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ask the expert: 5 things you should consider before your office refurbishment.

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There are many possible reasons for upgrading your workplace. Recent growth may mean you have outgrown your existing space, or you might be looking to improve collaboration, optimise building use, boost staff morale, or maybe it's part of your company's rebranding strategy. No matter what the reason, an office refurbishment can deliver many tangible, long-term benefits for your business.

However, it is important not to dive straight in without covering all bases with the right level of planning and preparation. Gareth Knight, our Operations and Technical Director, has compiled a list of five things you should consider for your office refurbishment.





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about the author.

Gareth Knight is a Chartered Building Services Engineer who heads up the commercial interiors division of our group. Gareth has a wealth of expertise in commercial fit out, refurbishment and facilities management, having advised on several contracts for the likes of Cardiff Airport, Welsh Government, Principality Building Society and the latest works at Fusion Point 2, Cardiff.

1. always determine budget.

There are often countless possibilities of what can be achieved with office refurbishments, but this can depend heavily on the state of your existing premises, ideal budget and in-house resource and capabilities.

In the first instance it can be difficult to establish a budget, but it is crucial to gain understanding and agreement from the start with your stakeholders. We recommend getting your finance, HR and IT teams around the table to produce an internal brief, compiling a list of what is absolutely required alongside those 'nice-to-haves'. This will use your time effectively and not only help establish a budget but outline the ambitions for the refurbishment.

Who is going to be responsible for the technical plans and building assessments? Do you need an external Project Manager to schedule the scope of works? Can you allow for any downtime, or does the space need to be operational at all times? Do you need to phase the scheme?

"In our experience, a detailed office refurbishment quote will always include a design brief, technical drawings, project and construction details and timeframes. But always bear in mind, that with any refurbishment project, unplanned eventualities are very common, and you should allow for contingencies within the budget, particularly when refurbishing older buildings."



2. involve staff.

There's no hiding the fact that happy employees are more engaged, more productive and more willing to go above and beyond.

Although you may have clear ideas about the changes you'd like to make to your office, it is worth inviting your office-based teams into the discussion. After all, they're the ones spending large proportions of their days in the environment and their suggestions could help you retain talent, and even save you money in the long run.

"We've helped clients identify things they'd never even thought about by compiling surveys, and even focus groups. You need to try and avoid assumptions; everyone works differently, across and within departments. If better lighting, quiet zones or a selection of fresh plants are going to alleviate stress and make staff feel more alert and productive, then it's worth posing the question."

Try not to get stuck in the trap of focussing too heavily on interior trends, without establishing exactly how your people and processes work. Choose your questions wisely with staff and your business will thrive.

top tips.

Choose your questions wisely with staff.

X *"What would you like to see in the office?"*

✓ *"What would help make you more productive in the office?"*



3. explore the future.

Before any office refurbishment, it is essential to consider anticipated future growth of the business and the sector in which you're in. It's not just extra workstations for new staff members or new departments to consider, but areas for storage, facilities and new technologies too.

Is your space able to adapt?

If your office isn't going to be suitable for anticipated growth or flexibility, or the space is going to limit your ambitions, a refurbishment may not be the best way forward and a relocation may need to be on the cards.

"We suggest considering all angles of the business for at least the next few years. At Powell, our Lead Interior Designer works closely with clients to develop professional 2D and 3D space plans to identify maximum capacity for workstations and help realise the true potentials of the space. The results can be really unexpected."

Can you create additional space in your office?

"A mezzanine floor can double floor space. For our recent client, designing a mezzanine floor created an impressive training area, welcoming customers on the ground level, as well as an open plan office space to house all staff on the first level."

Do you want an agile workplace?

Nowadays, it's not just about expansion but contraction as well. The endless advances in technology means that businesses can get rid of archaic, unsightly IT infrastructure and take a reduced size office space. Cloud-technologies also offers flexibility in working styles, enabling staff to work from anywhere.





4. assess your building limitations.

The layout, shape and quality of your building is going to be the main driver for the scope of interior works. Factors such as mechanical or electrical systems need to be taken into consideration as these may scupper your plans for what you want to achieve and blow your budget.

Do you need a large open plan office to aid collaboration, but your building is L-shaped? Do you want exposed ceilings? Do you need to reassess lighting and acoustics?

You'll also need to consider power or data infrastructure requirements that need to be supplied to certain areas of the building. **How and where will these be fed from?**

Professional interior designers will recognise the limitations of your environment and create a well-thought-out office for an effective, working space.

"If there are many restrictions to updating your office, simply due to the nature of your building, in the long run it will be best to weigh up the costs of adapting against relocating. If there are changes to your lease arrangements or you have the opportunity to move within the next few years, a refurbishment now will only waste money which could be put towards a trendy fit out later down the line."

Ultimately, the layout of your working environment should facilitate and simplify the way your business works.



5. design to encourage wellbeing.

Whether you're looking to launch a new brand, promote new products or create an improved office culture, revamping the interior is a great way to start. After all, your office is your shop window and all stakeholders should feel the same about your brand at every touch point, from walking into reception, to viewing your website and through marketing collateral.

As well as branding, staff wellbeing needs to be of high importance throughout the design process. Work-related health problems can include anything from back ache, to stress and depression. Research has shown that the positive impacts of choosing the right furniture pieces and lighting for your staff can be vast. When staff are comfortable in their environment, productivity will increase, and work-related illness will decrease. Additionally, when staff feel that their wellbeing is being prioritised, it can increase job satisfaction.

"We've found that with any office refurbishment, it's an exciting chance for a business to evolve. This can be your time to make the impression you really want."





Is there enough natural light in the office? Could certain job functions do with standing desks? Hot desking areas? Will furniture need to be ethically sourced?

For an objective view, it's worth having a professional assessment of your existing workplace. This is usually known as a Workplace Consultancy, which gives a broad understanding of your current working environment to assist your internal brief for the new office style. This consultation lends a hand in identifying what furniture, fixtures and equipment (FF&E) will be beneficial for staff and fit for the future.

"We've noticed that with recent developments in working styles, leading furniture suppliers and manufacturers are leaning towards a more residential design style, offering more and more flexible pieces of furniture for creating comfortable but functional zones within commercial spaces."

By considering a workplace consultation, internal brief, and a design with staff in mind, you'll be steps ahead in achieving a smooth and manageable office refurbishment that delivers powerful results.

A truly successful refurbishment will need ongoing assessment, even after completion, and so making adjustments if and when necessary will keep the office fresh, safe and modern, and will keep your staff happy, healthy and productive.

Our experts in refurbishments.



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