



MODERN PROBLEMS

# THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

How to pimp your corporate cubicle



*Illustrations by Mr Patrick Ledger*

Instead of taking a flying car to the office, the reality of arriving to the modern workplace probably involves staring at a sea of uniform workstations. Your employer may have given the public spaces whimsical names meant to evoke the boulevards of Paris or the constellations of the heavens (“our meeting is in the Omega Centauri boardroom at 10.00am”). But many of us are left scratching our heads in this new work environment: how to maintain our individuality, our spark and not have a whisper-fight with our significant other? No need to despair. Simply peruse the following bullet points (because what cubicle dweller doesn’t love his bullet points?) on how to turn your drab desk into a cutting-edge creative zone.

## 01 Remain In The Light

Where you sit in your office plays a big part in your productivity – or lack of. “Your eyes require the full variation of light and texture to stimulate the brain, so ideally you should be able to see at least one source of natural daylight from your chair,” advises Mr Clive Wilkinson, president of Clive Wilkinson Architects ([clivewilkinson.com](http://clivewilkinson.com)) and the man responsible for designing Google’s ground-breaking Silicon Valley HQ. If your desk placement means you have your back to the outside world, propping a mirrored panel behind your monitor will give you a glimpse of any passing sunshine – as well as provide ample warning when your boss is on the warpath. As for more artificial antidotes to the literal corporate gloom, the svelte yet supreme THIN task lamp ([juniper-design.com](http://juniper-design.com)) generates a desktop-filling 500 lumens of warm, white light from its 33 dimmable LEDs.

## 02 Upgrade Your Headset

If you’re going to spend any significant length of time on your work phone, ditch the outdated office headset for some chic telephony from Gallic communication specialist Invoxia ([invoxia.com](http://invoxia.com)). Its Audiooffice hub is engineered to accommodate the full gamut of VoIP services from Skype to Viber, plus it conveniently offers both a hard-wired receiver and an interference-free speakerphone. If your business adheres to the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) system, you’d be wise to acquire an EE signal booster to boost your smartphone reception indoors. The discreet hub has a 20-metre radius, so you’ll be doing your immediate colleagues a favour too – as a stronger phone signal also equals longer battery life.

## 03 Colour Your World





You don't need to be an occupational psychologist to know that the shade of industrial oatmeal decorating your desk space is doing nothing for your personal wellbeing, but before you repaint your personal space in a shade of Ferrari *rosso corsa* consider these colourful words of wisdom from feng shui guru Mr Simon Brown ([chienergy.co.uk](http://chienergy.co.uk)): “Over time we've acquired deep associations with the colours of nature and relate this to the general mood we experience in a particular season,” he says, “so the blues and greens linked to spring, for instance, inspire enthusiasm and a fresh approach to the way you work, while the orange and yellow palette indicative of summer will encourage a confident, outgoing attitude.” Exercise your new-found colour comprehension with Digital Habits' Cromatica ([digitalhabits.it](http://digitalhabits.it)), a hybrid desk lamp and Bluetooth speaker you can set to fill your cubicle with any shade of colour via its built-in touch sensor. Just steer clear of red: it's proven to reduce levels of concentration and analytical thinking.

## 04 Don't Strew It, Store It



No one wants to see your boxes of herbal tea gathering dust next to your gym kit. If you really need to stash your workaday swag under there, stylish storage solutions don't come more perfectly formed than the late Mr Joe Colombo's spacious Bobby cabinet for B-LINE ([b-line.it](http://b-line.it)). Pair it with Grovemade's stellar Desk collection ([grovemade.com](http://grovemade.com)), a comprehensive range of walnut and leather accessories, from pen pots to iMac stands via a keyboard tray featuring a concealed compartment for spare batteries and business cards.

## as Let It Grow



Pot plants are proven to prevent fatigue, reduce stress and improve the air quality and, unlike office pets, they're unlikely to stain the corporate shagpile. Mr Ian Drummond, creative director at Indoor Garden Design ([indoorgardendesign.com](http://indoorgardendesign.com)) advocates orchids for the simple fact that they're colourful, stylish and "they really like nothing more than being left alone". All you need worry about is that they have proper drainage. Alternatively he recommends *echeveria*. An elegant, rosette-shaped succulent from Mexico, it's renowned for its resistance to drought (ie, you forgetting to water it again).

## 06 It's OK To Put Your Imaginary Porsche In A Pewter Frame

This is not an invitation to decorate your new and improved work zone with P&L spreadsheets, rather an opportunity to remind yourself why you're here and what you're striving towards. "Pin up a photo of something you really aspire to own or have already acquired through your success at work," recommends Mr Brown. "This will help you focus your mind to continue building on those achievements."

## 07 Sit Pretty



According to the British Psychological Society (BPS) we spend an average five hours and 41 minutes on our backsides every working day. Regularly adjusting your seating position will increase blood flow, pumping more oxygen to the brain to help improve productivity. "It is important to listen to your body," says Mr Scott Openshaw, human factors and ergonomics knowledge lead at Herman Miller ([hermanmiller.co.uk](http://hermanmiller.co.uk)). "As someone once said, 'the best posture is the next one'." If your current office throne isn't providing you with that all-important flexibility, try out Mr Yves Béhar's [SAYL](#)

flashing your Calvins at your co-workers.

## 08 Free Yourself



If all else fails, you could always opt for a more radical solution to upgrading your cubicle: “The first thing you need to do is to tear it down,” advises Mr Wilkinson. “The Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and it’s high time office cubicles followed suit. A visual connection between you and your team is fundamental in the modern workplace. You need a sense of understanding what everyone else is doing, so if you can modify your cubicle by removing any high partitions it will make a huge difference.”

## 09 Trade Places

Mr Paul Malmstrom, founding partner at creative agency Mother New York, prefers a more musical-chairs approach to encouraging productivity: “We rotate seats every three months in a semi-random manner,” he explains. “Part of the beauty of rotating is that you clean up your s\*\*t and you start over with a minty fresh page.” For those of us whose offices are still trapped in the yesteryear of fax machines and filing cabinets,



DESK BUDDIES



MONTBLANC

Meisterstück LeGrand Gold-Plated Rollerball Pen



SMYTHSON

Aide-Mémoire Cross-Grain Leather Panama Notebook



B&O PLAY

3i In-Ear Headphones



LE LABO

Santal 26 Candle

*Words by Mr Henry Farrar-Hockley*



CALL US

UK: 0800 044 5705  
0330 022 5705

FOLLOW US ON THE MOVE



SHOP FOR HER AT

NET-A-PORTER.COM

SIGN UP FOR STYLE NEWS

Your email

SUBMIT