



Dreams into Reality

Using Modern Wallcoverings to Define and Enhance Commercial Spaces

Bold colours, eye-catching graphics, and unconventional materials are being utilised more frequently to imbue workplaces with character—a definite shift away from “safe” neutral colour schemes that can feel sterile and disengaging.





Introduction

In the realm of commercial and residential architecture, wallcoverings stand out as an economical and adaptable means of delivering striking interior designs. With an extensive selection of patterns, textures, designs and colour palettes, modern wallcoverings offer a diverse palette for creative expression.

In particular, custom wallcoverings, printable with any graphic, illustration or artwork imaginable, are becoming a popular option. Through careful use of colour, graphics and illustrations, designers can create enriching environments that are engaging for both customers and employees alike.

Recognising the advantages of printable wallcoverings, organisations seek to leverage them to enhance the visual appeal of their spaces. However, meeting the elevated demands for durability, sustainability, fire resistance and ease of maintenance poses a significant challenge.

This whitepaper aims to delve into the intricacies of specifying wallcoverings, offering insights into how designers and specifiers can optimise both the aesthetics and functionality of spaces. Through consideration of modern design trends, stakeholders can ensure that their chosen wallcovering solutions meet the rigorous demands of contemporary architectural environments.



Photography by Sascha Vaughan

A focus on sustainability

There are several types of wallcoverings commonly found in commercial/contract installations. Durable options include paper-backed vinyl wallcoverings and vinyl-coated wallpaper. There is also fabric-backed vinyl, which features a solid vinyl decorative surface that is laminated to a woven fabric or synthetic substrate.

Due to the growing demand for eco-friendly and sustainable building materials, there is much greater scrutiny of materials such as PVC. The production and use of PVC can release toxic by-products into the environment. In addition, PVC cannot be recycled at the end of its life and

is not biodegradable. During a fire, PVC is known to release harmful toxins, which can have dangerous implications for the occupants of a commercial building.

Technological advancements have led to the creation of PVC-free wallcoverings with post consumer recycled content and lightweight, breathable substrates. One example of a sustainable vinyl alternative is Terralon, which is made from 31% post-consumer recycled polyester from plastic water bottles. Another is Duralon, which is an olefin-based material with high-level durability characteristics.

Demand for joyful interiors

Over the past twenty years, there has been a noticeable shift away from the traditional corporate aesthetic in workplaces. This evolution is evident in the rising popularity of design trends such as biophilia, glass walls and open floor plans, which aim to create more positive, inviting and dynamic environments.

Moreover, contemporary design trends have seen a surge in the integration of playful elements, including custom wallcoverings, to inject personality and vibrancy into spaces. Organisations recognise the benefits of creating a unique and personalised space that builds a strong and consistent brand identity. Bold colours, eye-catching graphics, and unconventional materials are being utilised more frequently to imbue workplaces with character—a definite shift away from “safe” neutral colour schemes that can feel sterile and disengaging.

Why are we seeing this shift? Reports indicate that the majority of Australians would like to work from home, at least partially, and many would leave their job if they were not given flexible work options.¹ At the same time, employers are trying to attract employees back into the office, recognising the benefits of in-person collaboration.

Expectations for higher-quality work spaces are at an all-time high; if you want to convince talent to commute to the office, a sterile work space is no longer sufficient. Modern offices need to be not only functional but also inspiring and desirable to work in. In this era where remote work holds a strong allure, a well-designed and memorable workplace that can attract top talent is a competitive advantage.

Transforming spaces with wall graphics

Incorporating bursts of colour and graphics on walls can act as visual cues, effectively disrupting the monotony of a space and imbuing it with a more visually uplifting atmosphere. In recent years, workplace designers have recommended incorporating artwork on walls, which has been demonstrated to elevate employee performance and mood and is an effective way to communicate key brand messages.²

Graphics and illustrations on wallcoverings provide a lot of freedom to convey a range of values. Illustrations based on a variety of cultural traditions, for example, can signal diversity, whereas photos of historical landmarks can convey a sense of history and importance.

A modern example of brand experience meeting interior design is the offices of computational chemistry company Schrödinger Inc. The company partnered with architecture firm HLW's brand experience team, brandx, as well as its

internal sustainability consultancy, BEYOND, to design a healthy and sustainable workplace that reinforces the company's high-tech identity.³

Each floor has a different theme related to the company's offerings – biology, chemistry, computer science and physics. Highly technical graphics reflecting the associated disciplines were printed on DreamScape's Terralon Smooth wallcovering materials. For instance, on the biology floor, expansive graphic designs depict neurons, emphasising their dendrites, nuclei, axons and myelin sheaths.

Workplace graphics often run the risk of seeming like sterile marketing materials. By breaking free of conventional imagery, the creative use of graphics and illustrative styles on wallcoverings enables a stronger connection with employees and visitors to the mission and heart of a company.

Incorporating bursts of colour and graphics can act as visual cues, effectively disrupting the monotony of a space and imbuing it with a more visually uplifting atmosphere.





Balancing aesthetics and functionality

Wallcoverings serve as a dual-purpose solution: enhancing interior aesthetics while safeguarding walls from everyday wear and tear. The market offers a plethora of wallcovering options, each boasting unique characteristics and suitability for various applications.

Commercial grade printable wallcoverings offer unparalleled design flexibility, encompassing a wide array of textures, colours, and special effects. This versatility makes them ideal for various interior spaces and market sectors, catering to diverse aesthetic preferences. Moreover, their ability to withstand stains and abrasions ensures long-lasting interiors, further enhancing the overall visual appeal of the space.

Wallcoverings are susceptible to impacts from a range of objects, such as office chairs, carts, wheelchairs and rolling desks. Choosing wall materials capable of withstanding such impacts is essential to minimising the need for future repairs or

replacements. By specifying durable wallcoverings, potential damage caused by everyday use can be significantly mitigated, ensuring the longevity and maintenance of the space.

Fire resistance is another important characteristic to consider. Designers and specifiers should ensure the wallcovering has been independently tested and certified to meet the required fire rating for the proposed application.

Finally, when selecting wallcoverings, environmental factors are critical, requiring a comprehensive assessment of sustainability attributes throughout the product's lifecycle, including raw material extraction, manufacturing, and distribution. Particularly, PVC-based wallcoverings present notable drawbacks in terms of environmental impact and indoor air quality. Opting for wallcoverings made from non-toxic, environmentally friendly materials, certified under international schemes, is imperative to mitigate these concerns.

Dreamscape Wallcoverings: Understanding the Benefits

For those familiar with DreamScape wallcoverings, their exceptional quality, durability, and versatility are well known. Available in various finishes such as matte, gloss, suede, and linen, these printable wallcoverings offer a wide spectrum of creative possibilities for diverse applications. However, what truly distinguishes DreamScape wallcoverings is their extensive customisation options.

DreamScape wallcoverings excel in customisability, offering designers a myriad of options to tailor their creations. From a broad palette of colours, ranging from soft neutrals to vibrant hues, to pre-designed patterns that can be further personalised, DreamScape empowers designers to craft unique wallcoverings tailored to specific interior spaces. Moreover, the printable capabilities of DreamScape wallcoverings allow for the incorporation of custom designs, logos, and images, making them ideal for creating branded environments within commercial premises.

The versatility of DreamScape wallcoverings extends beyond mere aesthetics, offering the ability to create focal points, add texture, and enhance the overall ambiance of any space. Whether aiming for a bold statement or a subtle, textured finish, DreamScape provides a diverse array of options to fulfil various design requirements.

In the ever-evolving landscape of interior design, customisation plays an increasingly pivotal role, and DreamScape wallcoverings stand at the forefront, offering a range of customisable options to craft unique and personalised spaces. With their assortment of finishes, colours, and printable capabilities, DreamScape wallcoverings emerge as a versatile and high-quality choice for interior design projects.

For those seeking customisable and premium printable wallcoverings in Australia, Ricky Richards presents an unparalleled solution.

Product features:

Fire Test AS/NZS 3837:1998 | Breathable and lightweight | Recyclable material | PVC, plasticiser, phthalates, chlorine, halogen, heavy metal and formaldehyde free | Mould, mildew and fungal resistant | Anti-microbial | Can be installed using commercially available wallpaper adhesive | Suitable for healthcare and education applications

REFERENCES

- ¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. "Changing patterns of work." AIHW.
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/changing-patterns-of-work> (accessed 8 April 2024).
- ² Smith, Rachel. "Art in the Workplace: Why You Need It and How to Choose It." Work Design Magazine.
<https://www.workdesign.com/2016/10/art-workplace-need-choose> (accessed 8 April 2024).
- ³ DreamScape. "Schrödinger Workplace." DreamScape.
<https://dreamscapewalls.com/dreamscape-for-schrodinger> (accessed 8 April 2024).

All information provided correct as of April 2024

