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Jim Boomer • Feb. 08, 2016



Accounting firms aren't always quick to adopt change but we can all be assured that changes will continue to come in our profession. One area in which we are seeing considerable change over the last few years is in the utilization of office space. As firms face the decision between remodeling their current location or relocating to a new space, they are changing the basic layout of the space and the technology with which they outfit the office.

Bigger Isn't Necessarily Better

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How do you move into a smaller space, yet accommodate the same or higher level of staffing? The big four have used the concept of hoteling in their office space for years and we are now starting to see a growing interest in this concept further down market. Employees simply reserve a space – cubicle, office or conference room – for the period of time they will be working in the office. When they are done, the space is released for someone else to utilize. Through technology, this can be a streamlined process where you login into a kiosk and reserve a space which already has everything you need to do your work. And, through the software, you can also transfer your phone extension to that location. Some of the providers leading firms are using include Condecó, Steelcase and Asure, while other firms have had custom solutions developed for their firm.

Open Space

There is also a trend to promote and enhance collaboration among teams by bringing down the physical barriers that have existed in offices for so long. The open plan for an office makes use of large, open spaces and minimizes the use of small, enclosed rooms such as private offices and cubicles.

At first glance this sounds like a nightmare in terms of managing the noise of other conversations going on in the vicinity. However, the use of “pink noise” has allowed this to work by pumping in background noise that is shaped in terms of sound spectrum and level to provide the level of sound masking and privacy desired in the workspace. Firms that have implemented pink noise in their offices say it's amazing how you can be sitting ten feet from someone on the phone and not be bothered by their conversation.

Sitting is the New Smoking

Another workplace norm, sitting at your desk all day, is also being countered in

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Conference Room Upgrades

In my column last month, I focused on the conference room and some of the technologies firms are employing to upgrade their space for meetings. While I won't go into the same level of detail, I'll reiterate the tools that are modernizing conference rooms across the country.

- Flat Panel Displays and Smart Collaboration Screens
- Wireless Presentation Technologies
- Video Conferencing
- Robotics
- Reservation Systems

As I said at the start of this column, CPA firms aren't always the quickest to adopt change. It's especially difficult when it comes to the space where you conduct your business. While you might not adopt all of these trends in your office, I would encourage you to give fair consideration to each of these and see if any or all of them fit your firm's culture and employee's needs.

Jim Boomer, CPA.CITP, MBA, is the CIO of [Boomer Consulting, Inc.](#), which provides consulting services to hundreds of the highest performing CPA firms. Our unique and powerful solutions target five areas critical to a firm's success: Leadership and Management, Client Development, Talent Development, Technology and Compensation.

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