



***Technological advancements continue to alter the business landscape and, therefore, our work environments in significant ways. Major generational shifts are also happening as Baby Boomers are retiring and younger generations are growing up, transforming the makeup of the U.S. workforce, and ultimately shifting the expectations of workers today.***

***Competing in this global, knowledge-driven economy requires organizations to attract and retain top talent. In addition to offering competitive compensation and benefits, savvy business leaders know that candidates desire work environments that not only support the business objectives but offer comfortable, adaptable and livable workspaces.***

## **The Changing Workforce: Millennials Become Largest Living Generation**

Today's workforce is a mix of generations made up primarily of those in the Millennial, Generation X and Baby Boomer cohorts. While the needs of all these groups need to be considered in work environments, it's notable that Millennials recently surpassed Baby Boomers and Gen Xers to become the largest living generation.

It is estimated that by 2020, Millennials will comprise 50% of the global workforce. Naturally, business leaders are taking notice and adjusting recruit-

ing practices. Compared to previous generations, Millennials have a somewhat different set of expectations. At a formative age, they were exposed to the global economic crisis with many seeing their parents lose jobs and pick up the pieces. As a result, companies need to work harder to build trust with this generation.

Having grown up with smartphones, tablets and video games, they more easily adapt to technology than previous generations. This generation is nimble and adaptable. They think globally and are passionate about making a difference in the world. They appreciate feedback and interesting work in flexible surroundings.

According to the [World Economic Forum](#), 40% of U.S. businesses have difficulty finding qualified employees. Especially in this state of transition, a robust strategy for attracting and retaining employees is key to achieving business goals. Compensation and benefits rank at the top of the list for candidates of all generations, but work environments account for up to 25% of job satisfaction according to research conducted by [CoreNet Global](#), the association for corporate real estate. The bottom line? People want to feel comfortable and valued at work.

## Today's Modern Workspace Environments

We work differently than we did even 10 years ago, and work environments are following suit. While we are more mobile, our work still demands a high level of collaboration and teamwork. As a growing number of people work remotely, individual workspaces are shrinking.

Square footage previously occupied by expansive rows of tall-walled cubicles is being replaced by open floor plans with multiple areas set aside for collaboration. Natural light, better indoor air quality and amenities like kitchens and fitness facilities help employees feel healthier and more motivated at work.

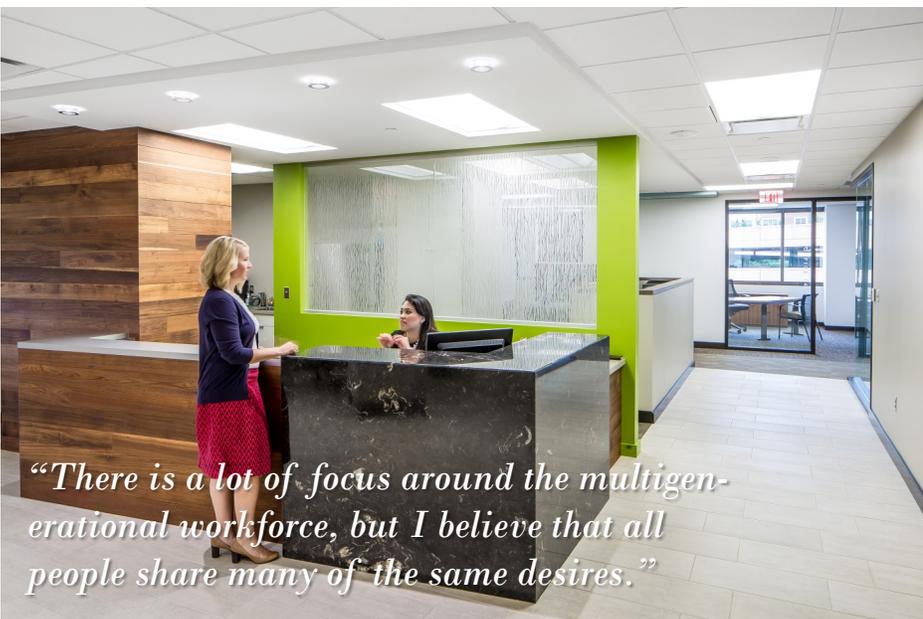
Emotionally, people feel more connected to their employer when the design incorporates colors and aesthetics that reflect the values, culture and brand of the company.



"People need multiple work zones, from heads-down quiet work, to social and collaborative spaces," said Jennifer Koehler, vice president, interior design, for Opus AE Group, L.L.C. "There is no one perfect workstyle for everyone, companies need to acknowledge that and provide reasonable options."

Control of personal space matters to employees of all ages. Upgrades like sit-to-stand work surfaces accommodate differing workstyles and help employees feel valued.

"There is a lot of focus around the multigenerational workforce, but I believe that all people share many of the same desires," said Koehler. "Flexibility of space utilization is certainly important, but we can't forget that most employees also need a home base—a personal space they can call their own."



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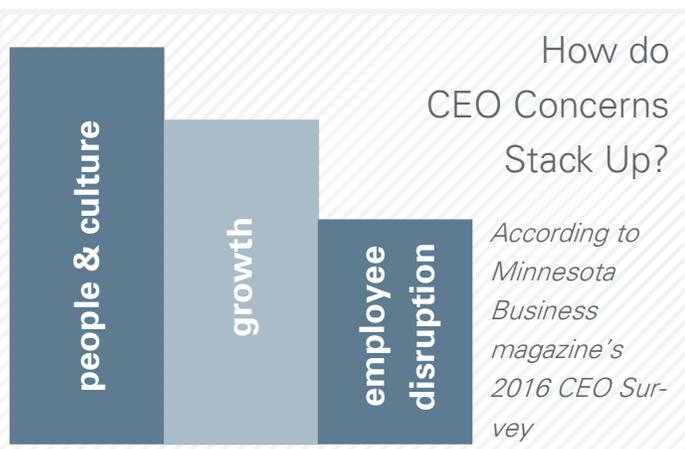
*“Our physical environment can help shape our productivity, mood and well-being. The happiest employees are those who feel respected and heard.”*

## The Role of Modern Workspaces in Recruiting

Business success hinges on a company’s ability to recruit and retain qualified people, and that is becoming more difficult. In [Bullhorn’s 2016 North American Staffing and Recruiting Trends Survey](#), 81% of respondents indicated that there are serious skills gaps in today’s workforce and shortages in many industries.

Meanwhile, when asked what keeps them up at night, 44% of CEOs in *Minnesota Business* magazine’s [2016 CEO Survey](#) said “employee disruption.” And their highest priorities were “people and culture” (52%) and “growth” (49%).

Investing in a well-designed, inspiring workplace that’s appealing to employees is crucial for recruiting the best talent and keeping them. It also contributes to achieving business goals and accelerating growth through increased productivity and efficiency.



“Our physical environment can help shape our productivity, mood and well-being,” said Koehler. “The happiest employees are those who feel respected and heard. We should always design spaces with that goal in mind.”

For example, Opus recently completed work for an engineering company that moved to a new location after decades in a building that no longer met their needs. The new design takes advantage of natural light for everyone with open office spaces and a healthy mix of conference and collaboration spaces.

The company also provided new furniture throughout, including sit-to-stand work surfaces. “The transition from high-walled workstations has been a real game changer for them,” said Koehler. “We worked to improve personal comfort, and those moves resulted in increased productivity for existing employees and helped in recruiting new employees in a highly competitive market.”

***It’s important for business leaders to understand the forces shaping today’s workforce. Generational shifts require consideration of differing attitudes and workstyles, and are pivotal in the growth of our companies and economy. Modern workspaces are a key component for attracting and retaining top talent with comfortable, amenitized, functional spaces where people can perform their best.***



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