

COVER STORY



Creators of COOL

From yoga classes to beer taps, Phoenix businesses are finding different ways to retain employees by making work a lot more fun

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Determining what's cool is pretty subjective. But when you walk into the new Tempe offices of public relations and advertising agency Zion & Zion, it's the first word that comes to mind.

The company shelled out \$4.3 million to achieve its version of cool: a 14,000-square-foot space on Farmer Street whose open, modern design includes wood floors and unique, welcoming furnishings.

The new office, which opened four months ago, also includes a key feature for those after-work socializing needs.

Co-owner Aric Zion makes it clear his firm's new digs are about keeping employees happy, motivated and not looking to switch over to another of the Valley's firms.

"If somebody said, 'What was the No. 1 goal of this space?' the answer was to have a space that would be so inspiring to ... the entire team that, basically, the idea of leaving becomes inconceivable because who wants to go squeeze into a cube like an

eel?" he said. "It was more about retention and attraction when it comes to people."

The company isn't alone in trying to develop a unique office space that fits its individual culture. For businesses, bringing in a designer and starting from scratch may save money, according to designers, architects and those making the move.

A survey by the American Society of Interior Designers found a pleasant workplace is directly related to an employee's job satisfaction. People who like their workplace were 31 percent more likely to be satisfied with

their jobs, according to ASID's 2012 survey.

Nearly half of the job seekers surveyed also said a company's physical space affected their decision to accept a job offer.

Zion & Zion's new space is achieving results, Zion said. The firm has received a number of queries from prospective employees and recently filled a position.

While technology and marketing companies often boast features such as recreation and game lounges or in-office gyms, what makes a good fit ultimately depends on company culture,



ZION & ZION

Location: 432 S. Farmer Ave., Tempe

Size: 14,000 square feet

Employees: About 35

Time in use: Four months

Describe your office space in three words:
 Embodying our brand



Aric Zion, CO-FOUNDER, ZION & ZION

Why did you choose the layout/design you did? We had a vision for the new offices of a bright, open, modern and comfortable environment for their team. The primary goals were to create a space that would inspire our existing team and attract new talent as we continue to grow.

What are the benefits of your office space layout/design? Increased efficiency and collaboration (via touch-screen technology and the ample supply of both enclosed and open meeting space). For example, a main area of the new Zion & Zion building, the Cafe, not only provides a break room for employees, but also is used for client events.

How does it help your business? It promotes retention of existing team members and attracts new ones, while inspiring people and making our agency a place where people want to spend time. Also, it allows creativity to happen anywhere and take any form.

If you could redesign or renovate, is there anything you would do differently? Put a hot tub on the roof.

said Stephanie Fanger, workplace strategist with Phoenix-based Goodmans Interior Structures.

Still, Fanger echoed the results of the ASID survey about job seekers, especially younger people, making decisions based on office aesthetics.

"The millennial generation shops around for employers," she said. "It's not always the amount of money that attracts them. It's the physical environment and amenities."

Fanger said the cost of a cool or unique office space can fall in line with that of a more tra-

ditional setup.

"If anything, because open configurations are utilized quite frequently, it means less furniture and less pieces," she said.

Martha Baker, an architect with Phoenix-based Kinetic who has worked on various types of office interiors, agreed.

"I don't believe these types of spaces need to cost more than a traditional build-out," she said. "Sometimes you have to tap into a bit more creativity and resourcefulness, but the concepts that make these environments unique can be achieved on a variety of budgets."



WHAT IS COOL?

A 2012 survey by the American Society of Interior Designers attempted to quantify what a workspace means to employees. Here are a few results:

31%

Employees who like their workplace who say they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs

41%

Job seekers who said physical office space would influence their decision on whether to accept a job offer

51%

Employees who said physical work space affects their decision on whether to stay in an existing job

SOURCE: AMERICAN SOCIETY OF INTERIOR DESIGNERS

8.8 hours

Amount of time each day spent at the office for employed adults ages 25-54

SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

However, final cost ultimately depends on the space design and what type of furnishings or layout a company wants.

For Zion & Zion, that kind of money brought large windows looking onto downtown Tempe and walls lined with whiteboards for doodling or jotting down quick notes or brainstormed lists.

The new space also features integrated technology including a room-reservation system and touch-screen monitors for presentations. Zion & Zion worked closely with neighboring architecture firm Architekton to bring its new office concept to fruition.

One key trend for offices is a move toward open and collaborative workplaces, said Fanger.

"It brings people together," she said. "Different research has found that if people get to know co-workers, they are happier and will be more productive."

Still, maintaining smaller, private areas for employees to perform individual tasks or speak privately with clients also are important, said Baker, who worked with Tempe-based PopHealthMan in developing an office that incorporated the

two extremes.

"Depending on the client, we have an area that's more open at PopHealth vs. closed," she said. "We had to deal with acoustical privacy and trying to manage the difference between being open and also having privacy you need."

PopHealth's offices include an open area for informal meetings and interactions among employees, as well as rooms where they can close doors for private conversations.

"It's a balance between having traditional formal spaces and also those open spaces that everyone does like and that encourage people to collaborate," Baker said. **Z**

► MORE COOL SPACES

We asked six local executives with cool digs to comment on why they went with the interior design they did, and what it has meant to their business and culture. On the following six pages, with a series of photos illustrating the work environments, we highlight what they had to say and how having a cool work environment can build creativity and boost employee production.