

# 6 essential considerations when choosing office space

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In the age of flexible work environments and remote employees, choosing the right office space may not feel like a make-or-break move anymore. As a result, a lot of businesses may be tempted to prioritise tangible factors like budget and square meterage over less cut-and-dried elements like convenience and brand synergy. This can be an expensive mistake.



Image source: Gallo/Getty

Today, more than ever, the right workplace can play a critical role in things like staff retention, client acquisition, productivity and profitability. It's not a decision that should be taken lightly or made purely on budgetary grounds, although finances obviously play an important role.

While the best office space will vary dramatically depending on your business, these are the elements all companies looking for a new workspace should consider.

## Location

With roads getting more congested and employees becoming highly conscious of their commute times, a location that is convenient for your staff is always a good start. However, this convenience needs to be balanced with things like client accessibility and brand synergy.

If your business is very corporate, a decentralised office deep in the suburbs may not be the best fit. Likewise, if you're highly client-facing, and a lot of those clients are working in a particular area, it makes sense to base your office nearby to increase visibility and make it easier to connect. It's also important not to discount the benefits of being close to shops, cafes and potential after-work social spots. An environment that encourages staff to get out and enjoy a change of scenery together can do a lot of good for morale.

## Space

Finding the right space means much more than just making sure there's room for all your desks and equipment. Meeting space, recreation areas, café or kitchen space and bathrooms are equally important.

There's a growing body of evidence that shows a well-balanced workspace – one that includes areas for work, rest and collaboration – can have a very positive effect on productivity. Old-school offices with claustrophobic cubicles, on the other hand, are a recipe for an unhappy workforce and can directly impact on staff retention.

## **Growth potential**

Businesses with plans to grow in years to come should also consider the potential for future expansion within their chosen space.

The last thing you want is to fit out a brand-new office space only to outgrow it in a year or two's time. If you're predicting future growth, it makes sense to look for a building that can accommodate that expansion.

## **Layout**

Moving offices is an expensive and disruptive operation. To minimise the impact of this, look for a space that doesn't need too extensive an alteration. If you are renting, your lease will often allow an amount for tenant installation, this is an amount that the landlord is willing to pay for alterations and is often calculated at an amount per square metre. Make sure that this will cover your alterations or that you have budgeted accordingly and can afford to make the alterations that are necessary.

It would be naive to assume you'll find the perfect office already fitted out to your requirements off the bat, but some spaces will be closer to what you need than others. Major structural renovations are time-consuming and costly, and don't add long-term value to your business. Rather look for a blank slate that can be customised with relatively inexpensive drywall, or a spot that can otherwise be reconfigured with minimal disruption.

## **Amenities**

Don't forget to look at more than just the walls when choosing an office space. Natural and artificial lighting, air-conditioning and connectivity are all important, too.

Do you need a lot of windows or will too much sunlight cause glare on staff computers? Are you happy with a centralised air-con system for the whole building, or do you need the flexibility to customise the temperatures in your own space? Is there plumbing for a private kitchen and bathroom, or will you share these facilities with other tenants? Is the building fibre-compatible, or will you need to arrange your own high-speed connection? These are all important questions that should be clarified before you sign on the dotted line.

## **Cost**

No matter how many boxes an office space ticks, cost will always be an essential component, but businesses should never discount the potential to negotiate on rental.

You're unlikely to negotiate a discount significant enough to drop your rental into a whole new affordability category, but a lot of landlords are more flexible on terms and incentives than they may let on. It's always good to educate yourself on the local commercial rental market and be ready to haggle a little to get a good deal.

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