

THE BEST LAID PLANS

When it comes to green-lighting a billion-dollar commercial development, the “starchitect” is king – but it’s the working desk that counts in the end.

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PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN COLLINGS

Santos offices, Adelaide, designed by Bligh Voller Nield

FOR FAR TOO LONG THE DEVELOPERS of Australian office buildings have seemingly used architects simply to maximise floor space and provide grandiose flourishes around the front door. Today, though, the best Australian developers are discovering that good design can provide both tangible improvements to their bottom line and, less measurably but with incalculable value, have a positive effect on a company’s image. >



Quality architecture signals a quality company as the future tenant

Architect James Grose, a director at Bligh Voller Nield (BVN), says, "Design is now the currency in which developers trade". That's quite evident if you take a look at the recent buildings on the skyline of Sydney – or its future buildings. There's German architect Christoph Ingenhoven, Italian architect Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers, Foster+Partners (English) and Jean Nouvel (French)." Quality architecture signals a quality company as the future tenant.

More practically, developers and commercial tenants are finding that design improves workplace performance. "Good design," argues Grose "is now very much targeted internally at the workplace so that all the issues that companies now deal with, such as transparency, communication and collaboration, are facilitated by the design of the building. Productivity, recruitment and retention are all important factors in the planning of a floor plate."

Bligh Voller Nield created a new headquarters for developer Stockland in Sydney that has had a big influence on how these issues are regarded. The emphasis has been on innovations such as open staircases between floors of the tower and workplace cafes with breakout spaces where people bump into each other, have informal discussions or can bring different disciplines together to form project teams. It is about creative places for creative thinking.