



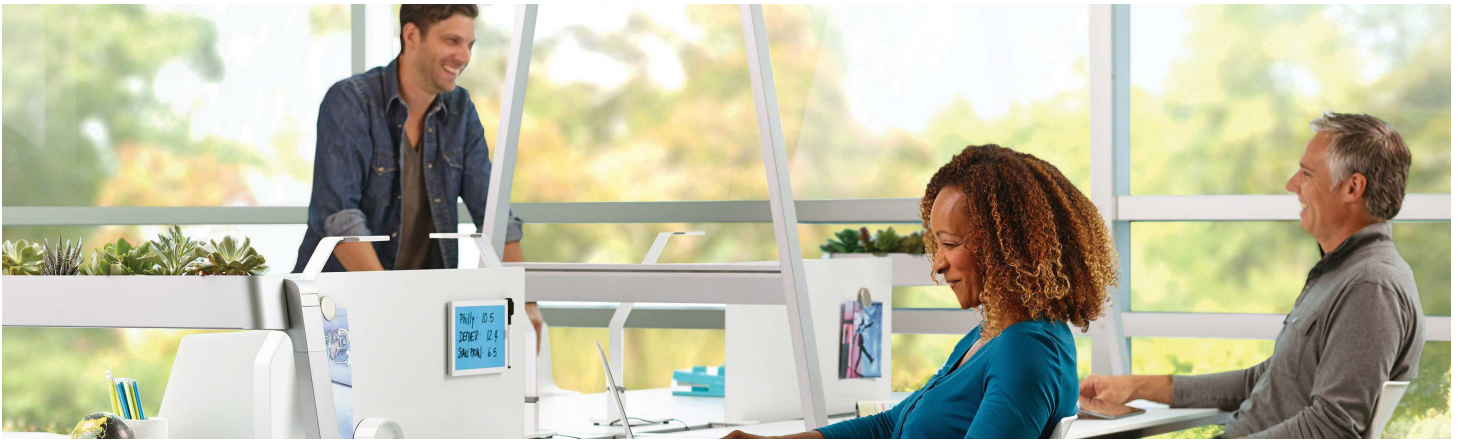
HOW TO CHOOSE: COLLABORATIVE OFFICE FURNITURE

Starting a conversation is what collaborative furnishings are all about. This information will be helpful as you begin to rethink your office design and create a plan that initiates dialog and teamwork within your office.

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Changes in workplace design and innovation are often driven by technology and the generation levels within the workforce. For the first time in history, there are five generations at work at the same time:

- **Generation I**, the traditionalist
- **Baby Boomer**, the delegant
- **Gen X**, the reliable
- **Gen Y** (Millennial), the socially conscious
- **Gen Z**, the digital nomad

At the onset of the workday, collaborative design must speak to the 5G workforce and how they work by constantly reinventing itself. It's a moving target. It will not be the same 3 months from now, let alone a year. So planning ahead is the key to successful staff recruitment and retention.

Finding Common Ground

Finding commonality for each of these generations hinges upon these five cornerstones:

Focus on similarities, rather than differences about each generation. Avoid the tendency to accept as fact the stereotypes attached to each generation in terms of work habits and skills. One thing every one of these generations craves is stability. *How can you incorporate a sense of stability and personal growth simultaneously within your office design?*

Foster collaborative relationships by understanding and appreciating the uniqueness of the person, not just the skillset. *How can you create opportunities for employees of different generations to interact in both work- and non-work-related settings to build relationships and minimize misunderstandings?*

Observe your employees. Understand the demographics of your workplace as well as how your employees communicate. *Would an annual survey help you identify both differences and similarities between various generations and departments to keep your productivity on track?*

Provide opportunities for cross-generational mentoring. This can work both ways—don't automatically assume that younger generations will be mentored by older generations. All age groups have opportunities to learn from each other. *How can your office design incorporate Makerspaces to encourage at-will mentoring and personal /professional development? How can mentoring advance your mission as a company and boost employee retention?*

Allow for the flexibility of when/where people work. Understand employee work/life balance, in terms of responsibilities and interests they may have outside the workplace. Don't make assumptions. It's important to remember that employees, regardless of generation, have a life outside of the confines of an office. Gen Z, by nature, are digital nomads working from anywhere there is a wifi connection. *What programs can you implement to define and encourage work/life balance?*

Accentuate Connection

Develop an engaging workplace: Foster an overall feeling of belonging, ability to connect with others, appropriate vision of company values, and a welcoming environment.

Support casual interaction with a well-planned layout that allows for casual interaction and communication throughout the workspace.

Provide quality meeting spaces: Provide the right number, size and location of meeting spaces and the ability to reserve and occupy meeting space when needed.

Opt for physical comfort with ergonomic seating and equipment creates wellbeing on multiple levels.

Provide acoustical privacy with access to dedicated spaces for focused tasks and secure conversations.

Visible safety & security provides employees with trust. Make sure they feel safe in the building, within the primary work-space and outside in parking areas.

The Generation Factor

Be aware that each generation views connection differently as it relates to their job.

Generation Y rates the importance of having an “engaging workplace” highest, and “quality of meeting rooms” lowest.

Conversely, Baby Boomers rate these two features almost opposite of how Gen Y rates them. These changing priorities will drive a fundamental shift in office design, away from merely supporting work function and process.

Future workspaces will need to provide a consistent, engaging, user experience that supports a wide choice of work styles and seamless flow of work, regardless of location.

This information will constantly evolve and will be key to selecting the best type of furnishings for a collaborative office environment inclusive of all generations and their needs.

Office furniture should always:

- Support casual interaction and communication with others through appropriate technology
- Multi-task and adapt to situations quickly
- Create opportunities for meetings to be held in the right places at anytime during the day
- Provide comfort and ergonomic design
- Allow for privacy when needed
- Provide built-in or proximity to charging for electrical devices

Provide Flexible Meeting Options

Collaborative office furniture should provide cross-generation options and accommodate multiple meeting situations:

- **Readily accessible work tables & seating** that can adapt and comfortably accommodate from 2-10 people.
- **Seating with built in work tables** to support nomads and casual creative work styles.
- **Impromptu work spaces** that are agile for any use empower the flexible work style of the Gen Y.
- **Benching tables** can be re-configured to match any meeting requirement, any where, any time.
- **Easy access to technology:** Configure tables so all attendees have a clear view of the video screen during video conferences. Provide multiple touchdown areas for BYOD connections for guests and mobile staff.
- **Integrated Huddle meeting spaces** provide quick meeting areas on the fly and should be integrated wherever possible.
- **Flexible overflow office spaces** can accommodate remote personnel, provide private meeting spaces as needed and function as a private offices on demand.
- **Height-adjustable desk options** with high chairs or stools can also make your breakroom usable for impromptu meetings.

Open work environments encourage positive team engagement. Our experienced [design team](#) will help you create a collaborative workspace that fosters positive workflow and can adjust as your team grows or changes. Well-crafted open plan collaborative workspaces should also encourage impromptu meetings and brainstorming sessions with quick connections for a laptop or access to a mounted monitor.

Integrating collaborative work needs with focused work needs may seem challenging, but our consultative design team will help you choose what works for your team now, and as your business grows.

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