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As banks look to modernize and expand their operations centers with the latest technology and customer experience enhancements, careful thought should also be given to office space, including furniture, as well as the overall work environment. If you think all desks are created equal, then think again! There have been numerous changes to office furniture in the past decade. Not only are there many more choices of colors, fabrics and designs, but there are new trends to consider. The kind of furniture you choose, along with the type of floor plan you implement, can signify the type of work culture you are trying to create as well as the type of employee you are trying to attract and retain.

Past design methods encouraged private offices around the perimeter, large offices with small cubicles, meetings in conference rooms only, small employee kitchens located in the basement and closed off departments with non-centralized copy/filing areas.

In today's work atmosphere, design methods are breaking down the walls and giving considerations to creating "wellness" environments, informal department meeting spaces, more centralized areas and open and col-





laborative spaces. Modern work environments need to be designed both to attract and retain talent as well as to satisfy today's growing multi-generational labor force.

Millennials, the largest demographic and most influential age group, are making decisions about where they work based on their values. Health and well-being is a top priority for them, even in their buildings and work spaces, and this is fueling a new construction trend of "wellness"-minded spaces. Millennials tend to be attracted to such concepts as lifestyle-focused, fitness-forward, healthy living, innovative design, collaborative space and cultural engagement. These can be translated into work elements that may contain open floor plans, better ergonomic solutions, less closed in walls and closed doors, inflatable exercise balls instead of chairs, and standing desks. While rare, there are banks who have even gone so far as to install a "treadmill desk" that allows employees to work on a computer or video conference while exercising on a treadmill. De-

spite the fact that may be extreme, it is important to note that millennials will comprise 40% of the workforce by 2020 and will be the driving force behind these healthier options.

Although millennials may occupy a majority of the workforce, it should not be overlooked that many people are also retiring later and therefore the workplace is increasingly becoming more cross-generational. It is crucial to focus on the factors that appeal to all employees and realize you may need to provide multiple settings for different work-styles, no matter the generation.

The impact to the bottom line is always the impetus for every business decision made and this holds true when creating an exciting work culture. While some furniture choices and floor plans may seem costly, weak team performance, poor employee satisfaction, low morale and meager productivity can adversely affect the bottom line more than the price it costs to make those changes. Research reveals that poor workplace

design costs U.S. businesses an estimated \$330 billion in lost productivity each year. Happy employees are productive employees, so designing workspaces with environmental factors in mind to maximize your team's happiness will directly increase overall productivity.

When renovating or remodeling your operations space, you don't have to have the budget of a large corporation. There are many cost-effective details you can incorporate to increase the well-being and satisfaction of your employees. Focusing on workplace design as an investment instead of an expense will go a long way towards promoting the success of your employees and your financial institution. By ensuring a greater focus on team performance and collaboration, planning for multiple generations and their work preferences, and providing a workspace that accounts for the increasing competition for talent, you'll be well on your way to remaining competitive with a happy and more productive workforce.

James G. Caliendo is a former bank executive and now President and COO at the 108 year old design/build and retail services firm. In the past 18 years alone, under Jim's direction, PWCampbell has worked with over 500 financial institutions influencing millions of square feet of retail and operational space to create engaging, impactful and scalable solutions for every sized facility project.