

Creating Discomfort for Everyone



That environment affects the business environment is undeniable. For years restaurant designers have understood that if you have bright primary colors such as the typical fast food establishment, people will eat and run. On the other hand, if

you want patrons to linger over glasses of wine, the colors are muted, the lights low.

Not every business takes advantage of creating an environment to maximize performance and/or create comfort for clients and customers.

As a young mechanical engineer I interviewed with a jet engine design company in Florida that had row after row of engineers sitting in a fluorescent lit room hovering over drafting boards. The room was so devoid of life that it literally sucked the energy from me as I walked between the sea of tables and was listlessly greeted by engineers who long ago lost anything resembling passion about their work.

On the other hand, when I worked with a design team at the E.I. duPont company, the environment was bright, efficient but alive with plants, color, technology and energized creative people.

One solution many companies are using is the Chinese art of Feng Shui. This practice focuses on the ability to recognize the importance of our environment and make it work for us as individuals.

While many westerners scoff at the practice of Feng Shui, this ancient art is increasingly used by businesses to increase productivity and prosperity.

More traditional practitioners such as architects and designers are focusing on designs that essentially accomplish the goals of Feng Shui.

Competition for good employees and rapid turnover leads forward thinking companies to take a close look at the retention tool of creating the environments that workers want to inhabit.

The tendency for workers to “cocoon” in their homes with entertainment centers is paralleled in the workplace as workers interact with their workstation and/or computer in their own personal environment while communicating to coworkers and clients by email.

In the new milenium, there is a real interest in creating outer environments that are pleasant, comfortable, safe and organized.

The question arises, what is pleasant, comfortable, safe and organized? After spending many years as an engineer as well as an executive in technical firms, I

appreciate that different environments are typical for different types of businesses. A good question for businesses to think about is – who works here and who is the customer for this business?

I have long thought that if I could find a place to get my car serviced that had good coffee, a clean, carpeted waiting room with no smoking, grease or offensive calendars, that business would have a customer for life. I suspect there are many people like myself who would appreciate an environment that works more for the individual consumer.

Why does a lube/oil place think that the customer wants to sit waiting in an environment that resembles a garage? Perhaps they haven’t thought about how their customer base has changed over the years.

The excellent companies are making sure they are considering the environments they are creating and whether they are safe and comfortable for the individuals who work and the customers who are served there. Some basics that any firm can consider about their own workspace are:

1. The colors used in the space. Do they promote mental agility, passion, stability, emotional balance?
2. The arrangement of furniture – is it conducive to welcoming or does it serve as a barrier?
3. What kinds of artwork is displayed and what does it convey to those who see it?
4. Is the environment neat and organized?
5. What objects are displayed and what do they say about the company?
6. Are the closets uncluttered?
7. Does your office invite others?
8. Does it make people want to return?
9. How is your client/customer impacted by your professional environment?

Many of my clients do not have time or expertise to work with their physical environment. Feng Shui professionals and more information can be found at www.ThoseFengShuiGuys.com.

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