



## Eight trends in commercial office design

The modern office workplace is changing rapidly and nowhere is this more evident than in the headquarters of Australian technology giants like realestate.com.au and LinkedIn.

Both companies offer their employees large communal kitchen, dining, relaxation and collaboration spaces, plus airy and modern atmospheres designed to make work feel more like home.

Internationally, companies are knocking out walls that block light or separate departments, and repurposing back office operations to create more space for public areas.

Here are eight of the top trends:

### Trend No.1: Ditching wires

Most organisations are eliminating wires and clutter from desktops and conference rooms, while taking advantage of WiFi solutions and furniture systems with integrated wiring systems.

### Trend No.2: Bringing nature indoors

Vertical gardens, recycled wood panel installations,

fabrics and upholstery that incorporate natural flower or plant patterns, and exposed concrete flooring are becoming more prominent.

### Trend No.3: Multifunction workspaces

Cubicles and small offices are transitioning into benches and non-assigned seating areas that accommodate flexible uses such as multi-media presentations and casual breakout areas. Height adjustable workbenches also allow people to stand while working.

### Trend No.4: Designated lounge areas

Wireless technology has untethered the workspace so rigid workstations are now passé. Offices are out. Relaxed collaboration is in.

### Trend No.5: Community tables

Long community tables allow people to interact more freely and are a reflection of a new cultural moment.

### Trend No.6: Mixed textures

Designers are using a variety of materials and textures throughout the workplace to create a more varied, inspiring and personalized work environment.

### Trend No.7: No more permanent layouts

Modular office furniture that can be mixed, matched, stacked, combined or separated, without rules and planning, are flavour du jour.

### Trend No.8: Workspaces arranged by colour

There's a school of thought that says colour boosts happiness, productivity and creativity so many designers are arranging new work environments with palettes of complementary colours. It is said that if you arrange your work environment with colour, your thoughts will be more organised and colourful.

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## Let there be (new) lights

Unsurprisingly, lighting system upgrades are among the easiest and most visible changes that can be made to slash costs in a building.

While the initial cost of upgrading old fluorescent tubes to LEDs is more than replacing it with the same technology, LEDs will be more cost effective in the long run.

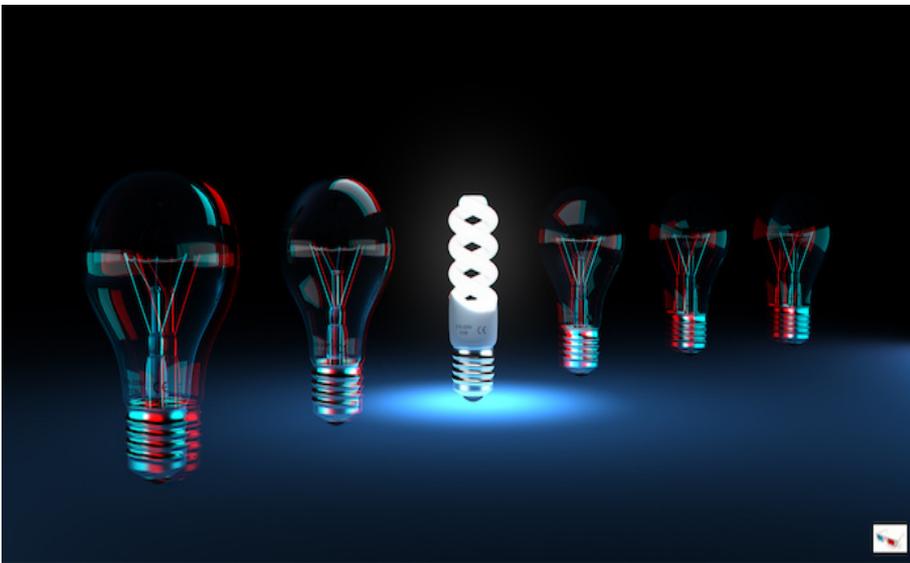
Lighting is probably the lowest of the low-hanging fruit. It's cheap, easy and delivers good bang for your buck.

It's not an invasive or an intrusive process to change a light. You're not knocking down walls, you're not demolishing stuff. You can do it over the weekend and the staff will come back in on Monday and they won't even know; they'll just have new lights.

LED tubes are currently about three times the price of fluorescents – \$10 to \$12 each versus \$3 to \$4 each – but not only do you get energy savings, they also last around three times as long, so you have reduced replacement costs as well as reduced costs to dispose of the old fluorescents," he says.

On average you're looking at about a two-year payback on this approach.

SOURCE: [realcommercial.com.au](http://realcommercial.com.au)



## How to cut energy costs in your office

Let's not beat around the bush. When it comes to your business, it all boils down to the bottom line. How much am I spending and how much am I bringing in?

Want to spend less? Shaving your utility bills is a logical first step. We spoke to the experts about how best to make a significant dent in your overheads.

### Knowledge is power

You can't change what you haven't measured, so it can pay to have sub-meters installed in your office or workplace.

Sub-meters measure how much power is being used in specific areas and then feeds that data back to you, so that you can determine where you can make improvements.

Damon Cuming, from sustainable engineering consultancy Irwinconsult, says sub-meters can be extremely precise.

"It's like, 'hold on a sec, why does the north-east corner have a three kilowatt electrical load on Saturday night? Is Johnny leaving his computer on overnight or is someone coming in and doing something?'" he says.

"Then you can say, 'OK, our baseline is this', and then you can start trimming it back."

Sub-metering systems have advanced significantly in the last couple of years, so much so that some monitoring companies, like Switch Automation, offer cloud-based metering so you can easily compare each of your buildings against the rest.

"Once you get this data in one place, you can sort of say, 'Oh, gee, I didn't realise that my per-square-metre count on kilowatt hours on this building is horrible compared to these buildings'," Switch Automation chief operating officer Peter Rake says.

"A lot of properties ... have a reasonable amount of smarts in them, they've just never been operated very efficiently."