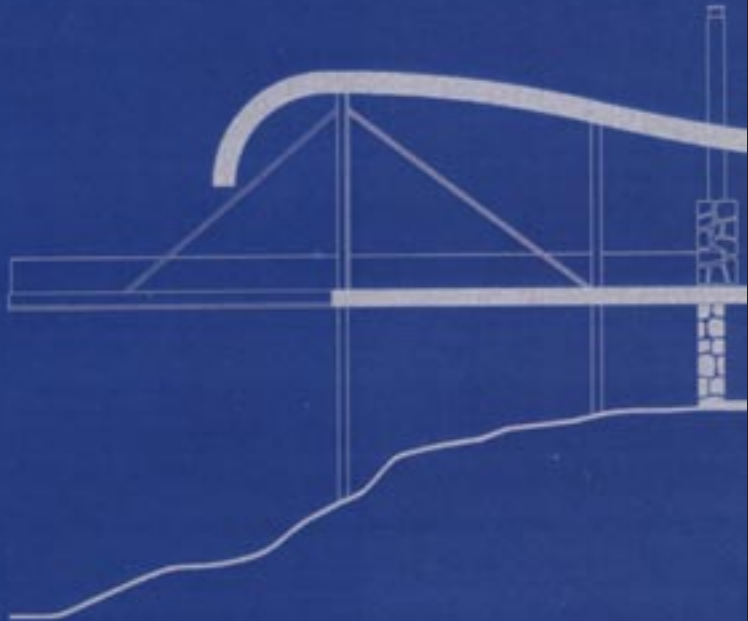


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HARRY SEIDLER'S GRAVITY-DEFYING SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS HOUSE
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AN ENGAGEMENT WITH MILITARY HISTORY FOR FREEMAN RYAN DESIGN AT ANZAC HALL
ARTEMIDE DESIGN LUMINAIRES: THE 'LEADING LIGHTS' OF AUSTRALIAN DESIGN





01

TALENT QUEST

INNOVATIVE WORK ENVIRONMENTS ARE PLAYING AN INCREASINGLY CRITICAL ROLE IN THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF TALENTED EMPLOYEES, REPORTS EVETTE PISANI, IN ORDER FOR COMPANIES TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE. TODAY'S NEW ECONOMY HAS FORCED ORGANISATIONS TO SHIFT THEIR FOCUS TOWARDS INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND THEIR WORKPLACE DESIGN IN ORDER TO DRIVE PRODUCTIVITY AND FINANCIAL GAINS

There is a palpable buzz in the air of progressive organisations as they embrace new economy strategies in order to win the war of talent.

Intense demands for human capital, a decline in employee loyalty, and an emphasis on performance has forced companies to realise the value of people, thus developing unique solutions to attract, manage and retain exceptional knowledge-based workers with the initiative and skills essential to an organisation's competitive edge. Within the context of recent workplace trends, employers are going to great lengths to enrich the workplace.

According to a report published by *Fortune* magazine based on survey results of the world's most admired companies, "A company's ability to attract and hold on to talented employees is the single most reliable predictor of overall excellence." (1998)

The power to lure and enhance the performance of top talent is becoming a major management challenge. Impressive salaries and other benefits alone are falling short at the bargaining table. Although appropriate remuneration is important, the expectations of many prospective employees are different, and include consideration of workplace resources and aesthetics.

Companies are reacting by demanding work environments that give them a competitive advantage, based on human-focused design and the premise that performance is particularly influenced by our experience within the work space.

Managing Director of DEGW Asia-Pacific, James Calder, has provided consulting and research services for leading global organisations implementing new ways of working. "The role of the office for knowledge workers is going through a radical rethink. The workplace is an important part of the continuum of knowledge transfer – as a facilitator of the shift from tacit to explicit knowledge linking the virtual and the real. These places

create the magic that happens when different knowledge and information interacts to create something truly new," says Calder.

A 1998 research study entitled "Competing for Talent: Creating a Work Climate to Attract, Motivate and Retain High Performing Employees", conducted by the Hay Group, a global human resources consulting firm, revealed a correlation between employee satisfaction with the physical work environment and company performance. They suggest that employees' feeling good about their workplace translates into financial rewards.

Innovative work climates conducive to employee satisfaction reflect an integration of company business needs and people objectives. The result is an environment based on design principles that facilitate the development and sense of community, a diversity of spaces, fit-outs accommodating varied work styles (formal and informal), and improved environmental conditions.

The AIS Media fit-out (featured in *Indesign 05*) is indicative of the greater flexibility that is coming to the workspace. According to designer Kirsti Simpson, HASSELL Principal, the AIS Media fit-out had to adapt and support its workers and any potential development of the business. "It is our responsibility to make sure that the work we do incorporates maximum flexibility, and the fact that it's a collaborative environment warranted the provision of such facilities as the fun bar and a number of other informal and formal meeting spaces.

"We have experienced such dramatic change in the environments that we're constructing, in the last 10 years, we have experienced marked departures from conventions even in the last two years," continues Simpson. "Built environments are changing dramatically, and it is our responsibility as designers of corporate environments to be up to speed with the latest trends and be able to provide recommendations that we hope will enhance the productivity of the clients that we work with and their business. Responding to different organisational cultures and the need to attract and maintain knowledge workers is vitally important."

Several developing trends shaping the workplace in the new millennium are theme-like in nature, or reminiscent of home living spaces, with workplaces developing into friendly, functional and fun environments.

Evidenced by some of today's customer call centres, huge costs incurred by employee turnover are demanding better working environments more conducive to motivating productive staff. >>>



02



03

"SEVERAL DEVELOPING TRENDS SHAPING THE WORKPLACE IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM ARE THEME-LIKE IN NATURE, OR REMINISCENT OF HOME LIVING SPACES."

>> The Australian Teleservices Association (ATT) reveals the \$A6.5 billion industry is setting new standards for workers with innovative designs for call centres which represent the office of the future (March 2000 *Australian Telecommunications Guide*). In an article titled "Empowering white collar workers – new workplace practices in the teleservices industry to reduce staff churn", it is noted that recent research estimates the average cost of losing an employee from a call centre is approximately \$10,000, and that "spending dollars in refurbishment and different themes where staff have an input is a cost-effective strategy to assist in reducing turnover costs."

"Call centres have the potential to become a kind of cyber sweat shop. We really need to address this issue and try and encourage a more amenable workspace," says Peter Hobbs of Jones Coulter Young, architects for an airline Perth Customer Contact Centre. The project featured a "tranquil internal courtyard" with "long visual vistas so people can look beyond their screen and look at a pleasing environment" in a bid to increase staff satisfaction.

Full scale cyber cafes, extravagant breakout rooms, high-tech workstations and weekly fun and games are just some of the incentives companies are offering employees. And, a choice of benefit programmes blur the boundaries between work and personal life in an effort to strike a better balance in the lives of valued workers.

A good example is PricewaterhouseCoopers' Tax Assurance Centre (TAC) in Melbourne which underscores the investment companies are making, where workplace design and leading edge technology mesh with human resources management initiatives as vehicles for creating company cultures equipped for success.

As noted by the TAC's career website (March 27, 2001, www.careers.au.pwcglobal.com): "Working smarter at the Tax Assurance Centre is not about working longer. It is about people working more effectively, in a purpose built, high-tech, team driven environment."

"... we've also outlawed hierarchies, scrapped our formal dress codes and introduced some very flexible work hours (in fact overtime is now frowned on). The result is a progressive work environment, ideal for the aspiring high flyer who seeks a better balance. If you want to work for a world leader – on your terms – get in touch with us now."

Work environments are saying more about a company than imagined. The all encompassing quality, appearance and functionality of the work environment asserts the company's corporate culture. The physical environment is one of the first impressions a prospective worker has of a company, and should manifest the high regard a company has for its

workforce, the company's success and the resources available to workers. Further, superior work facilities give companies the advantage over competitors by delivering powerful signals to the marketplace.

Design firm Geyer is finding that leading organisations in each industry are increasingly asking the practice to design workplace environments that attract and then help retain high quality people. "This is gratifying because Geyer has been promoting the workplace as a 'business tool' beyond its obvious purpose for over 10 years," says Peter Geyer. "When you engage the right sort of organisation with this issue of 'accommodation as a business tool' you get some great outcomes – ones which differentiate organisations from their competitors. We know that the best workplace solutions evolve from organisations addressing their value structure and how it manifests itself physically.

"For instance, some critical values of a recent legal client include 'equality' and 'transparency'. One aspect of our accommodation solution delivered coffee bistros in the primary perimeter location on each of the six floors. This client has reported a very positive response by the top graduate lawyers reviewing the firm for potential employment and, at the same time, the existing workers, both legal and support teams, have been thrilled that the Partners would invest such capital in their people, present a facility that through its quality recognises and supports people and share this facility themselves, creating a more democratic environment."

Concludes Geyer: "The overall outcome for the business is tending towards a lower turnover of people and improved general morale. The workplace solution as a 'business tool' therefore reinforces the firm's values in a very practical, meaningful and immediately recognisable fashion."

Intense competition for top talent has resulted in a welcome shift: a superior work environment that values workers' individual needs in achieving corporate goals and business objectives.

Companies are finally recognising the valuable contribution that superior talent can deliver to the company and the bottom line, hence creating a framework of incentives to attract, reward and retain necessary human capital. Flexible work hours, strong and vibrant work and informal spaces, and integrated high-tech resources are all characteristics of a new reward environment, an environment tailored to the needs of both the business and its employees. Companies need to ensure that the work environment remains an important issue on business agendas.

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01 SCHIAVELLO 'ALTO' RANGE FEATURING 'LIBERTY' CHAIRS 02-05 SCHIAVELLO 'ULTIMET' WORK ENVIRONMENT FEATURING 'LIBERTY' CHAIRS AND SCHIAVELLO FLAT SCREEN TECHNOLOGY



04



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