



# WHY BIG LAW IS TAKING UP LESS SPACE

Office spaces in nearly every industry vertical are changing. Technology, Millennials' attitude toward work, and economic pressures are driving businesses to redesign their workplace to meet the demands of the modern marketplace. Though law firms are often the last to adopt new trends in office design, even they are not immune to these market forces. Many law firms are redesigning their spaces to maximize efficiency, to attract and retain top talent, and to capitalize on today's technological capabilities.

Some of the top trends in law office redesign include:

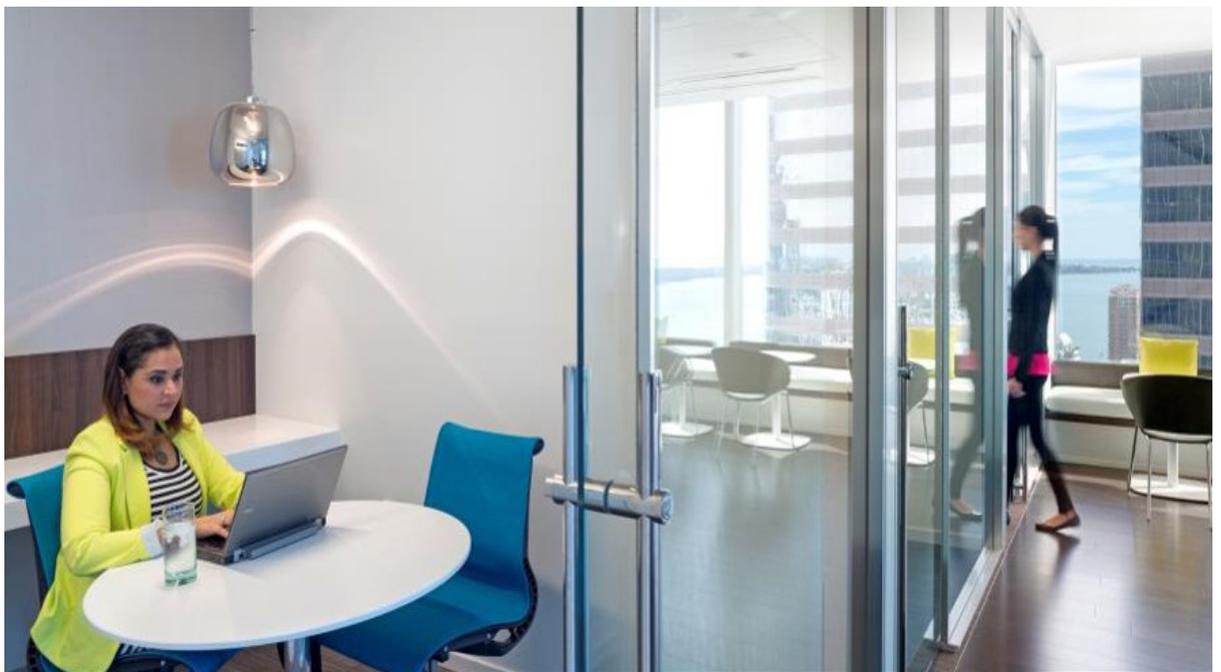
- Reduction of space, particularly for individual offices
- Providing a variety of work areas, including more collaborative space
- Reallocation of administrative spaces
- Incorporation of advanced technology and mobile capabilities
- Flexible design to adapt to future change
- Sustainability and "going green"
- Designing to reflect a "brand."



## Thoughtful Reduction of Space

Law firms typically allocate more usable square feet (USF) per employee than any other industry, but that is changing. To save occupancy costs, law firms are redesigning their space to include universal office sizes, wall-less offices, and mobility (work-from-anywhere) programs. Many of these forward-thinking firms have been able to reduce their space by as much as 40 percent while also increasing headcount.

- Firms with one-size offices typically take up 20 percent less space than firms with variable office sizes. These offices usually measure about 150-160 square feet. **(Gensler)**
- Other firms have opted for two office sizes, with an average allocation of 550-600 per attorney. **(NELSON)**
- Some firms have installed “internal offices”—i.e., windowless offices set up within the firm’s space, often with extensive use of glass facades. These offices may be optional for associates but required for contract employees, non-partner-track attorneys, of-counsel attorneys, and specialists.
- Many firms are reducing the amount of space dedicated to formal conference areas



INTERNAL OFFICE STRATEGY: OPTIONAL FOR ASSOCIATES

ASSIGNED FOR CONTRACT, NON-PARTNER TRACK ATTORNEYS,

OF-COUNSEL & SPECIALISTS



## Variety of Work Areas

Providing a variety of work settings that allow employees to focus and to collaborate results in a high-performance workplace and more satisfied employees, according to research.

- A well-balanced work place provides settings and choices to accommodate various work modes and habits, including:
  - Focused/“head-down” work
  - Teaming efforts
  - Collaborative work
  - Social/entertainment events
  - Training/learning sessions **(NELSON)**



PROVIDING CHOICE OF A VARIETY OF WORK SETTINGS THAT EFFECTIVELY BALANCE, FOCUS, AND COLLABORATION RESULTS IN A HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORKPLACE

- Highly mobile lawyers move from office to office and thus require a comfortable space in each location to do their jobs effectively.
- As in many other industries, law firms are especially keen to add collaborative space, since younger workers tend to prefer working in teams.
- Converting traditional space into collaborative space not only appeals to Millennials but also saves occupancy costs. One of Cresa’s Los Angeles clients was able to eliminate an entire floor by converting all offices to single-size offices and changing much of the remaining space to collaborative space.

## Reallocation of Administrative Space

Mergers, technological advances, and the need to cut occupancy costs are driving many law firms to reallocate their support spaces.

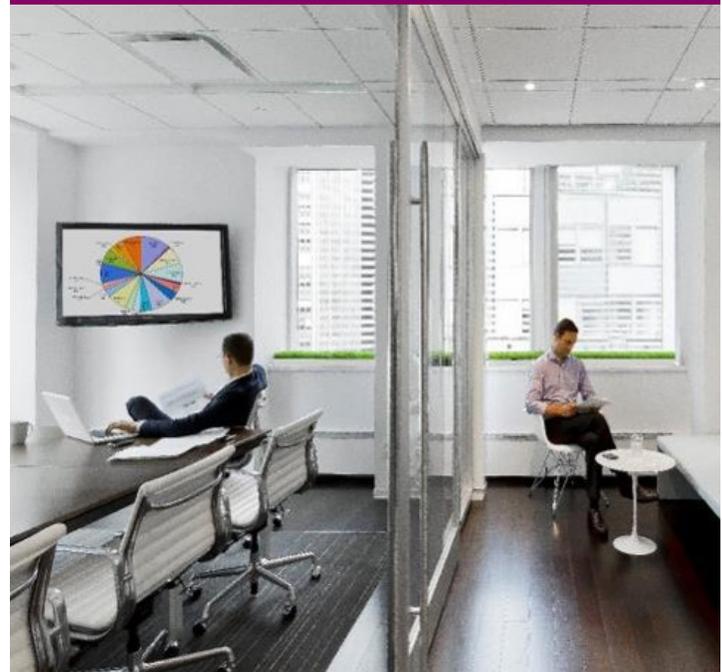
- Reallocation of administrative space is especially important following a merger, when the ratio of administrative staff to attorneys changes, requiring consolidation of support space.
- Digital technology is allowing law offices to forgo or to scale back traditional accoutrements like law libraries and file cabinets. As a result, many firms have significantly reduced the size of their law library (to 10 square feet per attorney) and file storage (to 50 square feet per attorney). **(NELSON)**
- Advances in technology are enabling firms to centralize administrative functions into a single location from which they can serve all offices remotely. Many firms have saved costs by moving non-client-facing staff to lower-cost space. Some have set up operations centers in outlying markets or smaller cities with lower labor costs.
- To maximize efficiency, some offices contain multi-purpose support spaces—e.g., a paralegal and secretary “flex zone” that includes cubicles suited to both roles.

## Technology for Savings and Efficiency

Technology is helping firms to cut costs dramatically and to gain unprecedented efficiencies. Today’s forward-thinking law firm has reliable, omnipresent technological capabilities (both virtual and tethered) with anywhere, anytime access. The ubiquity of technology (especially mobile technology—smartphones, tablets, Wi-Fi, etc.) is changing work practices and spurring shifts in the uses and types of space required.

- To encourage flexibility and productivity, some firms are adopting a “bring-your-own-device” approach by supporting a variety of end-user devices.
- Many firms are optimizing IT operations by focusing their in-house staff on high-value services and using third parties for commodity and non-core operations. These firms are shrinking their IT space to an average of 20 square feet per attorney. **(NELSON)**
- Firms are leveraging hosted and “software as a service (SaaS)” offerings to make their IT environments more flexible and scalable.
- Innovative solutions that enhance productivity, reduce risk, and increase service delivery are allowing firms to focus more on their business.
- Many law offices are providing technology and processes that allow attorneys to better manage their engagements, facilitating more predictable costs and outcomes. Advances in wireless video technology, for example, have made video conferencing much less expensive and more sophisticated, allowing workers to meet virtually from almost anywhere.

A WORKPLACE THAT MEETS THE NEEDS  
 OF YOUR FIRM TODAY, BUT CAN BE  
 RECONFIGURED COST EFFECTIVELY TO  
 ADJUST TO FUTURE WORK STYLES



## Designing for Flexibility and the Future

The trend in law office design is overwhelmingly toward flexibility—design that can easily accommodate a variety of work needs, activities, and future changes. A “future-proof” office design meets a company’s current needs but can be reconfigured cost-effectively to adjust to future work styles.

- A future-proof office might contain support spaces designed for maximum productivity—e.g., a paralegal and secretary “flex zone” that includes cubicles suited to both roles—as well as multi-purpose spaces. A large multi-purpose space, for example, might be used as a conference center, a banquet hall, a lecture room, a training space, and/or a boardroom.
- Some firms have invested in flexible furniture, such as partition systems. While more expensive than conventional furniture, flexible, adaptable furniture enables firms to easily and quickly reconfigure their office space based on need.
- Contract attorneys and contingent staff need flexible workspaces to perform large document reviews and other temporary but demanding projects.



### Ensuring Sustainability

Sustainable design is a trend with staying power. The digitization of data is enabling firms to “go paperless,” and this small initiative seems to have set in motion the broader adoption of green practices across industries. Now law firms—and their young professionals—are calling for space that provides a friendly environment while saving energy.

- A “green” image can enhance marketing efforts and the firm’s brand.
- Forward-thinking firms are using place and setting to create a culture of “belonging” that conveys a strong sense of connection and identity with the firm for all.

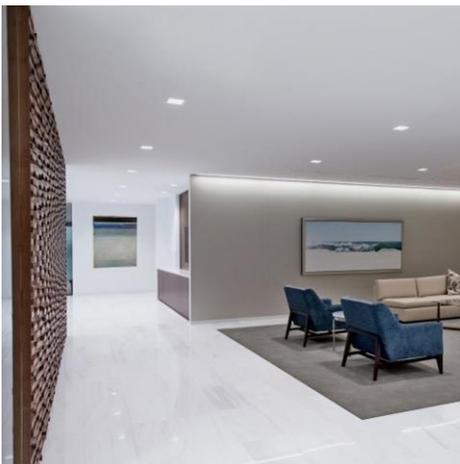
### Communicating a Brand

While adopting these trends can help law firms to save cost and space, each firm should select and implement the strategies that reinforce its unique culture and brand. The chosen design should enhance the firm’s image with an office that differentiates it from others in the marketplace.



### Design Matters

Ultimately, the design of a workplace affects performance, employee engagement, and innovation. For best results, redesigning or reconfiguring an office should be done thoughtfully, deliberately, and with plans for the long term in mind.



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### Learn More

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