

## Your public face, impressive or not

An emerging trend in recent times where companies have had to spend their allocated budgets wisely, has been to only upgrade the areas that are visited by their customers, whilst the work areas out the back have had to make do. We believe this is a sensible approach in a difficult time. It is important that your customers see you in the way you wish to be perceived. It is not a good strategy for your prospective customer to be greeted in a reception environment that is not in keeping with your perceived company image.

This person will make their judgment on your business within minutes of their arrival and if you fail to convey the correct image then you may never see them again. So where to best spend your hard earned capital. After reception, the boardroom and customer meeting rooms are traditionally the next place you will take them (hopefully not walking through your work area).

Design of these areas are of critical importance as it is not only a question of looks but also of functionality and when you eventually do works in the 'work area' of your office it should have a natural flow on effect reinforcing your corporate image.

Reception needs to be designed to take into account the number and



type of visitors that you will entertain. When we say 'type' of visitors we mean are you seeing families or corporate business people? Mum, Dad and the kids feel comfortable sitting next to each other on a three seater couch, but if your clients are business people, one may sit but the other two will most certainly stand. They are business colleague's not family members.

If it's your boardroom that you are renovating then you need to look at how you use your Boardroom? If it is for presentations then why not install a fully integrated AV system, and we are not talking ten, twenty or thirty thousand dollars here, you can install a fully integrated AV and sound system that will more than adequately do the job for around \$3,500. Or if you wanted a complete Multi-Media System with a control panel (desk or wall mounted)

that controlled all of the individual equipment items you would expect to pay in the vicinity of \$6,000. This will present a much more professional image than a Projector sitting on top of a phone book on the table.

## Top 10 things to ask your fit out company

If you type 'office renovation Sydney' into a search engine, the last time we checked it returned about 470,000 results. There are literally hundreds of fit out companies in Sydney and every one of them claims to be number one. As a consumer how do you know who to choose for your next office fit out?

There are so many stories of fit outs that have gone wrong, so here are

ten simple tips to help weed out the cowboys the next time you do an office fit out. This list is by no means comprehensive but may help as a guide.

### You should ask:

**1** To see examples of work that has been completed recently, that would be relevant to what you require.

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## Top 10 things to ask your fit out company continued

**2** For the quote to be broken down into individual items that let you easily see every aspect of what you are buying and how much each item is costing. For example, from the quote document you should be able to tell what type of chair you are buying, what fabric it is covered in and the exact value of the chair. If your fit out company can't do this then you should be asking them why. If you accept a lump sum non descriptive quote, then you have done so at your own peril, as you will not be able to tell what you are buying or what's been included or more importantly what has been left out. If items are left out of a quote (as they sometimes are by unscrupulous fit out companies in order to win work), they will most likely reappear as variations later, bringing the total cost of the fit out much higher than expected.

**3** The fixed nature of the price provided. If there are any PC Sums (Provisional Sum - a cost that may vary) you would need to ask why these are not fixed costs. Is it a lack of understanding of what is required or is it a lack of time to prepare a fixed cost?

**4** To see certificates of currency for insurances for Worker Compensation, Public Liability, Contract Works and Professional Indemnity.

**5** For a copy of their OH&S Manual, Safe Work Method Statements and Risk Assessments at a minimum. If an accident or incident occurs on site you could share some of the liability, make sure you are confident in the safe work practices of your fit out contractor.

**6** Does the company you are dealing with have the ability to properly draft plans with AutoCAD, or do they intend to hand draw on existing plans with a pen. This is rarely acceptable to reputable building owners and / or managers.



**7** Is council approval required, in the form of a Development Application and or a Construction Certificate or Complying Development or the like (if in doubt, call your local Council yourself)? Your lease should be checked to see if it stipulates that a Council DA is required for any works carried out on the premises. Some disreputable, opportunistic contractors will have you believe that it is not required just so they can get the work quickly, and then leave you with the mess when council catches up with you, possibly resulting in a fine and being forced to demolish what has been constructed or even evicted, as the area you have chosen is not zoned to suit your business. Sometimes just pulling down an internal non load bearing plaster wall can necessitate council approval of some kind, all councils are different and this should be checked on a case by case basis.

**8** Fire sprinklers / detectors and air conditioning works. Sometimes office fit out works will have a bearing on these services. Modification of these services could be mandatory if the services are adversely affected.

**9** Where the furniture and seating is manufactured. There is a lot to be said for local content, not only from a quality and consistency point of view, but also for the ease of obtaining parts and additional furniture in the future.

Not to mention supporting local business. Apex Executive Interiors is proud of its extensive use of local Australian made content.

**10** How confident you are with the proposed fit out contractor, don't be lead by price alone. Your potential fit out company needs to be able to inspire you with the confidence that they have the ability to provide what you are after in the time frame that you have allowed. Remember your business stands to lose a lot more than theirs if it runs over time. In fact the fit out company that tells you that it cannot be finished on time and offers an alternative date is most likely the one that's being honest with you.

**One last tip...** a good office fit out company is not there to sell product only, if all you wanted was product you could buy it on line with a simple click. What you are really buying is service, advice and expertise all provided professionally. If you feel your current office fit out contractor is not providing this, then ask yourself "why you are still talking to them". Apex Executive Interiors specialist staff have been in the interior fit out industry for many years and have seen the repercussions of fit out companies that don't do the right thing too many times. Make sure your next office fit out is a success and not a statistic.

## Mid Range Office Fitout

In the previous issue of "Office Advisor" we discussed the 'Budget office Fit Out'. In this issue we will discuss the 'Mid-Range Office Fit Out' and why it differs from the Budget Fit Out.

The 'Mid-Range Office Fit Out' is probably the most common fit out carried out in Sydney. It is usually a mixture of glass and plasterboard partitions for the offices and would include areas set aside for special projects and tender preparation (think tanks), a recreational break out area for staff, operable walls (office walls that can move or be folded) used to produce multifunctional meeting rooms and training areas, good quality functional workstations that allow for churn and flexibility of use and normally include modified amenities that can provide for staff showers and change room facilities.

Mid range office fit outs differ greatly from budget fit outs as they are no longer startup companies. They are mostly companies in a very dynamic environment, with some internal departments growing at the same time as others are downsizing. These companies are finding their feet and are very secure in their marketplace



and regularly dabbling in new ventures. Any good design for this sector will need to plan for future growth of staff and facilities and show these expansion areas on the plans (stage 1, 2, 3 etc leaving adequate spaces for the growth of each department without compromise to other departments or the aesthetics of the original brief). Office communications of interactive departments needs to be clear, displayed on the plans and fully understood.

Furniture in a fit out of this range would normally carry a minimum 5 - 10 year warranty. Most of the office furniture will be a functional laminated finish with polished timber veneers only used in the design of the boardroom and possibly the reception or foyer areas. The boardroom would be installed with a relatively good and functional audio visual system for training and presentation. Data cabling/ equipment is generally installed to a grade of category 6 for high speed video conferencing. Seating in this range would normally be Australian made products approved with an AFRDI certification and come with a 5 year warranty. Authority Approvals, Fire services, Plumbing services and Mechanical services will almost certainly be included within your growth plans. Apex Executive Interiors have a wealth of experience in this area. We can design and build your office fit out around your specific business needs of today and the expected term of your lease.



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## Thinking Green



ETS, solar credits, insulation rebates... there are many government incentives allegedly aimed at creating a better world for the generations that follow. Whilst the arguments continue in Canberra, there are a few simple things that you should be doing now if you are planning a fit out that just make good sense, not only from an

environmental aspect, but also from a health and wealth point of view.

- ▲ Installing automatic light switching so that lights turn off when a room is unoccupied.
- ▲ Separate switching of meeting rooms etc, so when not in use lights can be switched off.
- ▲ Putting some thought into investigating the ease of public transport for your staff when getting to the office.
- ▲ Reducing PVC in things such as vinyl floors, possibly replacing it with a more natural product like Linoleum.
- ▲ The use of energy efficient equipment and making sure that your computers and fax / photocopiers are going into 'sleep mode' when not in use.
- ▲ Use of energy efficient lighting systems.
- ▲ Design of fit out to incorporate natural light.
- ▲ Open plan designs reducing loads on AC systems and not to mention cost saving.
- ▲ Reuse of building materials where possible within the fit out.
- ▲ Reuse of materials from one fit out to another, ie. Workstations, seating, furniture etc. This can only be achieved by buying good quality modular furniture in the first place.
- ▲ Installation of energy efficient inverter AC systems.
- ▲ Use of quality workstations and furniture that allows for 90 - 95% reuse in future fit outs.
- ▲ Use of soft wiring in workstations, allows for 100% reuse and the ability to be reconfigured.
- ▲ Ensuring that all veneers and timbers are from renewable resources.
- ▲ Clever design, use of reusable store walls saves the need for plasterboard walls that cannot be reused.



***Designing and delivering safe and efficient corporate environments***

Level 1, Unit 3, 268 - 270 Victoria St, Wetherill Park, NSW 2164  
PO Box 6699, Wetherill Park, NSW 2164

▲ Phone 02 9604 9044 ▲ Fax 02 9604 9055 ▲ Web [www.apexei.com.au](http://www.apexei.com.au)

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