

RETURNING TO THE OFFICE

HOW WHITEBOARDS FIT INTO THE NEW WAVE OF OFFICE LAYOUTS



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How Whiteboards Fit into the New Wave of Office Layouts

The modern office space is an ever-evolving environment. We've witnessed its layout change from a sea of cubicles to an open concept, then back towards divided spaces for dedicated purposes. Today, as we return to offices and adjust to a world in which social distancing is likely here to stay, two things are happening. First, we're rethinking how we work in a hybrid in-office and remote-work environment. Second, we're reimagining the spaces where we work, all to create safer and more productive environments where employees want to be.

Nearly **75%** of remote workers want to return to the office.¹

In rethinking both how we work and where we work, there are four key areas of focus:

- **Collaboration:** essential for increasing productivity
- **Communication:** essential for creating new ideas
- **Connectivity:** essential for boosting morale
- **Culture:** essential for maintaining a company's core values

These concepts play a vital role in creating an in-office environment that is productive, engaging, and enjoyable for employees, and each one of them can be enhanced by implementing the right communication tools into the office. The visual method of communication offered by whiteboards, glassboards, and bulletin boards helps boost productivity, enhance collaboration, and increase morale. Why and how these tools can be implemented in "new" office environments depends on the areas in which they will be placed.





COLLABORATION

Increasing Productivity by Placing Whiteboards in Collaborative Zones

Research shows employees can be productive at home, but this isn't the case for everyone. Some studies have shown that as many as 45 percent of employees are more productive when working in the office, as opposed to 30 percent that feel more productive at home.² This can be because many people are simply more focused when they have a dedicated work environment.

This decrease in productivity is one of the reasons why employees are eager to return to the office, with only 12 percent stating that they want to stay working from home on a full-time basis.³

When employees return to the office, managing productivity will still be a challenge, and it's the job of the office's layout, along with implemented products like whiteboards, to help keep them engaged with their co-workers and with the work at hand. As we pull away from fully open office concepts and give employees their own private areas to work, the most viable means of communication and task management remain virtual (email, office messaging, task-management apps, etc.). The trouble with this method of communication and task management is the same at home as it is in the office; it keeps people locked on their screens.

Research on productivity shows that technology decreases a person's attention span and makes them less productive.⁴ Emails, instant messages, and other virtual alerts take us away from the task at hand, and it can take a long time to get back into a productive state after the distraction has faded.

While this technology no doubt has its place in the office, limiting it can have its benefits, which is why designated "collaboration zones" are being built into newer offices. These breakout areas, complete with whiteboards and other collaborative products, are communal areas where coworkers, teams, and departments can meet to brainstorm, plan, designate tasks, and perform any necessary team functions outside of communicating digitally from private office spaces.

45% of employees say they are more productive working in an office than remotely.²

As many employees will only be in the office for limited amounts of time, it's essential to provide them with the tools they need to collaborate and be productive while maintaining comfortable and effective social distances.

When placed in collaborative zones, whiteboards serve multiple purposes:

1. They are an easy-to-use solution for creative brainstorming, onboarding and training, and other team-focused activities.
2. They are analog ideation tools that provide much needed “technology breaks”, which help employees stay focused and on-task.
3. They can be customized (size, color, shape, images) to fit into any collaboration zone.
4. They allow for social distancing in collaborative environments.

The simple act of writing something down can have a profound impact on productivity. Psychological research shows the very act of writing something down can make us accountable to a goal, and goal-related writing had a significant impact on the ability to perform better.⁴

Options for Whiteboards in Collaboration Zones

A. Mobile Whiteboards: options for on-the-fly meetings wherever employees need them.

B. Wall Mounted Whiteboards and Glassboards: for dedicated collaboration zones and meeting rooms.



Where Communication Whiteboards Can Be Placed for Effective Communication



CONFERENCE/MEETING ROOMS



SOCIAL GATHERING AREAS



AT EMPLOYEE DESKS/
WORKSTATIONS



AT DESIGNATED EMPLOYEE
"STAND-UP" AREAS
(FOR QUICK MEETINGS)

COMMUNICATION

Increasing Ideation with Whiteboards During In-person Meetings

While employees can still collaborate while working from home, there is nothing more effective than face-to-face communication. Humans are wired for human connection, and much of communication is non-verbal. Facial expressions, body language, and other non-verbal cues are lost when communication is largely done via email, phone, and even video chat.

Whiteboards, bulletin boards, and other communication tools give employees what they need to meet with one another, work with one another, and build off one another. There is an inherent advantage to employees circling around a whiteboard to brainstorm, especially when compared to exchanging emails or communicating over the phone.

Science backs this as well. Studies and surveys of employees reveal that face-to-face conversations energize people, keep them thinking creatively, encourage meaningful change, and promote active listening and diversity of thought.⁵ It is the most effective form of communication in an office place.

CONNECTIVITY

Increasing Morale by Placing Whiteboards in Social Areas

People miss the social connectivity associated with office environments, and seclusion has taken a significant toll on employees who have been working from home for the better part of a year. Some of the negative impacts that employees have reported include:

- **“Zoom fatigue”:** video calls require more focus than face-to-face conversations as we need to work harder to process non-verbal cues (facial expressions, voice tone and pitch, and body language).⁶
- **Low morale:** home employees often feel secluded and left out. Drops in morale can even be accompanied by health risks.⁷
- **Work-life balance:** many telecommuting employees suffer from an inability to detach their work and home spaces, which can lead to a blurring of work and life boundaries.

52% of employees who work from home feel their colleagues don't treat them equally.⁷

Social spaces have played a more important role in new office layouts. Employees often value the time they spend with their coworkers, time that is ultimately limited as hybrid schedules become the new norm. New social spaces create an incentive for employees to want to make the return to the office, and they can bolster the morale of those who do.





Implementing Whiteboards in Social Spaces

Social spaces can be filled with any number of items, and whiteboards can play a pivotal role in these spaces. They offer time away from screens in a space that allows employees to relax and interact outside of their normal work routines. These vital interactions can create a more positive, less stress-inductive workplace, and can help teammates bond and work better together.

When placed in social spaces, whiteboards can be enjoyable ways to:

- Play games
- Post inspiring quotes or insightful questions
- Leave something creative like a sketch, poem, etc.

Whiteboard options for social spaces are much more open to creative features that make them more interesting and appealing. Some options to consider include:

- Colored glass surfaces: [see a full Glass Color Guide](#)
- Intricate shapes
- Whiteboard mounting configurations

When designed effectively, custom whiteboards can become functional pieces of artwork that fit into any social or collaborative space.

Options for Whiteboards in Social Areas

C. Mobile Whiteboards and Bulletin Boards: non-stationary options allow employees to connect wherever they are in the office.

D. Hex Whiteboards: unique shapes and colors that enliven any space.



CULTURE

Using Whiteboards to Reinforce Your Commitments and What You Stand for

Increasing Workplace Safety for Returning Employees

Safety is a concern for many returning workers, with 54% of U.S. employees saying they are worried about exposure to COVID-19 at their job.⁸ As the inevitable return to the office happens, office layouts are changing to make employees feel safer and more confident as they get back to their normal routines. Modern offices are trending away from close-quarters and open concepts and towards more private, space-divided areas. Whiteboards have also evolved to meet these needs; they are easier to clean and use, and they can be deployed within an office to create an environment that is more attuned to the needs of the modern worker.

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Space Division Solutions

Respect for employees is a major part of the culture for any business, and showing that a company cares about employee safety demonstrates this level of respect in a major way. Space dividers play a role in keeping employees safe by dividing up the office into sections, each with its own specific purpose. This allows employees to interact and work together while preventing large gatherings.

Space division has two major benefits: proximity and privacy. Offices that implement divided-space floorplans can create partially secluded spaces that separate from one another both in terms of proximity and privacy. Space division furniture and whiteboards allow for semi-private collaboration spaces that are separate from one another without reverting to an office layout that is completely devoid of an open concept. They offer visual and acoustical privacy on top of creating a semi-socially distant work environment for employees.





Personal Whiteboard Solutions

For even greater privacy and separation, whiteboard options can be implemented into personal offices and spaces for employees, allowing offices to reap the productivity benefits of whiteboards while creating a socially distant, yet collaborative workspace where employees can feel safe.

Mobile Whiteboard Solutions

When space is limited in an office, mobility allows for versatility and flexibility. Empty space can have multiple uses, and employees can move about the office to create their own collaboration or personal private workspaces as needed. Mobile whiteboard options allow for this flexibility. New spaces can be created at will by employees based on their needs, and there is no limit to the space's size, use, and layout. These mobile solutions allow employees to create spaces where they feel engaged and comfortable and allow them to work based on their preferences.

Glassboards for Mission Statements, Core Values, and Company Vision

What are the company's mission, vision, and core values? How are those reinforced throughout the office? An ideal way to display them in an artistic way, while also ensuring maximum visibility and exposure, is using mounted glassboards throughout the office. Custom fonts and images can be placed on glassboards that are displayed throughout an office, acting as a source of motivation and pride for employees.



WHY GHENT?

For more than 40 years, we've been crafting and serving our customers' needs with innovative and customizable products, exceptional customer service, and on-time, hassle-free delivery. As a premium supplier of visual communication tools, Ghent is your one-stop-shop for whiteboards, glassboards, bulletin boards, partitions and mobiles to enhance your office, conference room, workspace, or classroom.

Quality: with over 95 percent of our products made in the USA, we know what quality looks like. Our products feature durable materials and surfaces that are resistant to scratches, stains, ghosting, and wear. We outlast the competition and back our products with up to 50-year warranties.

Customization: every whiteboard, glassboard, and bulletin board that leaves our dock is made to order by men and women who understand the importance of quality craftsmanship. We feature near-endless customization options that include size, shape, color, materials, fonts, images, and so much more.

Easy to Use and Clean: our products are manufactured to make writing on them a breeze. They are also easily cleaned and disinfected. Surfaces and materials are specifically chosen to adhere to BIFMA's guidelines for performance as it relates to typical cleaners, disinfectants, and methods for cleaning and maintenance.

Secure Shipping: we ship our products on-time and guarantee that they arrive damage-free. We have taken the time to master all the complexities that go into shipping and have developed custom packaging specifically molded to protect our products, which is why we have the lowest damage rates in the industry.

Incredible Customer Service: as a team of passionate and qualified individuals, we work to follow through on our promises, from marketing and customer service to production to shipping. We are confident that you will find the perfect visual communication tool that is customized to meet your needs.

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