

THE DESIGN OF FUTURE WORKPLACES

Image credits: Calder Consultants

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Above: The National Australia Bank's building on 700 Bourke Street, Melbourne

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The National Australia Bank (NAB) made its presence felt in Melbourne's Docklands when its innovative and campus-style workplace opened in 2013. The building on 700 Bourke Street can't be missed and boasts an unusual, triangular floor plan. It houses a total of more than 6000 employees, but staff share a total of only 4500 workspaces.

NAB utilises what experts call activity-based workspaces, wherein the traditional office desk model is uprooted and replaced with a system where staff move freely between meeting rooms, desks and casual settings, depending on the task at hand. The building also features The Village – a co-working space that was imagined by global design and consulting firm, Woods Bagot. The Village is a professional yet relaxed space where NAB business customers and community partners can connect with clients, work between meetings and learn from leaders.

NAB serves as a classic example of the evolution of workplace design in Australia, says James Calder, the founder of Calder Consultants. Calder Consultants is a global, independent consulting firm with specialist expertise in the future of workspaces.

Calder, who worked on the NAB project, says, “The future workplace is a very different place now. And that's because ‘work’ itself has changed over the years. Most of what's going on in the growing industries is this form of intelligent, creative and team-based working. People now are required to not just work collaboratively, but they have the freedom of place and work virtually, too.”

Calder adds that the role of his consultancy is to help businesses today create a working environment that provides the physical space in which employees can not only work, but also have their creativity, mobility and collaboration bolstered. And that's achieved through various models and strategies, such as open plan offices, desk hopping, co-working spaces and more.

He says that business owners have to ask themselves the following question before redefining their workspaces for their employees: how do you want your people to be working to fulfil not just the business' goals, but also their own personal goals?

“It's a great time to reinvent some of your business aspects. And that's what we help our clients to do. We don't just advise on the design, but we strategise with our clients on how they should be future-proofing their business and looking at the opportunities that the space might do for them and their staff,” he adds.

Calder, who will be talking more about the design of future workplaces at Pause Fest with his client Atlassian, adds, “There is a strong relationship between the culture and vision of a company and the quality of the space that it has. These are no longer mutually exclusive and, without them, it's impossible to build a great workspace.” ■