

Office buildings have become business centers

By Wayne Swearingen

Why are companies locating to Uptown? Why are developers paying over \$200 per square foot for land and able to charge over \$50 per square foot rental? Two weeks ago, I wrote about the working age groups today and some changes in how they work. That Urbanism story was the



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perfect prelude to this one. Since 1962, my business has primarily been leasing office space, and I still represent tenants. In 53 years, major changes have taken place with workers and business space. To prepare for this, I went to my long-time friends and top professionals in business space design, Jo Staffelbach Heinz, FIIDA, and her partner, Andre Staffelbach.

They apply this knowledge of change scientifically to help their clients become more productive. Here is what they shared.

There are five distinct groups of office workers today that must be bridged:

- Traditionalists – a nice word for us older folks
- Boomers
- Gen X
- Millennials (Gen Y)
- Gen 2020 (new crop just out of college)

Staffelbach research shows that only 35 percent of the workers today are “engaged.” The rest

are detached, disengaged and/ or unsupported. Innovation = engaged team = success.

The challenge and strategy is to locate and design the workplace environment to:

- Increase engagement
- Revitalize energy
- Promote well-being
- Support physical needs
- Support knowledge sharing

This is accomplished by designing the work zones to maximize communication and innovation. Major changes over the past half century are:

- Technology
- Working 24/7
- Global influence
- Ways of working

Traditionalists still want an office and files. Gen X, Gen Y and Gen 2020 want a “big screen,” or they go home or to Starbucks, which really is not about coffee you know. Young people want the office to be “HOT.” They want the ability to sit or stand at their space. Walkable amenities must include restaurants, green areas,



Photos courtesy of Staffelbach Designs

Andre Staffelbach and partner Jo Staffelbach Heinz.

workout facilities, maybe a clinic and trails, such as the Katy Trail. Andre shared, “Attracting young workers is about the experience. Sell the experience, not the product.”

Now we see why developers and tenants are paying the high land prices and high rents in Uptown and Preston Center. The Design District is next.

Last week I visited the “office” of M Studio, owned by a new friend, Michael Potts. His company produces state of the art modeling and animation

for hotels, office developments and restaurants, worldwide. Mike’s workspace is in a converted warehouse in the Dallas Design District. He has no office, just space and no walls, not even demising walls from other technology and design tenants. This was an eye opener for this traditionalist.

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