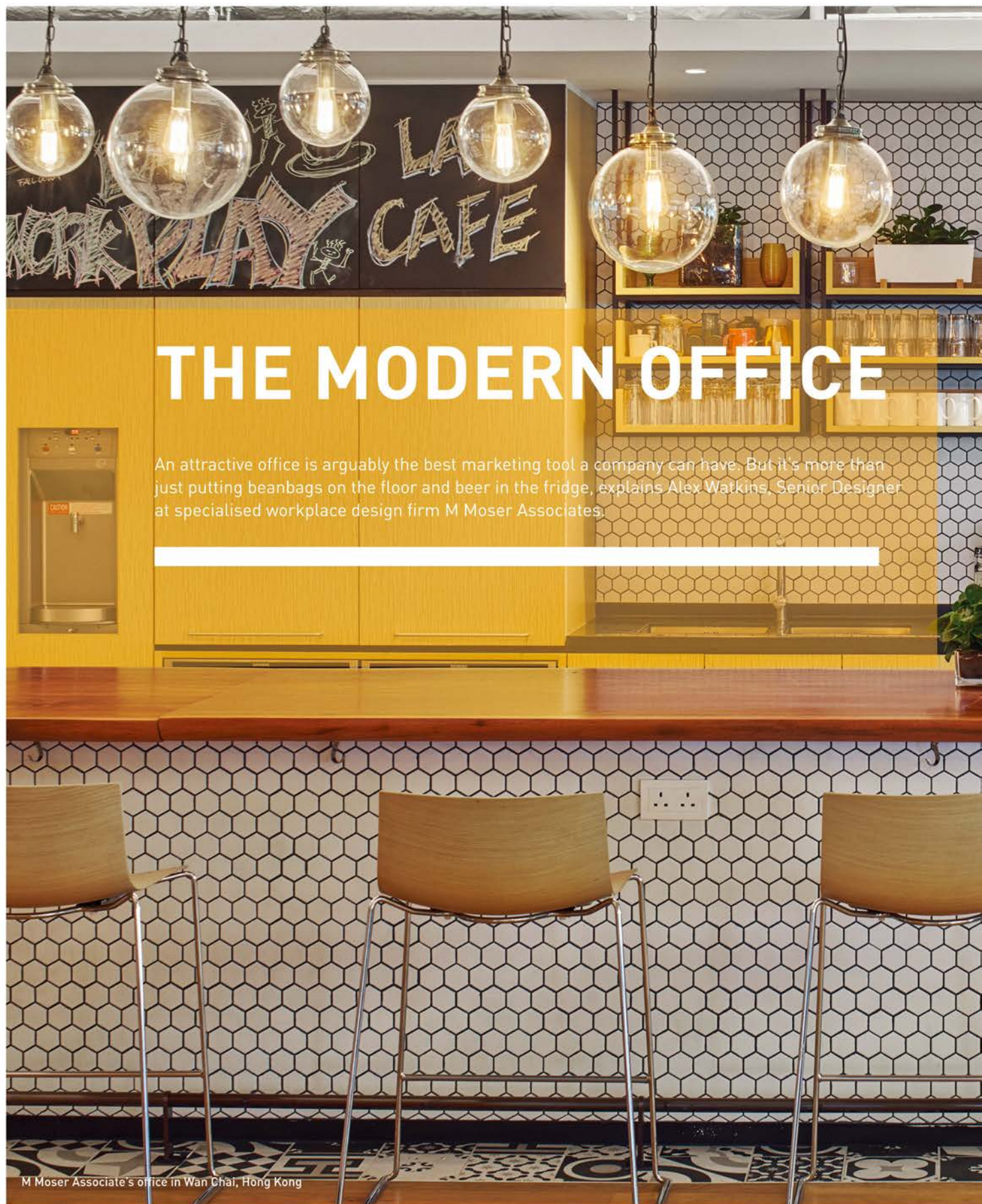




## **THE MILLENNIAL'S CHOICE**

**A NEW ERA FOR HR**



# THE MODERN OFFICE

An attractive office is arguably the best marketing tool a company can have. But it's more than just putting beanbags on the floor and beer in the fridge, explains Alex Watkins, Senior Designer at specialised workplace design firm M Moser Associates.

M Moser Associate's office in Wan Chai, Hong Kong





**T**o attract young talent, you need to put forward a more vibrant and invigorating atmosphere in your office that provides choices and options for how to work, which from a traditional workplace and corporate branding image may not always be the easiest to affirm,” says Alex Watkins. With the modern office fast becoming the latest battleground for attracting young talent, corporations are taking a closer look than ever at the environment they offer their employees.

“Every company’s needs are different and there’s no one solution for everyone. Our job is to understand those distinctive needs while also educating clients on the latest industry qualities and trends,” he says. It means creating a space that’s more than a misguided replica of the famed Google-style workplace while also balancing what the current, and next generations, are looking for.

“There’s always a question of balancing these desires, whether it’s through incorporating private and relaxed areas, open and energetic spaces, or functional ways of including technology and exercise in the workplace,” he explains

***“I think there are elements of co-working spaces that can be adapted to any business”***

Whatever the company or industry, creating an attractive workplace is all about offering options and incorporating solutions that can be enjoyed by all. “Sure, you can work at your normal workstation, but you should also have the option to

grab a coffee and sit on the couch with your device/laptop, take a seat amongst some trees to collaborate with colleagues or even choose to work next to the best view in the office at a standing desk for a few hours,” he says. That movement throughout the workday creates possibilities for better communication and collaboration amongst staff while also providing them with positive visual stimulation.

Even something as seemingly basic as furniture can play a role in facilitating interactions. “I’m often sitting at a high table here in the office and it’s fantastic for sparking conversations with people who are walking past at eye level, these organic interactions with a Managing Director or new staff generate confidence and important relationships that exceed the working office,” says Alex.

## The co-working buzz

So are we moving towards co-working-style workplaces for all? Corporates with a more traditional image have typically been resistant to embracing the kind of vibrant, collaborative environment seen in your typical co-working space. But things are changing.

HSBC is the latest major corporate to test the waters by shifting 300 of its staff to the Causeway Bay branch of global co-working giant WeWork – part of M Moser’s extensive portfolio of projects. Spaces like these are increasingly designed to alleviate common gripes about open space areas being overly noisy and disruptive by offering a combination of quiet areas to work semi-privately, along with fully open and non-private areas to communicate freely. “I think there are elements of co-working spaces that can be adapted to any business,” says Alex. “The way we’re moving forward is that there is more possibility for an even hierarchy to work settings in the office. Just because tradition tells us your title should enjoy a personal enclosed office it doesn’t mean that you need one. Again, it’s about educating people – you may give up one thing but you can gain so much more as a result.”

## A branding exercise

Too corporate? Not corporate enough? It’s a common dilemma for large organisations. “Sometimes corporate identity needs to be balanced with a vigorous, café vibe,” he says. Internal collaboration feeds off such an

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Alex Watkins, Senior Designer at M Moser Associates

atmosphere and the process can begin with something as straightforward as taking a bold hospitality concept and putting it in the middle of a very corporate environment.

The result is that more and more traditional companies are starting to embrace a more balanced showcase of substance throughout the whole office and not just in the front end while introducing more blending of vigour and vibrancy throughout the whole journey of the workplace. “We’re encouraged by this, but it could still be pushed further. This is especially the case in Hong Kong, where businesses are just starting to embrace a forward-thinking mentality in how they work but are still a bit behind.”

As offices are increasingly regarded as an essential component of a company’s branding, embracing such a mentality will be essential for attracting the next generation of talent. “We’re trying to have conversations with clients about embracing workplace design that can push their business in a direction that we feel will allow them to evolve and grow,” says Alex. When this happens, companies start to attract new talent and people take

notice. “All of a sudden, your corporate identity begins to change in a way that is positive for your development.” **E**

## Five essential elements for a modern workplace

### 1/OPTIONS

Focus on improving the experience of employees by providing options, choices and different styles of work settings for everyone to use.

### 2/ENCOUNTERS

Increase opportunities for cross collaboration and improved synergy between all employees by strategically planning the spatial journey to inherit optimised encounters.

### 3/WELLNESS

Attention to workplace wellness and employee wellbeing through reducing stress and creating a more relaxed environment - clean air, greenery, maximised sunlight, opportunities to exercise, water points evenly located and sustainable materials.

### 4/ATMOSPHERE

Aspects of all interior design disciplines; hospitality, retail, residential etc. should affect different components of the office to encompass an atmosphere that resembles day to day life and not just a place of work.





## 5/OFFICE CULTURE

Tailored professional advice and education about how the company's brand of working style and office life can evolve and adapt in order to maximise the best office culture and attract new talent.