

# Revolutionizing Workplace Design: A Perspective from Gray Reed's Facilities Leader



In an era where the workplace is constantly evolving, law firms face unique challenges and opportunities in facilities management, real estate, and design. Across the industry, firms are reevaluating their office spaces to adapt to hybrid work models, prioritize collaboration, and enhance employee experience.

Trends such as flexible seating, technology-driven planning, and the creation of multifunctional spaces are shaping the future of law firm offices. Additionally, there is a growing emphasis on designing environments that reflect the firm's culture while also appealing to the needs of a diverse workforce.

## Creating a Workplace That's Better Than Home

The mission is clear: to transform offices into spaces that draw people in – not out of obligation, but because the environment offers unparalleled value. For example, when I first joined Gray Reed, the firm's spaces were functional but uninspiring, with Sheetrock walls and Formica surfaces dominating the landscape. Over the years, we've undergone a complete metamorphosis, evolving into a modern, vibrant environment that's both inviting and practical.

## Key Elements of Our Design

- **Soundproof Glass Walls and Doors:** These ensure confidentiality during sensitive calls and meetings while fostering a quiet, professional atmosphere.
- **Central Stairway Design:** By replacing isolating elevators with open, visually striking stairways, we've created natural opportunities for interaction, mentorship, and collaboration.
- **Flexible Common Spaces:** From our welcoming reception areas to private wine bars, our spaces adapt to serve diverse needs, whether for focused work, client meetings, or casual networking.

The driving philosophy is simple: the office should provide an experience superior to working from home. As I often say, "If you're going to work from home, you'll deal with distractions. Here, it's studio quality—quiet, professional, and better than home."

## Harnessing Technology for Seamless Flexibility

Technology has been the backbone of our transformation. With the help of workplace management technology (we use Maptician), we've created a workplace that's as dynamic as the people who use it. By using scalable, to-scale floor plans, every piece of furniture and equipment is precisely mapped, allowing us to reconfigure spaces in minutes. Whether hosting a fundraiser, a seminar, or a champagne toast, our spaces can be seamlessly adjusted to fit the occasion.

The platform's user-friendly interface simplifies the process of reserving rooms and resources. Attorneys, staff, and clients can access what they need without extensive training or memorization. This intuitive approach eliminates complexity and ensures efficiency. Collaboration across departments has also greatly benefited from tools like Google Forms integrated with Maptician, streamlining event planning and daily operations. These innovations have turned our office into a flexible, functional hub where technology drives ease and adaptability.

## Designing for Collaboration and Growth

Our office spaces are designed to evolve with the needs of our firm. Reservable desks and offices accommodate a variety of users, from part-time staff and visiting attorneys to collaborative teams. Multipurpose rooms, which transition from theater-style setups to intimate meeting spaces in under an hour, provide unmatched versatility. Architectural adaptability ensures that employees can customize their office layouts to suit their preferences, fostering comfort and productivity. For example, attorneys who prefer a view of the outdoors can have their desks reoriented within minutes, supported by precise planning and execution. These design principles emphasize flexibility and make it possible to meet immediate needs while supporting long-term growth. The spaces we've created encourage collaboration, innovation, and a sense of community, making them essential to our firm's ongoing success.

## Advice for Firms Embarking on Workplace Transformations

For organizations considering a similar journey, I'd emphasize the following:

- Design with Flexibility in Mind: Spaces should serve multiple purposes, ensuring long-term usability.
- Standardize Smartly: Using consistent materials simplifies maintenance while unique finishes retain individuality.
- Invest in Technology: Workplace management tools reduce manual effort, enhance collaboration, and optimize space utilization.

## Looking Ahead: Gray Reed's Vision

As Gray Reed continues to grow, our focus remains on creating spaces that are not only functional but also a joy to work in. Future plans include staff centers with dedicated quiet zones for tasks like budgeting and collections, as well as common areas that double as event venues. Whether it's a partner hosting a poker night or a client meeting in a collaborative lounge, our spaces will continue to reflect our commitment to flexibility and inclusivity.

Ultimately, our goal is to create an environment that's "quiet, definitely better than home, and very flexible," ensuring our employees and clients feel supported and inspired. By staying at the forefront of workplace innovation, we're not just responding to trends—we're setting them.

## About Jonathan Corely

Jonathan has been with Gray Reed for over seven years and brings extensive experience in workplace operations, facilities management, and strategic space planning. Known for his hands-on approach, Jonathan has been instrumental in overseeing Gray Reed's facility improvements, guiding everything from interior design updates to the integration of advanced workplace technologies.

