



11

# MISTAKES

business leaders  
make on workplace  
change projects

Fotografija  
na naslovnici



Impakta Group  
Workplace Design  
Project



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# The purpose of this guide



The spaces we inhabit greatly influence how we feel, think and act – both in our personal life and at work. We all know from experience that we are happier, clearer and more productive in some environments than in others.

A large body of research shows that the physical environment has a significant impact on many aspects of individual and business performance.

Future-focused organizations are already reaping the benefits of high-performance work environments, enjoying increased productivity, more trusting relationships with staff and clients, and better financial outcomes. Their employees generate more creative ideas, make smarter decisions, and are happy to work harder. These organizations find it easier to attract and retain top talent, and have a more positive and engaging workplace culture.

Creating such high-performance workspaces takes skill and careful planning. Sometimes seemingly small details and decisions can make a huge impact on work

and business outcomes. Very often, unfortunately, great opportunities are missed and budgets are spent inefficiently in workplace change projects.

After you've invested much time, money and effort into an office relocation or upgrade, you should see the results you've been looking for. This guide has been written to assist you with the preparations for your workplace change project, so that you can make better plans and better decisions.

We have listed the most common and costly mistakes we see business leaders make, and provided recommendations to avoid them. We trust that this guide will help you create a work environment that maximizes people's potential and effectively supports your organization's objectives.



**PART 1**

# Mindset

## MISTAKE No

# 1

# Seeing the workspace as a cost, rather than an investment



### **Why this is important**

Creating a new work environment always costs a significant amount of money; however, the results can define the future of the organization. A well-designed workspace can support ongoing business performance, reduce operational costs and contribute to profits, yielding high returns on investment.

Unfortunately, many business leaders see workplace change projects as a cost, and go for cheap and quick fixes instead of a well thought-out solution. This can prove to be a costly decision.

Organizations that opt for lower quality solutions to achieve small savings in the short term may end up with a workspace that turns out to be very expensive in the long run.

## What you need to know

A high quality work environment can contribute to a company's financial performance in several ways:

- Profits can increase due to improved work efficiency and effectiveness, increased engagement and loyalty of staff, and more satisfied clients and customers. In addition, the organization will be able to attract better talent as well as better business opportunities.
- Staff costs can be reduced due to lower staff turnover, absenteeism and presenteeism. Due to increased productivity, the same amount of work can potentially be completed by fewer staff members than before. Furthermore, the company will not need to compete for talent based on salary.
- Operational and real estate costs can be reduced due to better utilization of space, lower maintenance requirements and lower utility usage.

You don't need an excessive budget to create a well-designed space. To keep costs low, the key is to explore your options carefully, and make well-founded decisions throughout the design process.

**“ A well-designed workspace can support ongoing business performance, reduce operational costs and contribute to profits, yielding high returns on investment. ”**

## How Kragelj can help

We are experts in developing workplace strategies that increase the organization's bottom line, year after year.

Kragelj has developed a research and analysis process, called Workplace Potential™, which incorporates a suite of tools that help maximize the short- and long-term financial results of workplace change projects.

As part of this process we perform a cost-benefit analysis to forecast returns on investment, and choose the most cost-effective design solutions, helping you minimize expenses without compromising the quality of the project.

This process also includes a feasibility study, assisting clients to understand risks and likely outcomes before deciding about investing in large projects.

We can also help you negotiate beneficial financial deals with suppliers, contractors and real estate representatives, and thus obtain high quality products and services at the best prices.

# MISTAKE No 2

## Underestimating the potential of a well-designed workspace

### Why this is important

Some organizational leaders underestimate the influence of the physical environment, thinking that work and business performance are purely management issues. Others believe that workplace strategy equates to creating Google-like offices – expensive and gimmicky spaces that spark the interest of adventure-loving millennials. Still others think that in order to make a real impact through workplace design, you must rip out all the walls and start rebuilding your office from scratch.

Due to such misunderstandings, many organizations fail to improve their workspaces, or go down the wrong path – missing out on the opportunities and benefits that only a well-designed, high-performance workplace can offer.



## What you need to know

The physical work environment influences people on many levels – it makes a difference to how they feel, think, work, communicate and collaborate together.

In a well-designed workplace, every element of the physical space – room layouts, furniture, materials, colors, textures, lights, sounds, technology and media – is carefully selected to enhance individual, team and business performance, both in the short and the long term.

Google's offices are an interesting example. They are excellent workplaces, but not because of the way they look. The reason they are so successful is because they have been carefully designed to support the needs, wishes, and work styles of the exact people Google aims to attract and retain. You can design your office with the same kind of thinking Google's decision makers employ, and end up with a very different kind of workplace – one which is perfectly suited to your organization.

You don't need to start with a 'blank canvas' to create a high-performance workspace. Sometimes making small but well-targeted changes to the interiors can yield significant results.

Every workspace imposes constraints, but also offers opportunities. Several highly successful workspaces have been created in buildings with major design constraints, for example, where it was impossible to change any of the walls, floors or ceilings. So even if it looks like you have too many limitations and not much can be done, it's worth seeking the opinion of an expert.

## How Kragelj can help

Kragelj has systems in place to help you minimize your risks associated with workplace change projects. We will help you understand the results you can expect from different workplace or property projects – supported by well-researched facts and evidence – before you commit to any major investment.

We also gladly discuss our past workplace projects with you. For example, how we have helped increase individual and team productivity, morale and satisfaction and other business performance metrics in our clients' organizations.

In addition, we are happy to put you in touch with other service providers who might be able to assist you on your workplace or property related projects.

**“ You can design your office with the same kind of thinking Google employs, and end up with an entirely different kind of workplace – one which is perfectly suited to your organization. ”**

MISTAKE No

3

# Not having a clear vision and strategy for the workplace

## Why this is important

Too often, business leaders try to create an attractive work environment by pursuing a set of 'cool ideas' – like setting up a dazzling lounge area with a pool table and bean bags, and installing trendy artwork.

Acting on 'cool ideas' may help you create an attractive-looking workplace with a few potentially useful features. However, if you're aiming to create a high-performance work environment that actually supports the performance of your teams and your business, you'll need to develop a vision for your organization in the new space, and think more strategically.

## What you need to know

Having clear objectives – including desired business, organizational and human outcomes – is essential for a workplace project to succeed.

What are the ultimate goals of your workplace transformation project? How would you like to see people perform in the new space, and what results would you like to see – in regards, for example, to productivity measures, engagement levels, turnover rates and sick leave? And how do you envision your business operating in a better, more efficient way?

Maintaining focus on these objectives will ensure that all members of the project team are on the same page, are able to effectively collaborate, and can make well-informed decisions during the design and implementation process. A compelling vision will set your project up for long-term success.

Setting up specific goals for your workplace change project will also allow you to find out later on how successful the project has been, for example, what's been the rate of return, and how your organization's performance indicators have improved.

Remember that your vision for the workplace should go deeper than just how the space looks. 'Cosmetic' upgrades rarely achieve real results. So before starting conversations about design, decision makers should first agree on what success looks like to the organization.

**“ Your vision for the workplace should go deeper than just how the space looks. Before starting conversations about design, decision makers should first agree on what success looks like to their organization. ”**

## How Kragelj can help

Developing a vision for a workplace project which is both viable and compelling – and which resonates with the organization's leaders, employees, stakeholders, and the market – takes skill and coordination.

We facilitate visioning and goal settings workshops, with the focus on helping the project team gain clarity about the direction they are going in and the results they aim to achieve.

With substantial experience in workplace design, business strategy and change management, our members know the right questions to ask, and are skilled in assisting workshop participants to reach new insights.

We use proprietary methodologies to measure a project's success after completion. Our role throughout the project is to ensure that the agreed goals and milestones are achieved, and that your business is on the right track towards reaching its vision.

MISTAKE No

4

# Copying what other companies do



## Why this is important

There is no one right way of creating a high-performance work environment. Every organization is unique, and therefore needs a different kind of environment to thrive.

Decision makers in workplace projects often try to follow 'hot trends' and copy what other companies do, without looking beyond the surface and trying to understand the relationship between the physical space and business performance.

What works for one organization may not work for another. So implementing a design solution just because it is popular or has worked for another organization might actually put your project at risk.

## What you need to know

Before starting the design process, it's important to identify what makes your organization unique. How would you describe your company's brand, values and culture? How is work done in your organization, and how do team members interact? Why do people want to work there? What motivates them, and what makes them proud?

By creating an office space that reflects the DNA of your company, and is tailored to users' specific needs, you will help your people work more effectively, and will make them feel more at home in the workplace.

In addition, you'll create an environment that celebrates what makes your company special. Bespoke, authentic workplaces tend to foster engagement and inspire innovation, and attract the right people and opportunities to the company.

Think through what design solutions would actually align with the personality of your company, support your business processes and work practices, and address people's needs and expectations. Remember, trends go out of fashion quickly, but a workspace that is tailored to your company, and is loved and maintained, will remain current for a long time.

**“ Trends go out of fashion quickly, but a workspace that is tailored to your company's needs, and is loved and maintained, will remain current for a long time. ”**

## How Kragelj can help

A workplace transformation project is a great opportunity to rethink 'who' your company is, and to identify what sort of environment would make a real home for your teams.

Through a series of conversations and workshops, we can assist you to create a detailed picture of your company's 'personality', by looking into your organization's purpose and culture, and exploring your team members' interests, passions and work styles.

Furthermore, we can help you get clear on what high performance means to your organization, and provide you with design solutions that will bring out the best in your people.



Grey Ljubljana  
Workplace Change  
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**PART 2**

# Participation

## MISTAKE No

# 5

# Not allowing enough time for research



## Why this is important

The research (or pre-design) phase is a fundamental part of any workplace change project. During this phase, data is gathered about the office space, the organization and the industry to identify the most beneficial and viable paths for the project.

However, research and analysis rarely produce quick and visible outcomes. Impatient business leaders often want to get this phase over with quickly, or skip it altogether, to save money and time. (Some might already have decided what the new space should be like, expecting the designers only to confirm their ideas.)

Making certain decisions too early, based on speculation or preconceived notions, – as opposed to well-supported facts – can make the process very stressful and lead to sub-optimal results.



## What you need to know

The research phase is the best time to:

- Learn what's working and what's not working in the current workplace, and find the best strategies for improvement
- Explore the wants, needs, goals and challenges of employees, organizational leaders and stakeholders
- Create a vision for the project, set objectives for the design, and identify measures of success
- Envisage how people could work better, and how the organization could function better, in the near future and beyond
- Answer fundamental questions like: Who will use the new space? Should the company relocate or upgrade? How can technology better support our work in the new space?
- Explore different real estate options
- Test out different work practices and processes, as well as different design and technology solutions
- Learn from relevant scientific research studies and case studies about high-performing workplace solutions and practices
- Start the change management process by engaging employees in conversations about their new workplace

Your investment into the research phase will pay off multiple times. By the end of the process you will have a clear picture of where your organization is currently at, where it could be, and how to get there.

Understanding your options, and the implications of different solutions, will help you make informed decisions with confidence, as you won't need to rely on speculation or guesswork. This will take much of the stress and uncertainty out of the process, so you will be able to better enjoy your workplace change project.

## How Kragelj can help

Kragelj's Workplace Potential™ process incorporates thorough research and analysis to identify the most beneficial approaches for a workplace project, and subsequently to ensure that the new workspace will enable the organization to maximize its potential.

On completion of the analysis, we present a range of workplace strategy and design options, along with associated costs and expected outcomes.

Beyond supporting your organization's efficient operation in the near future, the suggested solutions can also help you create a future-proof, adaptable and resilient workplace which stands the test of time.

The insights gained from the Workplace Potential™ analysis also set the course for the project, and support informed decision-making throughout.

**“Your investment into the research phase will pay off multiple times. You will get a clear picture of where your organization is currently at, where it could be, and how to get there.”**

# MISTAKE No 6

## Losing focus and getting sidetracked



### Why this is important

Creating a compelling vision at the start of the project, as discussed in Mistake #3, sets the direction for the design. However, without developing and following a roadmap for the project, with clear milestones and measurable targets, you'll find it difficult to stay on track towards your goal.

Workplace change can be a complex process with many distractions, and unexpected twists and turns. You'll likely encounter exciting new opportunities as well as unforeseen issues, work under time pressure and need to make quick decisions.

Following a roadmap will help you make better choices, avoid costly mistakes, and complete the project as you envisioned, on time and on budget.

## What you need to know

A well-prepared project plan includes the following information:

- How your organization measures success, and what your key performance targets are
- What exactly employees need to do, and how they need to think and act in order to be able to meet those performance targets
- What resources employees need to have access to in order to be able to work well – including work tools, technology, information, and other team members
- What kinds of spaces, and what workplace practices would support productive work and promote the desired behaviors and attitudes

The project plan should also include a detailed timeline, a schedule of actions and responsibilities, a set of design targets, as well as a breakdown of the budget.

Following a project plan will help members of your project team work in a more focused manner, rise above personal agendas and collaborate more effectively. They will be able to make the most of new opportunities and successfully address issues as they arise, without getting lost in detail or losing sight of the ultimate purpose of the project.

Setting everything up may take some effort initially, but will ultimately save you time, money and frustration.

The design and change process will be more efficient, resulting in a better workplace.

## How Kragelj can help

We run strategic planning meetings to identify constraints, opportunities, and also resources available for the successful delivery of a project, such as time, budget, and capabilities of team members.

Based on the information gathered in these meetings, we develop a detailed project plan, complete with design benchmarks, timelines, milestones and financial targets.

We use sophisticated frameworks for evaluating every single design option against the project's objectives, so that the most beneficial solutions are always selected.

Most importantly, we manage the design and implementation process rigorously, ensuring that the project team stays on track with the agreed action plan.

**“ A well-prepared project plan will help you make better decisions, avoid costly mistakes, and complete the project as you envisioned, on time and on budget. ”**

# MISTAKE No 7

## Acting as a spectator, not as a participant



### Why this is important

Your workplace professionals are there to help you create a personalized work environment in which your organization will thrive.

You would be doing yourself a disservice if you adopted 'off-the-shelf' workplace design solutions, or expected external consultants to make all the decisions for you. The time when architects acted as masterminds and worked behind closed doors to cook up clever designs for their clients is now history.

Your workplace professionals can only help you get the best results if you are open to collaborating with them, and if you allow them to get to know your teams and your organization really well.

## What you need to know

Allow sufficient time to engage in conversations with the professionals you work with, and also give your employees the time to be involved and share their perspectives.

Be ready to share the information and documents your workplace professionals are asking for. You might find it a bit unusual at first to discuss business information with a 'design specialist', but they will only be able to give you the best support if you're completely open and honest with them.

You and your leadership team know what's best for your organization, and therefore you're the most qualified to make important decisions about the design of your workspace.

Do your best to follow the agreed project program, and to make decisions at the right time. Making decisions too early or too late both create problems, as does avoiding decision-making altogether.

Your workplace professional knows what processes lead to the best results. If you participate fully, your reward will be an outstanding workplace – delivered on time and on budget.

## How Kragelj can help

When setting up the project plan, we will make it very clear what your and your teams' role is in the process, along with the types of information they need from you, and the time investment you may need to make.

Our team will do its best to make this process smooth and straightforward for you, and will aim to answer your questions as quickly as possible.

We will do the research and help you understand the implications of the different options for your workplace. We will suggest priorities and offer professional recommendations, making it easy for you to make your decisions.

We are also happy to liaise with company stakeholders on your behalf to save you time.

**“ You and your leadership team know what is best for your organization, and therefore you're the most qualified to make important decisions about the design of your workspace. ”**

# MISTAKE No 8

## Not engaging employees in the process



### Why this is important

Employees are often pushed to the sidelines in workplace transformation projects, which is a critical mistake.

When leaders fail to involve employees in conversations about the new space, they run the risk that the space won't work for their employees, or that employees won't use the space as intended. The culture of the organization may also suffer, with employees becoming disengaged, stressed and anxious about the uncertainties surrounding the changes.

In contrast, workplace transformation projects with strong employee participation tend to run more smoothly, and result in workplaces where people love to work.

## What you need to know

While employees are not experts in workspace design, hearing their insights can help the design team come up with better solutions. Conversations with employees can reveal what holds them back from performing at their best in the current office, and what workplace solutions could help them work better.

It's also worth listening to employees' hopes and needs. Nothing increases engagement like giving people what they ask for. Of course, in a workplace change project not all employee requests can be fulfilled, but people will appreciate that their wishes have been heard and considered, and will be more open to accept changes in the new workplace.

Frequent, open and honest conversations about your workplace transformation project will prepare employees to the upcoming changes, informing and empowering them to make the most of the features of the new space. Employees will feel more invested in the changes, and more willing to adapt the way they work.

We recommend that you use a variety of channels for communicating with employees, such as surveys, workshops, training sessions, informal conversations, online platforms and written materials. Remember that a workplace change project is an excellent opportunity for members of your organization to learn about each other's work, and to collaborate towards a shared goal.

## How Kragelj can help

As part of our consulting service, we facilitate a series of user workshops where employees have the opportunity to express their needs, get their questions answered, and contribute to the design with their suggestions and insights.

In addition, we develop, carry out and evaluate tailored company-wide surveys, including pre- and post-occupancy (POE) evaluations, ensuring that every single employee is heard and understood.

We have considerable experience in developing change management strategies – including employee engagement and education programs – and in delivering these programs for our clients.

To reach out to everyone impacted by the changes, we use a wide range of communication platforms, such as emails, printed posters, brochures, newsletters, reports, group meetings and workshops.

**“ Studies show that when employees are involved in the creation of their work environment, their engagement and productivity can significantly increase. ”**







**PART 3**

**Project**

**Management**

## MISTAKE No

# 9

# Starting to think about a relocation or renovation too late



### Why this is important

Very often, business leaders avoid dealing with critical office accommodation issues until it's very late. The lease might be expiring in a few months, or the organization might be growing or changing in ways that the current workspace cannot support.

Starting a workplace change project at the last minute will make the process unnecessarily stressful, expensive, and disruptive to your business. Having to rush through the project will also force you to make many compromises, leaving you with a poorer work environment.

On the other hand, starting to prepare early will allow you to make the right choices about the space, and to secure the best deals and contracts with commercial real estate owners and suppliers.

## What you need to know

Deciding about a workplace change project is never easy, but making an early decision will certainly make life simpler for everyone who is in any way affected by the project, including your employees.

Ideally, you should allow at least 9-18 months for the preparations. This will enable you to find the most beneficial real estate options in the location you desire (in case you're relocating), and make well-considered decisions about every bit of the new space.

With time on your hands you'll also be able to organize the move so that it causes minimal disruption to the operation of your business, and to transition to new ways of working more smoothly.

Make sure you give enough time to research and planning, including setting goals for your project, evaluating your options and creating a strategy for implementation. Do not rush. Remember, doing things right the first time is always cheaper and less disruptive than fixing things up later.

It's worth investing some of your time into establishing close relationships with the people who can help you, such as design and real estate professionals, suppliers and contractors.

Keep in mind that refurbishing and fitting out a new space can take longer than you might expect. For example, adjusting the building's existing lighting and air-conditioning systems to suit the new office layout can be a major project in itself, and shipping some of the furniture could take several months.

**“ Make sure you give enough time to research and planning. Doing things right the first time is always cheaper and less disruptive than fixing things up later. ”**

## How Kragelj can help

We can already assist you at a very early phase, when you perhaps haven't yet decided whether to upgrade or relocate, or are not sure what type of office environment you would like to create.

We can find different accommodation options for you, and assess how beneficial the various choices would be for your organization, by employing the Workplace Potential™ tool.

If you allow sufficient time, we will be able to make the most of the goal-setting and pre-design phases of the project, ensuring that your investments in time, money and effort will yield the greatest returns.

Note that if you are already behind schedule, we can help you to achieve the best possible results within the timeframe you have available.

# MISTAKE No 10

## Communicating ineffectively with other decision makers

### Why this is important

For the success of a workplace change project, it is critical that communication between decision makers in your organization is seamless, and that a process is in place for decision making.

Very often, organizational leaders hand over the responsibility for coordinating the project to people who are either not qualified for the job, or not authorized to make decisions. This can create major inefficiencies, hold back progress, and at times even bring the project to a halt.

## What you need to know

As discussed earlier, successful workplace transformation is the result of fruitful collaboration between designers, consultants, suppliers, contractors, real estate representatives, and members of your organization. However, project team members can only contribute to the best of their capacity if their ideas and recommendations actually reach the right decision makers.

To make everyone's work more efficient, make sure that there is a plan in place for internal communication and decision making – and that your colleagues actually follow this plan. The chain of communication should be clear, functional, and as short as possible.

Make careful choices when you appoint your internal project team. Your project managers and coordinators should have the authority to make certain decisions, and the skills to manage internal communication effectively.

The best project managers and coordinators are trusted and respected members of the organization, who have positive relationships with both the executive team and support staff. They are talented, dynamic and passionate individuals who are firmly committed to the success of the project.

Such talented people tend to be very busy in every organization, but involving them in a workplace change project can be crucial to success.

## How Kragelj can help

As part of the project plan, we can develop a communication program outlining the decision making process.

Our members know how to present complex data in a way that is easy to understand. We are open to using your preferred media and communication style, and to speak without jargon, making it easy for you to understand and evaluate your options.

Our members are happy to liaise directly with multiple decision makers, and to present their research findings and design proposals to several different teams, ensuring that nothing gets lost in translation.

**“Your project managers and coordinators should have the authority to make certain decisions, and the skills to manage internal communication effectively.”**

# MISTAKE No 11

## Not engaging a workplace consultant



### Why this is important

Creating a tailored, high-performance work environment requires specialist skills and a holistic approach – aligning the physical space with human needs, technology, work practices, organizational strategy and corporate culture.

Business leaders often rely on their own judgement, or expect architects, designers or facility managers to provide all the answers and guidance they need for a successful workplace change project.

While these professionals might be experts in their fields, they are rarely prepared to venture beyond their disciplines and act as strategic leaders. And without strategic leadership, you have little chance of getting the results you are hoping for.

## What you need to know

A flourishing workplace is more than the sum of its parts. It is not only attractive-looking and functional, but it makes your team members and visitors feel, think and work better, in alignment with the strategy and culture of your business.

Few architects and designers are qualified to offer workplace strategy services. When you assemble your project team, make sure that someone – either the architect / designer, or an independent workplace consultant – is willing and able to represent your organization's interests in the design process.

Your workplace consultant should have the skills and the drive to support the following objectives through the workplace they help you create:

- Improve productivity and quality of work
- Improve the way people communicate, collaborate and innovate
- Optimize organizational processes and practices
- Support people's health and wellbeing
- Meet employees' goals, needs and expectations
- Create a positive employee and client experience
- Minimize the environmental impact of building works and operations
- Enhance your brand and culture
- Elevate your organization's market position and strategy – now and in the future

The value a qualified workplace consultant can bring to your project is significant. It can not only be measured in money, but in savings in time and stress, and in the increased satisfaction of your team members and clients.

## How Kragelj can help

Our expert team has a broad range of collective skills and experience, including research, architectural and interior design, project planning and management, construction management, change management, and real estate strategy.

We understand high-performance work environments, and are highly qualified and committed to adding value to your organization as a whole. We can help you develop a strategic design brief and assemble the project team.

Furthermore, our members are there to guide you through all phases of the relocation or renovation process (from the preparations and design to implementation and occupation), and to liaise with project team members, ensuring that your initial objectives are successfully accomplished.

**“ The value a qualified workplace consultant can bring to your project is significant. It can not only be measured in money, but in savings in time and stress. ”**



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HAPPINESS IS  
the smell of  
THINGS



# About Kragelj



We are a multinational team of workplace experts and designers, specialized in enhancing organizations' performance through optimizing their physical environments and work practices. We plan, manage and deliver workplace transformation projects that are tailored to our clients' unique needs and circumstances. Our clients are leaders and decision makers in medium- and large-sized organizations that see themselves as pioneers in their fields, and are open to exploring new ways of working in order to remain competitive.

Our team's expertise spans across building and interior design, property planning, organizational development, workplace wellness, project management and change management. Our members regularly speak at conferences, have published numerous articles and books on workplace strategy, and have left a trail of happy clients.

We have been in the shoes of business owners, managers, consultants and employees, and so we understand the views, needs and challenges of different stakeholders. We recognize that navigating through the complexity of a workplace change project, while meeting deadlines, staying on budget, and fulfilling the expectations of different interest groups, is not easy.

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If you're thinking about relocation, a design upgrade or any other changes in your work environment, feel free to get in touch. Please contact us at [info@kragelj.com](mailto:info@kragelj.com) or +386 1 2564 350 for a free consultation.

A workplace change project is an excellent opportunity for organizations to reexamine how they run their business and to reinvent operations based on their current needs.

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