How can biophilic design bring employees back into the office?

Office working is back, yet people are still working remotely. In some instances, this can be more practical. But with 1 in 5 Brits wanting to work remotely full-time, have workers become too comfortable in their own homes?

Biophilic design has many benefits besides the aesthetics. But how does bringing the outdoors inside improve our working environment? Here, we explore biophilic design and its benefits for workers.

What is biophilic design?

Biophilia is a term _coined in 1973 by Erich Fromm_, a psychoanalyst, to describe the desire by humans for a connection with nature, which was then suggested to be a genetic desire by Edward Wilson in 1984. But with _66% of humans estimated to live in urban environments by 2050_, it's inevitable that biophilic design will become more prominent in our lives. It's no surprise that it's _shaping up to be a major trend this year_.

So how can something be counted as a biophilic design? There are _three key elements_, one of them being direct experiences. This involves physical contact with features of nature, including air, water, light, plants, weather, animals, and landscapes.

Alternatively, indirect experiences can be incorporated into the design, where connecting with nature can be satisfied by forms, shapes, and colours – such as through paintings, natural materials, or even sculptures.

The experience of space and placement accounts for the third element of biophilic design through various senses: touch, sound, light, smell, movement, time, and taste. Something as simple as lighting a wood scented candle can tick that box.

Biophilic benefits

Biophilic design is stress relieving, so where better to implement it than in an office? The levels of our bodies' main stress hormone, cortisol, are reduced when elements of nature engage the mind with fascination, thus resulting in restored attention and focus.

Poorly designed offices can actually _negatively impact the well-being of workers_. So sprucing up the space is going to make a difference for employees. But biophilic design, in particular, will not only prevent negative impacts but can also actually boost one's well-being. Nature is, of course, at the core of this design. Given _its ability to increase happiness_, positive social interactions, and a sense of purpose in life, it will undoubtedly be an effective implementation in an office.

Your productivity is certain to increase by implementing biophilic design into an office space. Research has revealed that _productivity can increase up to 20%_ and absenteeism can be reduced by 15%. Not only will you feel full of life, but you'll also be channelling that energy into your work, so you can boost your self-esteem through your accomplishments.

Incorporating biophilic design into working spaces

Greenery is arguably the simplest addition for offices. Small indoor plants are a perfect way to brighten up a space by placing them on a desk. _Dracaenas, peace lilies, and bromeliads_ are just a selection of the many desk plants that can be easily looked after – so, even if you're not a plant connoisseur, you won't have to worry when it comes to maintaining them. Or if the walls are dull and spacious, they could be filled with what is known as 'vertical gardens', where the space is filled with a stimulating ecological display.

Although office working is back, _29% of UK organisations are implementing hybrid working_ for employees. So for the days outside of the office, you may be

missing the elements of nature surrounding your desk. But who's to say that this can't be implemented into your at-home working environment? Particularly with the warmer and (hopefully) sunnier months coming up, it could be an idea to work in your garden. If you've already got a table and chairs, then you're halfway there – but it might be sensible to invest in some _outdoor heaters_ to fend off any early morning breezes.

Working in an office doesn't mean that you have to be surrounded by plain designs. And given the benefits of biophilic design, whether it's for stress relief or productivity, it's definitely an area to consider implementing into a working environment.

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