

Change it up!

Remodeling may offer alternative to purchasing new space

By Danielle Birkin
Contributing writer

In light of the nationwide economic downturn, a dynamic shift has recently occurred when it comes to corporate office space. Many business owners are now opting to remodel and refresh their existing workplace rather than take on the additional expense typically associated with relocating to new digs, according to Leslie Parraguirre, president of Colours Inc., a valley-based boutique design firm.

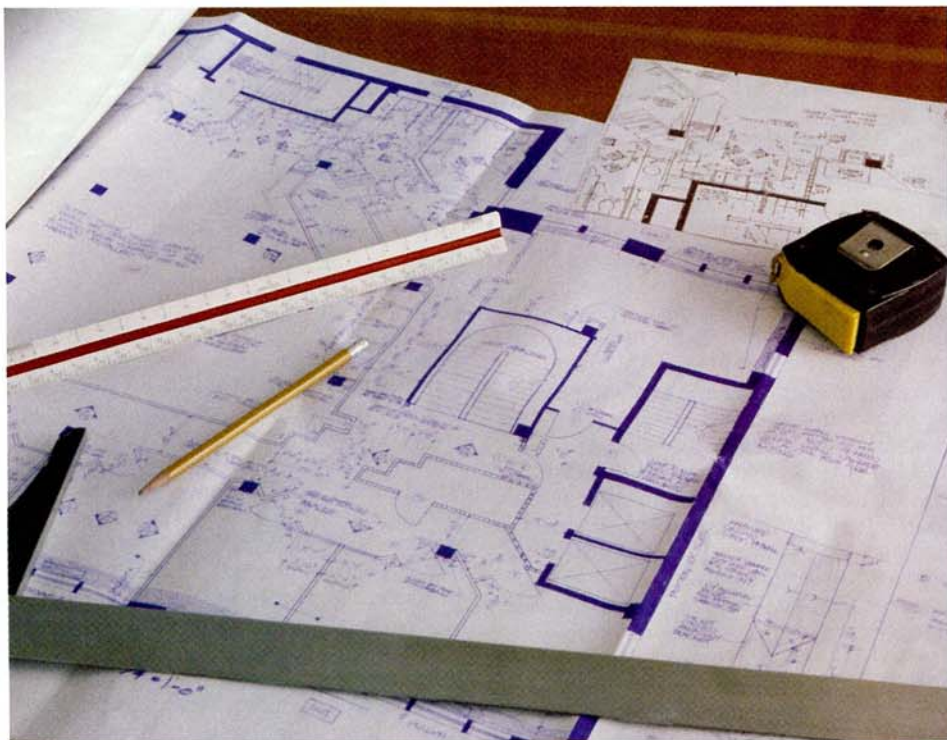
"Colours used to do about 2 percent remodeling, and now we do 60 percent or more across the board both commercially and residentially," said Parraguirre, who holds a license with the Nevada State Fire Marshall and recently acquired her general building license with the Nevada State Contractors Board. "People are looking at how much they can put back into the business or home they already own or lease, and remodeling has become a less expensive alternative to starting from scratch. The commercial market is very tender right now, and they don't want to spend money, but it's amazing what you can do simply by changing paint colors and fabrics and carpeting. You can get a whole new look."

Robyn MacAdams, director of interior design at Carpenter Sellers Architects, said there are three primary regions to consider when remodeling: the reception area, the conference room and the back office.

"There are a lot of very simple treatments you can do to dress up the back wall in the entry behind your front desk to make it look very contemporary and up-to-date," MacAdams said, adding that new lighting fixtures and furniture can also go a long way toward transforming the vestibule.

"Place No. 2 is your conference room, where you show off your company," she said. "That is where you want to develop your image and get your punch. The first thing to do is bring it up to date as far as upgraded technology, then you can add a new top to your existing conference table and get new chairs. We're also seeing a lot of conference rooms with glass walls in the center of the office space that allow for a lot of light."

In the back of the office, MacAdams



suggests eliminating interior walls and cubicle partitions to create open spaces — "instead of having everybody in their own little cell," she said — and bring in as much natural light as possible. New carpeting and paint can make a noticeable difference, and the creative use of boldly colored accent walls can add depth and drama. Many businesses are also setting up cool, casual seating areas where co-workers can meet, talk and eat lunch.

And the days of ugly plastic office furniture are happily in the past.

"There have been a lot of improvements in the design of modular office furniture," said Ramona Burns, a project coordinator with Carpenter Sellers. "It can be mixed and matched and moved around, and it doesn't have to be gray. There are a lot of great, bright colors that can look really contemporary."

In addition to the front lobby, conference room and back office, MacAdams said there is one other area to take into consideration when remodeling.

"If you are so lucky as to have your own restrooms, that is another place to invest in," she said. "You can make them look cool and fresh, and architecturally, you can be really creative in there. Try to do something that people remember, so they walk away and remember the flavor that the company has."

Depending upon the complexity of the remodeling project, Parraguirre said, many businesses are able to keep their

doors open during the process, especially if they work with a general contractor that specializes in remodeling and understands how to avoid costly delays and pitfalls.

"They have a whole different vision and mind-set and know how to do their homework up-front," said Parraguirre. "You also have to be prepared for any contingency. Once you decide to go forward, you should have all of your materials on-site or ordered before you begin work. And always check your lead times."

In order to have a successful business, Parraguirre said it is imperative to have a memorable brand and look.

"It is important to stay current and contemporary," she said. "People should not be intimidated and need to realize that you can create a new look within a budget."

Another option in office space?

Roy Burson, principle architect at JVC Architects, said some Southern Nevada business owners are looking at less conventional locations, such as buildings that are considered industrial.

"There is a lot of brand new office space that is not leaseable now because the economy has slowed down tremendously, but there is a lot of warehouse space that lends itself to opportunities for lower lease rates," Burson said. "If you take over a bay in an area that has already been developed and renovate the space, you can cut back on your rent." **cre**