

Must-Add Ingredient For Return To The Workplace: Light



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The Manhattan office of Ducera Partners, designed by Ted Moudis Associates, emphasizes the ... [\[+\]](#) GARRETT ROWLAND

If there's a light at the end of the tunnel for hard-pressed office building owners hoping to see workers return to workplaces, it may be the effective use of natural light.

Several years ago, a survey of 1,614 North American employees by human resources advisory firm Future Workplace found availability of natural light and outdoor views respondents' most desired workplace attribute. It outpolled such perks as on-site dining rooms, fitness facilities and high-end benefits like on-site child care.

Not only was natural light highly desired, but absence of light and dearth of outdoor views were associated with less appealing employee experiences. More than a third of respondents did not feel they received enough natural light in their offices. The lack of light via a window resulted in 47% of respondents feeling tired or very tired, and 43% reporting a bleak or forlorn feeling resulting from lack of natural light.

"Access to daylight throughout the day for all workers is critical to achieving a productive and happier workforce and is a fundamental design principle we apply to all of our work," says Anne Gibson, national practice leader with NELSON Worldwide.

“In addition to the many biological benefits of natural light like boosting vitamin D — which strengthens the immune system — and the fact that it triggers the release of serotonin, access to natural light throughout the day actually helps us sleep better.

“Many studies have shown that increased exposure to natural light throughout the day supports our natural circadian rhythms, leading to better and longer sleep, in some cases as much as 45 minutes longer.”

Design imperatives

Growing evidence of a link between natural light and employee happiness is triggering a larger number of requests for designers to maximize natural light and outside views.

Investment banking firm Ducera Partners enlisted workplace designer Ted Moudis Associates to optimize 360-degree views from its space. Maximizing height and volume of the space by means of a jade-tinted exposed ceiling, the team also featured black linear lights as a subtle reference to Ducera’s geometric logo and brand identity.

The design team incorporated tinted glass walls throughout the conference center to reflect dramatic city views from the conference rooms. It also implemented a modern and mirrored interior design concept, in keeping with Ducera’s instructions to sculpt an inviting, front-of-house zone for clients and a bright, open workspace for staff.

When designing its new workplace design lab in Salt Lake City, MHTN Architects made natural light a priority. Its design deliberately reduces single-user enclosed offices that limit light sharing. As a result, light reaches an array of collaborative and private spaces across the office, exposing employees to the natural cycles of light throughout the day.

Three rooms used for work that is performed best with no or low natural light feature limited access to natural light. Using its own spaces as an experimental design lab sparks creativity for MHTN, leading to design innovation for its clients.

Nature friendly

International design firm Pininfarina recently introduced a two-tower corporate office building design titled 'Torre Designo' for Mexico City-based real estate investment and management entity Grupo Bosque Real. Offering views of the capitol, the property is surrounded by the landscape's natural frondescence. Lush soaring gardens and a rooftop terrace distinguish the design from typical office buildings, while also giving tenants and visitors a chance to savor a tranquil minute of reflection and respite.

"Our team was very focused on enhancing the quality of life for those who use the office building," says Jairo Vives, lead architect of Pininfarina of America.

"This resulted in the incorporation of various green spaces, as well as distinct moments where views of Bosque Real can be celebrated. We also paid special attention to the selection of nature-friendly materials."