

Designing for Experience: Rethinking the Architect's Office as a Destination

The role of the workplace has fundamentally shifted. In an office landscape as employees have grown accustomed to working from home, cafés, and third spaces, the office is no longer a default. It must be a destination.

For design firms, this shift presents a unique challenge. What should an architect's office look like today? More importantly, how can it offer something that remote environments cannot?

In relocating its headquarters to a full floor within the Chrysler Building, Ted Moudis Associates approached these questions from an internal perspective, treating its own workplace as an opportunity to test and redefine the future of the office.

From Workplace to Experience

Rather than replicating the traditional studio model, the design reimagines the office as an experiential, hospitality driven environment. The goal was not simply to support work, but to enhance the day-to-day experience of employees and create a space people genuinely want to be in.

This approach is rooted in a broader industry shift. Workplaces must now foster connection, support well-being, and reflect organizational culture in a meaningful way. At TMA, this meant prioritizing the employee experience as the foundation of every design decision.

The result is an amenity rich environment that blends the comforts of home with the functionality of a high-performance workplace, challenging long standing expectations of what an architect's office should be.

Designing for Flexibility and Connection

Flexibility became a central driver of the design. Instead of assigning rigid functions to spaces, the office supports a wide range of work modes, from focused individual tasks to large scale collaboration and social gatherings.

At the heart of the workplace is the café, which serves as a dynamic, multi-functional hub. Throughout the day, it transitions seamlessly between a coffee bar, informal meeting space, workspace, and event venue, encouraging spontaneous interaction and reinforcing a sense of community.

Surrounding this core are a variety of settings, including lounges, huddle rooms, private focus areas, and open workstations, allowing employees to choose how and where they work. This level of autonomy not only supports productivity but also contributes to overall satisfaction and well-being.

A Human Centered Approach to Design

Unlike traditional projects, designing for an internal team required a deeply collaborative process. Input was gathered from across the firm through focus groups, surveys, and hands on prototyping, ensuring that the final design reflected a wide range of perspectives and needs.

This approach extended beyond planning into testing and iteration. Workstations, storage systems, and collaborative environments were evaluated in real time, allowing the design to evolve based on direct user feedback.

The result is a workplace shaped not just by design intent, but by lived experience, creating a stronger sense of ownership and alignment among employees.

Challenging the Architect's Office Aesthetic

A key ambition of the project was to move beyond the conventional aesthetic often associated with design studios. Rather than defaulting to industrial materials and minimalism, the office embraces warmth, texture, and residential influences.

Soft lighting, layered materials, curated furnishings, and biophilic elements contribute to an environment that feels welcoming and comfortable. This shift reflects a broader understanding of workplace design, one that recognizes the importance of emotional experience alongside functionality.

Brand identity is also integrated into the architecture in a subtle and immersive way, reinforcing the firm's culture without relying on overt or applied graphics.

Balancing History and Innovation

Located within one of New York City's most iconic landmarks, the project required a thoughtful balance between preservation and innovation. The design respects the Chrysler Building's Art Deco heritage while introducing contemporary workplace strategies that support flexibility, sustainability, and evolving user needs.

This integration underscores a key principle. The future of the workplace does not require starting from scratch. Adaptive reuse and thoughtful interventions can create environments that are both historically grounded and forward looking.

A Workplace as a Living Prototype

Ultimately, the TMA office serves as more than an office. It functions as an evolving environment for workplace innovation. By applying the same level of rigor, research, and creativity typically reserved for clients, the firm has created a space that continuously informs its broader design practice.

The project demonstrates that the most effective workplaces are those that prioritize experience, embrace flexibility, and evolve alongside the people who use them.

As companies continue to navigate the future of work, the question is no longer whether the office is necessary, but how it can offer something meaningful, memorable, and distinctly human.