

How Biophilic Design Can Support Workplace Wellbeing

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In the UK, most people spend up to [90% of their time indoors](#), with [62% of office workers seeing no sunlight this this past winter](#). Yet the benefits of spending time in nature cannot be overstated, as research has found that spending just two hours per week in nature can improve health and wellbeing. For facilities managers tasked with creating healthy, productive workplaces, this raises an obvious question: if people can't get outside, how do we bring the benefits of nature indoors?

The great indoors

Commercial spaces like office buildings can be overstimulating environments, often using harsh artificial lighting and uninspired furnishings, as well as being poorly insulated against sound pollution from high-traffic areas. These factors combined can lead to unnecessary stress and a lack of engagement, forcing more employees to need respite from work simply due to the environment. For facilities management teams, this translates into a workplace that works against its occupants rather than supporting them.

One way to remedy this is by incorporating elements of biophilic design into the workplace. Biophilic design refers to integrating elements of the natural world into the built environment, through the inclusion of naturalistic textures, hues, shapes and lighting, to name a few ways in which biophilic design can be expressed. It's something we have been exploring at Interface for well over 10 years now. It can also be as simple as using subtle reference to nature to aid intuitive wayfinding and is a concept that is constantly evolving with no one right way to incorporate it into commercial design.

While it is easy to think that plain, minimalistic decor may promote a sense of calm, visually simple wall

and floor coverings may actually have the opposite effect by being too unstimulating, reducing employee engagement. [Employees who work in well-designed offices commonly report lower levels of stress and higher levels of job satisfaction](#), indicating that taking the time to curate a considered interior has long-term benefits for businesses.

Opting instead for nature-inspired hues and textures for wall and floor coverings provides a more visually engaging environment, while also promoting feelings of calmness and serenity.

Flooring plays a central role in shaping how calming or overstimulating a workplace feels. Materials that offer natural hues, subtle texture and strong acoustic performance can help create a more grounded environment, particularly in high-traffic areas where noise quickly becomes a source of stress. Rubber flooring is especially effective here thanks to its durability and ability to absorb sound. Interface's [nora range](#), including the noraplan stone collection is one example, pairing nature-inspired shades with the practical benefits of rubber to support both wellbeing and long-term performance. Interface has always taken cues from nature in its designs across all its flooring ranges, making it perfect for spaces with different functional or aesthetic needs. Luxury vinyl tile and carpet tiles offer further opportunities to introduce colour, warmth and natural references, ensuring biophilic design can be integrated into almost any commercial project.

Utilising biophilic design can also be an excellent way to support neurodiverse colleagues, who may otherwise struggle to perform to the best of their abilities in the workplace. Understanding how to accommodate neurodivergence is a relatively new field of study, and organisations may feel lost as to how they can best support their colleagues. Tweaking the work environment with biophilic features is a great place to start, as it can aid in alleviating stress and promote feelings of calm, as well as [boost productivity by 15%](#).

The impact of poor wellbeing

Boosting wellbeing is not the only way in which biophilic design can be an asset to organisations, as it can also aid in increasing retention and reducing burnout from poor mental health.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development reports that [sickness absences have risen to 9.4 days per employee per year on average](#), with mental illness accounting for [41% of long-term absences](#). Evidently, prioritising employee wellbeing is vital for businesses and facilities managers to tackle the growing problem of burnout and absenteeism, and improve productivity, presenteeism, and retention.

When considering how to support employee wellbeing, it can feel overwhelming knowing where to start. While open communication with employees and policy implementation are an excellent way to overtly make changes to wellbeing, using biophilic design can greatly contribute to workplace wellness and contribute to the curation of an inclusive, supportive workplace for all.

Perfect by design

As research develops on the best ways to promote wellbeing and prevent stress-related absences, facilities managers can make the first steps to improving wellbeing through the materials they opt for, curating tranquil, inspiring spaces where productivity can thrive. Incorporating biophilic design into commercial spaces can be an easy and cost-effective way to boost wellbeing, and uplift employees.

For more information about Interface, visit: <https://www.interface.com/GB/en-GB/design/biophilic-design>