

Casual, comfy home office

Match home decor. Designers deal with jumble of cords

Daniel Drolet, Canwest News Service

Don't look now, but office furniture is getting a makeover.



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This arrangement is stylish and practical.

Photograph by : Image courtesy of Herman Miller

Driven by the increasingly collaborative and informal work styles of the young, the increasing number of people working at home and the long hours people spend at their desks, office furniture is morphing into something that says as much about comfort as it does about function.

In the process, it's losing some of the look and feel of a traditional office.

Designers are also realizing they have to do something about the maze of computer cords that dangle from work spaces.

"One of the things we're seeing right now is that people are looking for comfort in their regular office,"

said Anika Nielsen, marketing manager for office products at CSN Stores, a Boston-based furniture retailer that plans to launch Canadian operations very shortly.

"People are there for long periods of time. They want it to feel like home."

"It's about creating an atmosphere where people are happy to come to work," said Jenny Harvey, communications manager at Coastal Contacts, a Vancouver-based company that sells eye-care products over the Internet.

With the idea of creating a bright and creative space that keeps people working in their call centre in an upbeat mood, Harvey is in the process of outfitting the Coastal Contacts office with furniture on a beach theme.

She's putting in a couch, a beanbag chair, vases, flowers "and things you'd have around the house" and tying it all together with a blue and orange colour theme that is feng shui-approved.

"As the job market in Canada becomes more desperate, companies are looking to their human resources departments and other means to keep employees happy - which is something a homey, comfortable office environment provides."

Harvey says it's been tough for her to find beach-themed office furniture.

Maybe. But it's not so difficult to find office furniture that is more relaxed, versatile and informal than the rigid wooden desks of old.

Toronto-based Teknion Corp. recently launched a new line called District that they're describing as "home sweet office."