OFFICE DESIGN:
Concepts Are Changing

Wall and Ceiling Contractors have a big stake in being familiar with changing interior design concepts

Until the late 1940’s, offices were not “designed”—they were simply utilitarian, containing the bare essentials required for effective business operation.

But as awareness of “image” became stronger in more sophisticated firms, businessmen became aware that their offices, particularly those visible to the public, were significant elements in building (or tearing down) the “image” that the firm wished to create.

And office design and remodeling became a very important part of the interior designer’s commissions.

“With our commercial clients, we have found that the office is becoming less formal and institutional,” says noted designer Norman DeHaan. “Today’s more casual environment creates a more informal ambience, which is growing more popular with many kinds of firms, not only the small, aggressive ad agencies and art studios.”

And Milton Swimmer, ASID (American Society of Interior Designers), has found that energy conservation is a prime factor in the changing office interior.

Swimmer Planning and Design, Inc., Beverly Hills, California, comments that “in the choice of lighting, color and materials—energy conservation controls many decisions.”

- Since pale colors reflect more light than dark ones, we use brighter colors.
- Many clients select natural fabrics such as wool and cotton, which are beginning to compete with the petroleum-base vinyls.
- In lighting, designers prefer the warmth of spectrum found in incandescent. Often a “mix” of lighting is used—warmer fluorescent above the desk, as task lighting, and incandescent lighting being used in the conversational area.
- Walls are now being covered with fabrics, both for added warmth when needed, and for sound-absorbancy.

DeHaan considers that “the amount of light usually prescribed (Continued on Page 29)
for the office is often excessive. Even for the task—the degree of light depends on the task itself. There is very little needle-threading required for the average office. I prefer indirect light if possible."

In colors, both designers see a strong trend toward brighter shades. DeHaan: “Colors for the office today are more daring—lighter, livelier values such as lemon peel, sun yellow, or creamy apricot. For drama, I use strong accent colors such as sienna or wine shades.”

DeHaan continues: “Since so many of the fluorescent lights in the office are cool white, which accent blue shades more, we use few blues. I feel that the warmer shades are much more appealing.”

Other aspects of office are also being revised, due to changing economic conditions.

Milton Swimmer has found that “today’s interior designer must do more with less space. For example, cabinets have become very expensive because of high-priced labor, and so, storage space is changing.

“Either steel prefabricated units or plastic modular systems are often selected for storage. In offices where wood is desired, steel cabinets are faced with wood.”

These experienced designers agree that various areas of the office demand specialized design treatment.

The reception area is the first impression all visitors have of the firm, and should be expressive of the “total image” which the firm wishes to project. Not a work area, if really demands simply a desk for a receptionist and a seating area, with visual attention provided for product or company identification.

The general office has no particular need for privacy, since it is the usual setting for clerical work which demands frequent communication. But an open, noisy office “pool” will be both unpleasant to visit and to work in, suggesting that the individual worker is only a cog in an impersonal machine.

To make the general office bearable, use good lighting and acoustics, designers advise. As a further heightening of visual interest, there should be planned use of good colors and materials, growing plants, and perhaps paintings or other objets d’art.

In executive offices, demands are much different. Most executives talk a great deal—both in person and by phone. But personal conversation and communication are seldom carried on effectively across a desk. Does the executive really need the desk at all, or if he..."
OFFICE DESIGN:
(Continued from Page 29)
does, does it need to be the same kind of desk used by his secretary?

DeHaan has found that executive offices have become much more personalized in decor. “Interesting people usually prefer to work in an interesting setting, whereas a bland and unexciting setting implies the occupant is a conventional ‘organization man’ with little personality.”

Shaping the office “landscape” depends on the construction of the buildings, as well as energy conservation, according to the designers. Swimmer, agreeing with DeHaan, has found that “today’s executive offices are still being designed with a ‘home-oriented’ environment, but the general office is often divided with five-foot panels, which provide a measure of privacy, but still permit carpeting to be used throughout and the same lighting systems above.”

STEEL FRAME:
(Continued from Page 16)

As the panels are installed, both framing and enclosure are accomplished in one operation. Just about any surfacing material may be used in a steel framed building from plaster to stone and brick to metal and plywood.

Enclosure Is Fast

Once the structural frame is positioned and attached, the structure is enclosed rapidly and interior work proceeds immediately. Work schedules are more efficient and simplified.

For example, skilled craftsmen can be scheduled to perform their functions at a designated time rather than wait for the completion of preparatory work. Plumbers and electricians can complete their jobs faster since steel studs and joists have prepunched openings for wiring and accessories.

The speed and efficiency of the overall construction with steel framing often results in a building’s completion sooner than anticipated. Consequently, significant savings in interim financing accrue since the interest paid on a construction loan is reduced. Rental income is also generated sooner in the case of apartment construction.

Code Approval, Too

The fact that steel is an incombustible material may provide lower fire insurance premiums. An architect can easily meet just about any fire rating requirement through the selection of proper collateral materials.

Approval has been received by International Congress of Building Officials (ICB); Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA); Southern Building Code Congress (SBCC); as well as satisfying F. H. A. requirements.

Lightweight steel framing systems offer the versatility and flexibility to meet the specifications of just about any type of project from low rise apartment construction, schools, office building and nursing homes to shopping center complexes.

Although the systems can easily be adapted to any building plan, it is recommended that the decision be made during the initial planning stages. Revisions are easily transacted when steel framing is successfully bid against alternative construction methods.

Although the desired effects are often achieved at costs substantially below other methods of construction, the economies are due to efficiencies in design and installation methods, not to cutting corners. The uniformity of the steel framing member, which does not warp, crack, or swell, helps reduce call backs.

When a contractor’s customer understands the various materials and methods of framing used in residential and light construction, he will discover that steel framed buildings are recognized as structurally reliable, top quality construction.