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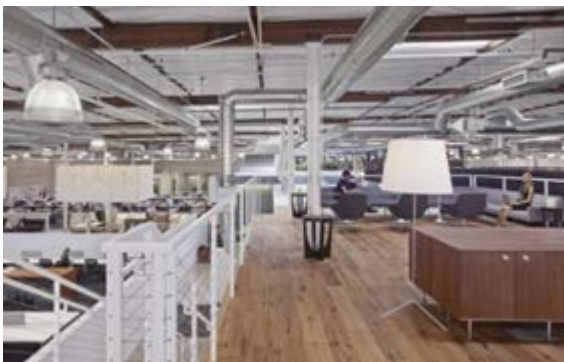
Should You Model Your Office After a Skateboard Company's?

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Action sports companies have always been at the forefront of creativity in the retail sector, and now they're turning into leaders of the creative office push as well. But that's not going to look the way you might expect.

Friedman Stroffe & Gerard (FSG) attorney Jennifer Stroffe (who counts Patagonia, Hybrid, Vissla, Wave Loch, and Fox Head among FSG's clients) says Billabong's store in The Camp played a large role in the trend towards building creative retail spaces in Orange County. That location opened in 2001 with a skateboard ramp inside, and the shopping center rebuilt itself as more creative around it. That space has been taken over by Active and the ramp closed down, but Jennifer says the trend is accelerating, with action sports companies putting in unique elements that reinforce their brand. (FSG's client Lorna Jane is building a store now with workout and yoga rooms inside—you can buy your sports bra and head back to use it immediately.)

Similarly, Jennifer says action sports companies (including Quicksilver, Oakley and Fox Head) have been some of the first to push to fully integrated creative offices in Orange County. That's being driven by the culture and purpose of these companies—to recruit and retain top talent (often a younger, more athletic demographic), to promote creativity and cutting edge product, and promote work/life balance. But while some companies are pushing the envelope with unusual elements—like Wave Loch, which is installing a wave pool at its HQ—most are just moving to more open and collaborative spaces and more progressive work policies. Pictured, one of FSG's action sports clients' creative offices.



That subtlety is indicative of the creative office movement across industries, Jennifer tells us. The drive behind the trend for most companies is increasing productivity (and thus, profitability), and that can mean something as basic as adding breakout rooms or taking the dividers down in one area (that's what FSG has done in its own recently renovated space, above). Companies should consider factors like industry and size to determine which creative elements they can incorporate. And Jennifer says not every company can make the conversion—there aren't many existing creative options in Orange County, and many smaller companies don't have the funds or influence to go as far down the spectrum as they'd like.

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