

Facilities Management from A to Z



Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard
published monthly in Facilities by Lexis Nexis between 2008 and 2016

M Meeting Room Design

The design and management of an organisations meeting and conference space is an important role for many facility managers. As mobile technology has taken work out of the office, the office building has become the key point of social interaction and knowledge exchange. Meetings are still the most effective means of generating ideas, collaborative decision making and managing group activity. But this can be made much harder or easier depending on the environment, furniture and equipment of the meeting room and its availability at the desired time.

Calculating how many meeting rooms the organisation requires depends entirely on the culture of the organisation and the nature of its work. In a traditional hierarchical organisation managers may have cellular offices of their own where small meetings will take place. In an open plan office there may be an increased need for separate space although if the organisation operates in a very informal style the need may be met by the provision of casual breakout space.

Economies of scale in larger buildings will be able to provide a variety of meeting room styles and sizes to meet different needs. Lecture rooms for large theatre style briefings; Conference rooms for the biggest meetings; Interview rooms for one-to-ones; Small, medium and large meeting rooms; Intimate, formal and informal space; Prestigious board rooms and purpose built video conferencing rooms. In smaller buildings intelligent design will attempt to meet as many of these needs as can be achieved through flexible furniture and adaptable partitioning.

The effectiveness of each meeting room can be greatly influenced by choices made around furniture and decor. Chairs need to be comfortable but firm enough to ensure attentiveness rather than drowsiness during long meetings. Stackable chairs and modular tables assist the flexibility of room layouts but must present the right image to visitors where corporate reputation is favoured over institutional efficiency. Heavily used space will require durable finishes while design choices on colour, lighting, artwork and soft furnishings will affect the acoustics and general ambience.

Choices of support equipment for meeting rooms will dictate how they are used. These may be low tech solutions including stationery, flip charts, wipe boards, clocks and wall track or pin boards to display flip chart sheets. Increasingly higher tech solutions have become the norm with smart boards, projectors, screens and audio/video conference equipment often integrated into the design of the room.

“The Inspired Workplace” by Marilyn Zelinsky ISBN 1592530567 is one of a number of useful books exploring workplace design for the encouragement of social interaction to inspire creativity and productivity.