YOUR GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL OFFICE REFURBISHMENT
The office has evolved to a point where it is now viewed as an asset that can be instrumental in attracting and retaining the very best talent, the lifeblood of an organisation and as a result, more and more companies are investing in creating workplaces that staff want to work in.

When you are tasked with an office refurbishment project, it can be daunting especially if it is your first time undertaking something like this. We hope this short guide provides logical step by step instructions to follow and proves useful.

So, you’ve been asked to investigate potentially refurbishing your existing office, where do you start?
STEP 1
DEFINE THE REASONS FOR THE REFURBISHMENT
It may be that your office has become dated, a little dilapidated, not seen any investment in some time and is not somewhere that staff are proud of or enjoy working. Essentially it is not an office that truly reflects your brand and corporate identity.

The office has become a reflection of your brand and has a major role to play when it comes to attracting and retaining the very best staff in what is a competitive market. So, providing existing and potential staff with a workplace that really works and where they enjoy working has risen hugely in importance.

Others factors like workplace wellbeing and/or embracing a new, more productive way of working may also influence the decision to refurbish your office. Your existing space may not be equipped to handle hot desking, agile working practices or new technology and needs to be adapted so your organisation can avail of the numerous benefits like increased productivity and improved staff morale.

Your refurbishment can also allow you to embrace workplace wellbeing through incorporating more natural light, providing staff with a choice of work areas where they can concentrate, collaborate, catch up or simply unwind to providing showering and bike storage solutions. Another factor could be growth and you simply need to make better use of your space to accommodate more staff. Effective space planning and clearly defining what you want from your new workplace can solve this.

It could also be that you are approaching a lease break or renewal and have entered discussions with your landlord, who has offered to provide funds to refurbish the space. If this is the case, it becomes a matter of deciding whether the existing space, once refurbished is one your company can comfortably work from for the duration of the new lease.

Think about the why. What is wrong with your current space and what should a new refurbished office do for you and your organisation?
Additionally, you may feel that your existing spaces is not utilised effectively and that a refurbishment would create a better, more efficient place to work. An example of this is where companies have numerous meeting rooms or other space that aren't utilised effectively. A good example of this is where individuals or groups of 2-3 people use massive boardrooms for calls for simple catch ups that could be conducted in an open break out area or in private booths.

**Why should we refurbish?**

It is so important that you define the reasons at an early stage as all organisations differ and have unique requirements. There is no one size fits all solution when it comes to creating a workplace that will work for you, so keeping this list of reasons in focus throughout the project is key to its overall success.

So, you’ve spent time defining the reasons why you need to refurbish your office, what next?

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**Reasons for Refurbishment** (tick all that apply)

- The office looks old and dated
- We are growing and need to better use the space we have
- Our lease is expiring and our landlord has offered to update the space
- The current office doesn’t reflect who we are
- We want to create a more inspiring place to work
STEP 2
CREATE A PROJECT TEAM
Once you’ve defined your list of reasons for refurbishing your office, it’s time to put together a cross departmental team and most critically to get a senior project champion on board. This should be somebody senior who can make decisions, who can communicate well, has experience managing budgets and importantly, someone who wants to create a better workplace.

After selecting your project champion, you need to decide who else needs to be involved and also what skills are required, the list below includes examples of the skillsets required to deliver a successful project.

- **IT**: Technology in the workplace is evolving at an ever increasing pace so involving IT is a smart move to ensure you future proof the new workplace from an IT perspective.

- **HR**: Staff may have concerns about the new workplace so proactively involving the HR team so you can communicate effectively with staff is important.

- **Facilities**: Nobody knows the building better than the Facilities team so it really is a no brainer to get them involved at an early stage.

- **Marketing**: Creating a workplace that reflects your brand and its values is crucial so involving marketing is important so you get the branding element right.

- **Operations**: The day to day functioning of the business needs to continue uninterrupt ed during the refurbishment so involving the operations team is a must.

- **PA’s**: Often overlooked but a hugely influential group who can help to deliver a seamless transition from the old working environment to your newly refurbished one.

- **Finance**: It goes without saying that having somebody senior from the Finance team involved is crucial. Somebody who can effectively manage the budget and who can take care of the associated admin (raising PO’s, ensuring invoices are paid etc…) is so, so important.

So, you’ve defined your reasons for refurbishment, assembled your team, now it’s time to discuss what kind of workplace you want to create.
STEP 3

WHAT WORKPLACE WORKS FOR US?
This initial wish list will morph into your brief so make sure you include everything, otherwise there’s a possibility that the same issues may reappear in your newly refurbished office.

Your Wishlist

- We want to work more collaboratively
- We want to adopt a more flexible way of working
- We have nowhere available to comfortably eat lunch
- We never seem to have enough meeting rooms
- Our workplace is really noisy and it’s difficult to concentrate
- We don’t have anywhere to speak privately on the phone
- We never speak with the other teams located on the other floors/different sides of the office
- We don’t have enough natural light coming into the office
- We don’t have any facilities to shower or store bikes for staff who cycle to work

All of these factors will influence the final office design so take the time to discuss them in detail, it will be worth it in the end. It is also worth adding that this doesn't necessarily need to involve just the team members, hosting a company meeting to get staff views can also be invaluable.

So, your newly assembled team have discussed not only why your office needs to be refurbished but also what your new workplace should deliver for you. This has formed the basis of your brief, so what next?
STEP 4

SPEAK WITH OFFICE DESIGN & BUILD COMPANIES
So where to start? How do I select a partner to refurbish our office? Our recommendation would be to do some research online and ask friends, colleagues, peers and even neighbouring companies who they would recommend. Spend some time taking a look through each company’s case studies, looking at who they have worked with and their recent work and before making contact with on 3-5 companies you are confident could deliver.

After making contact, the company should try to arrange a time to come and view your existing space, to discuss your objectives and to answer any questions you might have. What questions should you ask? Here’s a list to choose from:

**Questions to ask potential partners**

- Have you worked with companies in our sector?
- Who have you recently delivered projects for? (Ask for projects of a similar size)
- Can you deliver a refurbishment project in occupation?
- How do you plan a refurbishment ensuring there is no disruption to normal operations?
- Do you work to a fixed price budget? (no hidden fees)
- Do you offer a space planning/test fit service prior to appointment?
- How financially stable are they?
- Can we visit some offices you have recently refurbished?
- Can they assist with planning permission/license to alter applications?
- How do you ensure you deliver refurbishment in occupation projects on time?
- Do you have extensive knowledge of office furniture?
STEP 5

AGREE A PROJECT BUDGET (AND STICK TO IT)
Your selected refurbishment partner should be able to help you to create some top level budgets based on what you want to create and the size and complexity of the project. Realistically speaking, fit out costs vary depending on a number of factors including:

- the type of building and space being refurbished
- how old the building is
- the state its mechanical and electrical services (heating, air con, ventilation etc…)
- the level/quality of finishes and furniture required
- IT/AV upgrade costs

We normally communicate to prospective clients that costs vary from £35 per Sq. Ft. for a basic refurbishment right up to over £100 per Sq. Ft. where no expense has been spared.

It is worth speaking with your landlord to see if that can contribute towards the cost or to negotiate a lower rent, after all the refurbishment will leave them with a vastly improved, more valuable asset.

Exploring leasing options and relevant tax breaks may also be beneficial and can end up saving you a sizeable amount in the long term. Speak with your internal tax experts or if you don’t have somebody in-house, it is advisable to speak to an external advisor as you can save by:

- Maximising your capital allowances
- Activating tax allowances for using sustainable materials during the refurb
- Signing up for a low interest leasing option

Ensure that your chosen office refurbishment partner can work to your budget and that they can provide a detailed line by line cost breakout for everything from painting and decor to storage and furniture costs.
STEP 6

WORK CLOSELY WITH YOUR REFURBISHMENT PARTNER
Your partner can assist with getting the relevant permissions and licence to alter from your landlord and if necessary the local authorities. Once all of the required paperwork is in order, you should start to discuss a detailed plan with timings and key milestones, critical for any refurbishment project. It is also important to ensure that any disruptive, noisy works and bulky deliveries are scheduled outside of working hours.

If you want the space to remain as a live working environment for the duration of the project, discussing staff moves (as their spaces are been refurbished), allocating swing space and storage for equipment and furniture is very important. Agreeing a timely, phased approach, where the space is divided into separate blocks, each to refurbish in turn is critical at this stage.

While the project programme is being agreed, it is also essential that you and your team engage with the designers to discuss the design style you wish to adopt before finalising and signing off on the design for your new workplace. This process can involve a series of design meetings, workshops, trips to showrooms to select furniture and other finishes and visits to other offices to determine your likes and dislikes.

Tip: This is an exciting time and you should start to get a real feel for how your new office will look and remember that your partner is there to help you every step of the way so if you need help or anything explained, don’t hesitate to ask.
STEP 7
SELECTING THE RIGHT FURNITURE
Your furniture selection is important as it should reflect your brand and will be the most visible element of your new workplace. Spending time appraising and selecting seating, desking, collaboration furniture and meeting room tables can make a huge difference and help you to create a workplace that truly reflects and works for your organisation.

It is also important to select the right furniture for different areas of the office. What we mean here is that selecting specific furniture can denote what an particular area is designed for:

- Comfortable couches to promote informal collaboration
- Tall tables to promote quick standing meetings
- Private booths for calls and/or where staff can concentrate
- Ergonomically friendly seating for desk based working

There is a plethora of options available and lots of quality furniture brands to choose from, so it is advisable to spend some time visiting showrooms with the furniture expert from your refurbishment partner and also taking on board their advice.

Furniture is also playing an increasingly important role when it comes to workplace wellbeing with an increasing number of companies opting for sit-stand desks for staff, tall tables designed for quick, efficient standing meetings and booths providing staff with somewhere to concentrate.

Take your time and get advice from furniture experts before making your selection and ensure it works within your budget and that each item can be delivered on time.

Tip: Selecting ergonomically friendly furniture for your workplace has enormous benefits and is worth investigating and investing in. The last thing you want is furniture that isn't comfortable or that has the potential to cause injury over the long term.
As the project moves onsite and work begins, it is important to ensure that all staff are aware of what is happening, that the programme of activity has been agreed and that your partner and internal team are ready to move staff and equipment as per the plan.

It is also incredibly important that your partner adopts a strict approach to health and safety so the highest standards are followed throughout. Maintaining a clean, accident free site is what you should be aiming for.

Other factors to consider include:

- Access to parking for contractors
- Access to facilities for contractors
- Scheduling frequent site visits to appraise progress
- Keeping lines of communication open (regular team meetings are recommended)
- Arranging access for out of hours works and deliveries
- If in a multi occupant building, ensure other tenants know what is planned

It is also crucial that everything in the design has been approved so there are no delays with delivery of bespoke items like joinery or manufactured furniture. It is also important that you work closely with your refurbishment partner to ensure there is no disruption to normal work activities as a result of noise, deliveries or anything else associated with the project.

Tip: Many contractors are now signed up to the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS) which emphasises and scores contractors on site appearance, their interaction with the community, their environmental credential and the support and training available onsite. Ask your chosen partner if they are signed up?
STEP 9
MANAGING HANDOVER
The project is underway, your staff (and you), are getting excited about their new workplace and everything is starting to come together, so how do you manage the handover and transition to the new space.

If you have agreed a phased handover of space, managing this handover and transition to a brand new working environment is critical to ensure staff can get up and running quickly. As each block is refurbished and handed over, furniture and equipment must be moved in and installed ready for use the following week (this work normally takes place over a weekend with staff starting work in the new space the following Monday).

The regular meetings should flag up any issues or challenges allowing you time to adapt but, everything should run as per your agreed plan.

Tip: If you have moved out for the duration of the project, creating a detailed move plan making sure that everything is delivered and installed on time and ready to go on move in day is key.

As the projects approaches completion, spend some time evaluating your new space highlighting anything you would like changed - this can range from the relatively minor to the more serious. Your objective should be making sure that everything is perfect for when your staff move in and start working.
STEP 10
MOVING IN
Communication is key at this stage, not just with your refurbishment partners but also with your project team (don’t be afraid to delegate) and most importantly with your staff. Ensuring that all staff know what is happening, what to expect and who to direct questions to is vital.

This can be tackled by sending regular email updates, hosting pre-move team meetings and/or taking staff on tours of the ‘almost’ finished space. Keeping everyone in the loop will make the transition as smooth as possible and will allow you and your team to address questions and potential issues well in advance of any move.

On the day of the final move, host a team breakfast and have your project champion address everybody speaking about the new workplace and what it is designed to achieve with some time for Q&A. It’s important that staff embrace their new space, and are aware of any new innovations (and how to use them properly).

Tip: Show off your fabulous new space and host a party inviting clients and staff - it’s the beginning of a new era so it is worth marking the occasion.
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