, and construction management.

- Have a design center with a vast range of office furnishings and contract furniture.

- Enable measurable cost savings by leveraging design knowledge and value engineering process.

- Have in-depth experience with the building permit process and working with city inspectors.

- Have a full team of licensed contractors available for immediate mobilization.

- Will take care of the planning, systems check, and scheduling described above.

Avoiding Common Office Renovation Mistakes

To err is human, but that doesn't mean business owners need to accept that certain mistakes will be made during the renovation process. In this section, we'll analyze a few common missteps that often plague office renovations and explain how you can avoid them.

Going the DIY Route

DIY in the context of office renovations doesn't mean that CEOs and other team members trade in their suits for overalls and tool belt. Rather, it means that some businesses believe that it's most cost-effective to hire various professionals (project manager, architect, trades, general contractors, etc,) and manage their work internally.

Unfortunately, while this may look feasible on paper, the reality is typically quite different. Within days of launch milestones aren't achieved, deadlines may be missed, and confusion, conflict, and chaos can follow. Experience counts for a lot in regard to managing a renovation successfully.

Not Leveraging All Cost-Saving Opportunities

There are many ways to control renovation costs and to keep them within a business's prescribed budget. These include exploiting in-depth design knowledge to maximize space utilization, as well as applying value engineering tools and techniques to see how minor adjustments can yield significant cost reductions.

Businesses that do not have the expertise/in-house resources to leverage these cost saving opportunities — or that do not work with an interior solutions specialist who can provide it — will invariably pay much more than they should. This is true even if their project comes in "on budget."

Lacking a Robust PIM System

A robust PIM (project integration management) system is essential for an office renovation project of any size — including, and sometimes especially — simple jobs that often turn out to be more complex than first imagined. Anyone who has experienced a home renovation project that went sideways knows how exasperating and costly this can become.

Again, we can't stress enough the importance of partnering with an experienced design firm. Seasoned office design veterans ensure that plans are developed, implemented, executed, controlled, and closed effectively.

Benefits of an Office Renovation

So far, we've covered many of the technical aspects of pulling off a successful renovation. Here, we'll take a look at a few of the significant benefits a business can expect to enjoy in the wake of an effective renovation.

Improved Efficiency

Many business suffer from office designs that don't inspire peak performance from their staff. A study by Harvard Business Review revealed that employees at one company wasted more than 10 minutes a day just searching for adequate meeting spaces! The same study also found businesses that eliminated cubicles in favor of a more open, collaborative workspace reduced email volume by 50 percent, and yet their employees were more productive and enjoyed better communication.

Lower Utility and Energy Bills

As we touched on above, office renovations can help businesses lower utility and lighting bills. For instance, by reconfiguring an office with greater capabilities for natural light, companies can save money on their electric output. Additionally, open offices also enhance airflow which makes heating and cooling a space much simpler.

Enhanced Collaboration and Interaction

Most traditional workspaces function to keep employees and teams apart, which can be attributed to disengagement and miscommunication. An office renovation that creates more open, shared workspaces (while still offering private meeting areas for groups and teams that need it) can enhance collaboration and interaction, while also promoting cohesion, teamwork, and overall office efficiency. Alternatively, workspaces that don't offer employees the privacy requisite for their jobs can also damage performance.

Conclusion

At Key Interiors, we've helped our clients complete more than 300 successful renovation and redesign projects over the years. Our team members are experienced and savvy, and we know how to deliver positive results for our clients. So while an office renovation might seem like a daunting task at first, know that partnering with the right professional can alleviate many of the risks and struggles associated with the process.

Contact us here for more information or to get started on your next office renovation project today!

About Key Interiors

DESIGN | BUILD | FURNISH

Established in 1978, Key Interiors is a complete interior resource assisting clients with any facility re-design, expansion or relocation in mind. Located in Chicago, our office design firm offers a comprehensive range of services including design-build, architectural design, construction management plus a design center with over 300 lines of office furnishings & contract furniture.

We are project management specialists capable of managing your project from initial office design to completion. Our team of forward thinking collaborative partners have over 30 years of experience and a track record of 300+ successfully completed office renovation projects including corporate offices, dental offices, healthcare waiting rooms, car dealerships and more!

We know profitable office environments today are fast paced! The right workplace can foster excellent work-group collaboration, increased productivity and streamlined processes.

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