



Connecting Nature Within the Workplace

Humans are naturally connected with nature. The biophilic design hypothesis was formally introduced in 1984 in Edward O. Wilson's book, "Biophilia". He defined biophilia as "the urge to affiliate with other forms of life". He made the case that "to explore and affiliate with life is a deep and complicated process in mental development" and our very existence depends on it. Bio (life) and philia (love, affinity for, attraction to) literally means the "love of life, love of living systems". This is not a new concept; it's as old as mankind; a neurological and psychological orientation of people towards nature. It's in our DNA.

As our world becomes less human focused, more technology driven and we spend most of our time inside buildings, we crave the opportunity to reestablish a connection with nature around and inside our buildings. This has led to the development of not just biophilic buildings but entire cities that reconnect people with the natural environment while incorporating sustainable design strategies and decreasing the environmental impact of the built world.

We spend more time at work with co-workers than we do with our own families. How can we improve this experience?

Jacques Cousteau noted "people protect what they love". How can we create an experiential work environment that is loved by the people that work there? And if you were able to create this space, what would be the level of creativity and output that would be generated in this environment? Where are your most creative ideas generated? Many say in nature, by water, surrounded by the magnificence of the outdoors. Imagine this, what if we dissipated distracting sound by adding white noise into the work environment that mimicked the rhythmic pulse of waves breaking on the beach?

There are endless opportunities to incorporate nature in every aspect of the built environment from adding natural light through skylights, living green plant walls, more organic raw materials in the construction as well as the furniture. Our "brewery inspired" benching system WorkiBeam and raw "live edge" wood slabs and desks harvested through local urban forestry, create an instant emotional connection. Instead of a collaboration room, what about a locally made teepee or organic nook made from plywood?

There is humanness to handcrafted furniture that cannot be experienced with factory manufactured furniture. The key to affordability is to incorporate notable pieces with more traditional furniture, especially in areas where staff socializes as a community.

The race for talent has intensified and will continue to be the most pressing challenge for businesses. When prospective employees as well as clients enter your office, do they immediately feel at home, do they talk about the emotional connection they feel to your space? Consider adding more human elements in every area of your space, the payoff in attraction and retention of staff and clients will be well worth the investment.