

# 7 office trends we expect to see by 2025

As we approach 2020, expectations of the workplace are changing.

Already, telephone handsets are disappearing as workers use computers as telephones. Rooms for nursing mothers are legally required. Restrooms are going co-ed. Staff meetings are done via computer with everyone on one screen, not in one room. Workstations offer sit-stand—and even kneeling—options. Open space offices have fallen out of favor.

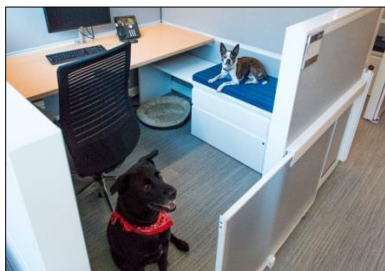
Andrea Johnson of San Francisco Bay Area space-planning firm KRJ Design Group predicts seven fun trends will continue to emerge.

## 1. Offices that accommodate dogs. And children.

People love their dogs. A study suggested that dogs in the office boost morale. But any animal needs to be managed, and bathroom breaks and coworkers' allergies must be considered.

We expect to see more pet furniture products, including workstation built-ins. Dogs will have their own cubbies in workstations and gated entries in cubicles, so no one is tripping over them and their water bowls, and the dogs enjoy a secure space.

Likewise, for kids, employees will expect more accommodation for their family obligations. Offices will feature more soundproofed play and study areas for kids returning from school or



joining parents at work on days off. This will become an expected amenity for parents.

[Photo: ASPCA]

**2. Offices that build in a variety of movement options and surfaces (hint: there won't be more chairs, and the floor won't be smooth!)** Standing up at desks was the story a few years back. Then it was desk treadmills and bikes---

which didn't take off. But the future will be about "nutritious movement" and varied movement. Biomechanist Katy Bowman tells us we need a variety of movements in our lives—and a variety of textures. "We live in a world where 'life' is mostly sedentary, and exercise is the one or two hours a day we set aside to fit in some



movement," she says. "While that movement is beneficial, research shows that this approach isn't meeting our bodies' needs for movement." Employees will stand on trays of stones or pebble mats to exercise the small muscles in their feet and legs. Workstations will provide opportunities for varied positions, including sitting or kneeling on the floor. Desks will be sited so the user can look directly out the window periodically to avoid eye issues. More staff meetings will be conducted while walking and standing. The modern office will be built around this.

## 3. Office furniture and fixtures will be easily removed, cleaned, and replaced—and recycled.

It started with the LEED and other green building certifications (and maybe some conscientious eco-minded people before that), but now we might see recycling and reuse mandatory as landfills fill up and markets for recyclables

disappear. Office partitions, desks, and chairs will be designed to be easily taken apart with screwdrivers. Metals will be kept apart so they can be recycled. (In Germany, it is already required to take apart furniture for various recyclables-pickup days.) Fabrics and finishes will be designed for easy removal and replacement.

Manufacturers will be expected to take back materials. With landfills closing, the age of “no garbage” is coming fast. Be prepared.

#### **4. Offices that accommodate remote workers.**

As businesses include more work-at-home options, meeting with one’s coworkers will increasingly be done virtually, requiring more screens in places they haven’t been before. The company, Beam, even envisions people interacting with each other face to face via



moving screens that can even move around a room. Others envision workstations made up of coworkers interacting via screens in a dedicated workspace. It will look more Star Trek than Skype. [Photo: Beam]

#### **5. The office will resemble a forest. Expect more daylight (both authentic and created) and offices designed with built-in forests.**

More and more, employees will expect their workplaces to look less like factories and more like where they’d like to be: Outside. A new Microsoft campus in Silicon Valley includes a planted roof viewable outside a floor of its office building. This “green roof” will actually help clean water that will be recycled for toilet flushing and



irrigation while providing beauty, sound buffering, habitat, and perhaps clean air. [Photo: Microsoft’s new building with green roofs and water-cleaning landscapes]

#### **6. Workers will expect more health-supporting comfort from offices.**

Napping under one’s desk at work was once a joke. But it likely will be taken seriously as a health practice going forward, especially as employees have longer commutes and the brain-refreshing power naps gain acceptance. Also expect: More air filters and white noise generators.

#### **7. The office will movable.**

Now you see it, now you don’t. Office fixtures and furniture increasingly will be on wheels to allow for functional adaptation. The increasing cost of office space in some cities will mean businesses will occupy smaller spaces, requiring a space to serve several purposes: office use, regional meetings, and special events and seminars, for example. Electricity will be supplied with power drops from the ceiling. White boards will serve as partitions that roll away as teams congregate for meetings and then roll back.

Workforce trends are changing fast, so it’s important to invest in fixtures and furniture that can change with them. Going forward, the focus will be on recyclability, health, multi-functionality, and adaptability.