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Millennials fuel trends in Phoenix office space design

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AMY EDELEN, Cronkite News

Experts estimate that in five years, millennials will make up more than half of the workforce. That shift will influence how companies build office space, industry insiders said.

"This demographic is changing how these companies make real-estate decisions and then how they actually occupy and build out their space," said Ryan Bartos, managing director of Savills Studley, a national commercial real-estate firm with a Phoenix office.

Bartos spoke at a panel discussion on Wednesday as part of Phoenix Startup Week. He said companies are placing more importance on satisfying employee needs.

Millennials typically look for collaborative workspaces close to public transportation and freeway access, Bartos said.

Companies can accommodate those new workers by building wide-open workspaces instead of cubicles to promote social interaction. They also can incorporate modern construction with exposed ductwork, large glass windows to increase natural lighting and concrete floors, he said.



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Zion & Zion in Tempe has made its office more acceptable to creative workers. Millennials are seen as a driving force behind the revamp of the modern office.

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Commercial real-estate broker Matt Coxhead said companies are dumping conference rooms and holding meetings in break rooms.

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"A lot of those things are playing into the decision-making factor a lot more these days than solely based on cost," Coxhead said.

Bartos said Phoenix still has a long way to go before it can become a talent-rich technology hub, such as San Francisco, but he's seen progress with companies attempting to create office space that is inviting to millennials.

Weebly, a San Francisco-based startup that relocated to Scottsdale, added amenities such as a massive break room, a ping-pong table and catered lunch every day.

"When they decided to come to the Phoenix area, they were solely focused on Scottsdale," Coxhead said. "We're seeing these little technology hubs popping up – and it's in Old Town Scottsdale, it's in downtown Tempe, and we're even seeing downtown Phoenix now."

Coxhead said it's important for companies to find business space that's flexible to accommodate growth.

"That's the biggest thing with these guys is that nobody knows what tomorrow is going to be," he said. "You don't know what is going to happen with your company."

Coxhead said Baby Boomers tend to have longer workplace tenures. And although millennials may switch jobs more often, they will stick around longer if companies give them the right workplace environment.

"It's all about creating that culture and believing in that culture and letting them help you define that culture," he said. "If you do that then they aren't going to go anywhere."

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