

# Interiors

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## Magical space

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Developer's gathering place in Saudi Arabia



**Hotel design**  
Picking the right furnishing

# Shifting forms in design

DR SAEED ZAKI on how interior design firms are helping find solutions to current and future office needs

A CoreNet Global survey in 2009 revealed the increasing importance of alternative workplace strategies (AWS). In the survey, 88 per cent of the respondents confirmed using AWS for reasons which included employee retention, employee productivity, reduction in real estate costs and response to increasing awareness to environmental sustainability.

The survey also revealed more than half of the participating employees were completely mobile, which does not require provision of a fixed space in their workplace. However, traditional work practices and office layouts suited to them were no match for this more open, communicative and mobile style of working.

For this paradigm shift to truly take effect, have significant impact and be fully embraced by everyone, workplaces and the layouts thereof have to and are being adapted and redesigned.

## OPEN WORKSPACE

We are now witnessing a real emphasis from a

shifted to a more open and mobile workplace environment. To implement these changes successfully requires a complete rethink of how we design workplace environments.

Typically, when we think of a modern workplace, even the ones that are open, barrier-free, energy-efficient and socially vibrant, we still generally do not think beyond groups of work stations, lounges and social areas, cluttered with nice relaxing chairs, and high tables with bar stools. Once in a while, we do come across a slightly more adventurous workplace, with a dedicated recreation area for staff to exercise, play and completely switch off from work mode for a time.

However, the veritable paradigm shift that merits much closer attention and is indeed inevitable is of a much more fundamental nature. This shift is one that completely transforms one's behavior in a workplace. Such a workplace will be at once a place that will allow employees freedom in the work environment, driven by the latest in information and communication technology (ICT), whilst

creating a social hub and a feeling of home-away-from-home. The concept of 'work at home' will be stretched and reformed in this new workplace environment, so much so that employees will have the feeling of 'being home' whilst working.

All the above may sound rather far-fetched and still looming dimly in the realms of fanciful imagination, yet, at design firms such as dwp | design worldwide partnership, experimentation and implementation has already begun. dwp is serious about effecting beneficial change, and, with ongoing ventures into new workplace design concepts, is eager to be a forerunner in helping companies to adapt their working styles by design, which, in turn, envisages helping them stay ahead of their game into the future.

These changes address the needs of both the employer and employee, including satisfaction, productivity, profitability and all-round well-being. dwp, and firms like it, are instigating and innovating this paradigm shift.

In a recent project for a major Chinese

The areas for employees to work, gather, meet and socialise are all weaved in the form of a giant ribbon, which acts as a link within and between floors

menwear fashion brand's head office in China (Lilanz Headquarters at Jirjiang, China), the idea was explored in earnest with most pleasing results, well received by the client and users alike. The new Lilanz office environment thus created has been a complete break from the traditional workplace mould. The areas for employees to work, gather, meet and socialise are all weaved in the form of a giant ribbon, which acts as a link within and between floors.

## THE CONCEPT

Basically put, the concept takes form at the entrance area where a moulded reception desk welcomes one and all. Continuing on, this then takes the form of an eye-catching ceiling feature and continues onwards to morph into a meeting table, followed by a long workstation area for people to get creative at. Progressing further, this feature becomes a storage unit, a space for social gathering and eventually forms part of the staircase to link the space with upper floors.

On the upper level, the concept continues, thus transformed into a weaving element in this large multi-storey workplace building, where creativity and innovation in design are key facets in everyday working life, which is to be expected from a leading fashion brand of tomorrow. This concept highlights ultimate connectivity and fluidity.

This intertwining concept not only allows for an efficient, flexible, socially cohesive work environment, it also explores available technology to a maximum. The idea is to develop the new workplace, which is completely unwired (both for data now and power in future), to allow maximum freedom and utmost efficiency. The new workplace



## About the author

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created, in this way, allows staff to work wherever they like, form different work groups, depending on the requirements of the projects they are working on, on a case-by-case basis, or to socialise without necessarily having to move from one environment to another.

The Lilanz headquarters also has a luxury rooftop sky bar and lounge workspaces easily convert into fashion show runways, for grand collection displays, and can quickly be made over to accommodate other large functions, extravagant dinners, workshop training sessions and the like. This new workplace also wholly and completely exploits the AWS to unprecedented degrees, as it gives true freedom and flexibility, all the while being a symbolic brand ambassador, setting a dynamic corporate identity,

**Eye-catching features:**  
Lilanz design studio  
(above) and the skybar



paying tribute to the Lilanz designs.

#### FUTURE DESIGN

The future of workplace design is an even more exciting prospect, when we take into consideration the advancement and continued integration of higher technologies and systems, opening up even further flexibility and mobility. Scenes from sci-fi movies may well become the norm in workplace environments. The traditional workbench or workstation will become a thing of the past and be replaced with giant interactive touchscreens that will act as both computer and workbench, thereby creating a comprehensive 'digital environment'.

With the ever shrinking world blasted by constantly advancing technology, the time and space divide will continue to decrease, freeing the bonds of old and liberating the workplace of future for the employee of the future to be located anywhere on the globe, catering to the needs of businesses scattered several time zones away.

These shifting patterns will also be, in part, led by the need to source workforces and real estate that are as economically competitive and environmentally sustainable as possible. The already present trend and increasingly enhanced demand for such environmental sustainability will also push forth this shift in workplace concepts. Penans being located in a most pristine environment, in a workplace custom-designed for the highest sustainability considerations, in a zone where workforce is both competitive and co-competent, while still being able to serve businesses located in Tokyo or New York or London, and you have already far-forwarded into the future.