



An example of using textured backgrounds and dimensional signage to create a warm and inviting environment while promoting a company's image. (All images courtesy JD Hamilton)

# Reimagining Workspaces in a Post-Pandemic World

**G**etting back to normal is not going to happen after COVID. There I said it. The corporate work environment is going to change and there will be a new normal. In this article, we are going to look at the new designs and layouts of corporate spaces as companies attempt to entice the workforce back and provide a healthier space after the lessons learned from the pandemic. Much of these changes will include a variety of unique wall covering graphics and branded corporate signage.

## **ARE CUBICAL FARMS THE NEW FAX MACHINES?**

Going back to corporate will not resemble Jim and Pam's workplace in "The Office." Corporations are being creative in designing new welcoming and comfortable spaces. Going forward is a unique moment in history. Every corporation and business needs to rethink what it means to work — the way we perform that work, where that work is done, and what it will look like in the future.

Corporate traditional spaces may be a thing of the past, but new ideas of design will begin to be invented. The old routine of going to the office 9-5 every day will likely

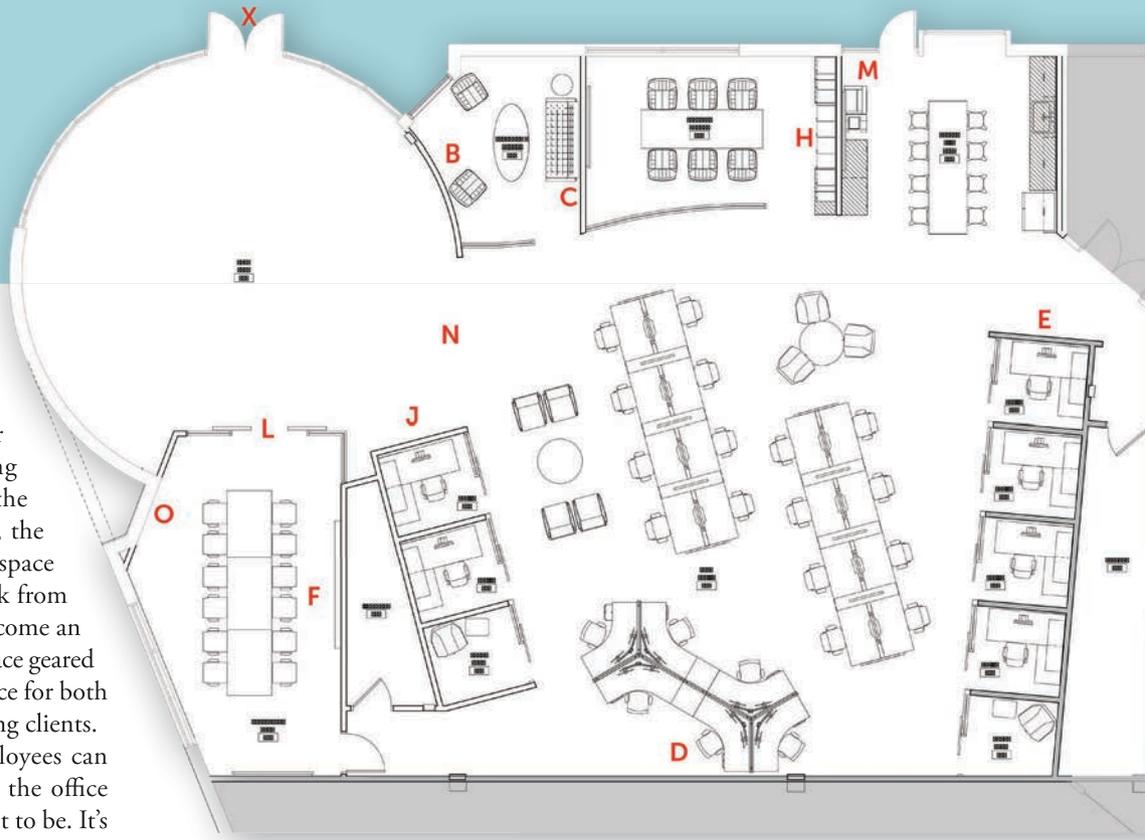


***HOW CORPORATE WORKSPACES WILL CHANGE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND BRANDED GRAPHICS***

BY JD HAMILTON

change. Now the corporate headquarters or main office will be the new destination for collaboration and connecting with co-workers. Instead of the old school individual cubicles, the emerging designs of the workspace will focus on a motivated break from working from home. It will become an enticing and open gathering place geared to create a welcoming experience for both returning employees and visiting clients.

While a lot of current employees can work remote from anywhere, the office will become the place they want to be. It's human nature to want personal interaction and value those encounters that come with it. To bring people to the office, corporations are developing creative destination-worthy workplaces. Even though many



**Above:** Open and more inviting areas, as seen in this layout, show the growing trend in workspace environments. Large, open areas with rooms designed for team collaboration as well as some closed and semi-closed work areas. **Below:** Drawings and renderings of environmental, branded, and themed wall covering graphics and signage. These are power images and quotes meant to inspire and the logo is utilized to promote the brand.

#### SIGNAGE SPECIFICATIONS

##### Dimensional Letters

**Material:** P95 Acrylic, second surface painted, cut to shape.  
**Thickness:** 1/4"  
**Letter Style:** Per client artwork  
**Background Color:** White and black  
**Mounting Method:** VHB tape to wall

Rendering



DATE: August 24, 2018  
 DRAWN BY: JC  
 REVISION: Original

**modulex**

SIGN TYPE

**B**

CLIENT: Badger Sports

FUNCTION OF SIGN: Wall Graphic

PROJECT: Badger Sports

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'

\* Colors shown in this drawing are for presentation purposes only. For actual colors, refer to color match sample. \* Modulex does not check for errors in production artwork provided by client, including logos. Clients are responsible for any production errors as a result of artwork discrepancies or mistakes. \*\* Scale shown on this drawing is for presentation purposes only. Actual signs are to have Grafik 2 Bubble which is the same color as the background of the sign.  
 This drawing is the property of Modulex. This drawing is submitted under a confidential relationship for a specified purpose and the recipient, by accepting this document, assumes custody and agrees that this document will not be copied or reproduced in whole or in part, nor its contents revealed in any manner or to any person except to meet the purpose for which it was delivered without express written permission from Modulex.



Branding is not the only possibility for printing and signage. These illustrate the use of cool graphics to make an office area inspirational and comforting.

businesses were already offering blended work from home options before the pandemic, COVID assured us that with the technology available today a person's workspace can be wherever you can set up a laptop. Knowing this, corporations realize work-from-anywhere spaces need to be considered in workplace design and that wow-factors that offer advantages and benefits are needed to attract employees to work on site.

In the new workspace of the future, open space, color, form, texture and yes signage and graphics will create an atmosphere that is unique to the corporation. When all these elements come together, it will create a destination where employees want to work, and clients want to visit.

#### **A PLACE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND BRANDED GRAPHICS**

I had the opportunity to talk to John Elvington (owner) and Brent Cobb (senior corporate business developer) with Modulex Carolinas about trends they are seeing in the corporate world for signage and graphics.

Modulex Carolinas is a large architectural signage firm that specializes in interior and exterior signage programs for multi-family, school, and corporate facilities.

Charlotte, North Carolina, is a progressive, growing, and evolving city that has many national corporate headquarters that were hit hard during the pandemic and these corporations are working creatively to attract workers back to the office after working mostly remote for the last couple years.

"Corporate management of the businesses is trying to instill their brand to not only employees, but to visitors as well. They want to promote an inspirational tagline to display. That is often with graphics. Getting employees back not only reminds them where they're working and what their core values are, but it also gives them some incentive. While at the workplace they see these branded graphics on the wall, it reminds them and reinforces the company image and philosophy," Cobb mentions.

"There is also a movement for more icons and visual cues," Elvington adds. "Not

necessarily tied to branding, you're just creating these cool looking graphics that define the area, whether it's a break room, a cafeteria or sitting area. Different looks in those environments are what they're looking for. It's not necessarily tied to the logos or branding. It's just a graphic element."

It was pointed out that the graphics portion of the new corporate world will depend on if the home offices are in a standalone location or a shared tenant building. In multi-tenant situations, you can't have one brand overwhelming the other tenants. However, these areas still have great graphic potential; but more of an environmental graphics theme as compared to a standalone headquarters where branding stands loud and proud. Here you will find new areas of shared collaboration. Wall coverings provide neutral yet inviting graphics. The use of new digital directories that not only direct visitors to their destination but would allow employees to find the closest places to catch lunch. You will also find more inviting cafeteria areas that offer coffee, snacks, and soft drinks so employees will feel comfortable to



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take a break in-house rather than battling traffic for lunch or that mid-morning and mid-afternoon reset time.

Elvington further explains, “What’s happened the past couple years is that people are used to the flexibility and kind of the safety and comfortability of working out of their home. Some may like it; some don’t, based on their personality. But the question you have to ask is what a corporation or business owner can do to their space to make it so that an employee looks forward to going back to the office. Some may have a 15-minute to a 45-minute commute to the office. So, once they show up, they want that same level of comfort as much or more than home. They want to be with people again so the look and feel of the new work environment needs to fulfill those expectations. You can have a great team of people, a new work environment with signage and graphics, but some employers are having

to go a bit further with coffee machines, soda machines or some sparkling water machines. For convenience, people don’t want to leave their office space to go down to the store, they want to be able to do what they did back when they worked out of the house; walk to their fridge, walk to the coffeemaker, get their stuff, go back and work and they want the flexibility to do their work when they want to do it. That is the challenge of the new workplace going forward. A redesign of workspaces and branded and environmental graphics/signage can play a key role.”

### **THE GREAT RESIGNATION AND FILLING THE VOID**

This double whammy of the COVID pandemic and the recent trend of people looking at doing something new and different creates a unique challenge for corporations and businesses to not only

get existing employees back; but also, to attract new people to their organization. This has never been seen before so we are entering uncharted waters.

Interior designers have rethought the workplace and have come up with plans to make the new work environment inviting, comfortable and productive. The “hi-ho, hi-ho, it’s off to work we go” will change to a place you want to go to work. These new environments will offer great opportunities for the signage and graphic industries to help make that vision a reality. Be part of the change. **GP**

**JAMES DEAN HAMILTON** has been writing for NBM since 1995. After a decade sabbatical from writing, he is back in the saddle. With over 30 years of experience, he has a vast knowledge of everything signage, marketing, and workflow management.