

The Changing Role of the Office Entrance Environment

Arrival, experience and security in the new
workplace

GUNNEBO[®]
Entrance Control

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The rise of hybrid working has changed the look and feel of commercial office design.

With pressures to achieve the balance of work and home life, offices focus on communication and collaboration, areas for teamwork and connection. They feature wellness areas, collaborative spaces, creative studios and flexible social zones.

Unlike traditional workplaces, where employee schedules were predictable, such offices see constantly changing

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occupancy and a mix of visitors. Different groups often arrive at the same time but move through separate areas, each with their own access needs.

In this evolving office environment, security needs to be adaptable, keeping people safe while supporting the openness, engaging and creativity encouraged for today's offices to thrive.

The entrance is where this mix comes together. It is one of the few spaces used by everyone and its layout has a direct influence on how simply people

can move from arrival to the rest of the building.

Clear movement, legible routes and an understanding of where to go next all need to be maintained, even when numbers increase or users are unfamiliar with the environment. This all needs to be achieved whilst seamlessly blending with the surroundings to become part of the “office event.”

In many buildings, entrances are still organised around fixed patterns of use. Layouts prioritise separation and

control rather than overlap and flow. As daily use becomes more varied, these arrangements can place pressure on the space, particularly at busy moments, and make the entrance harder to navigate than it needs to be.

In this context, the entrance needs to be understood as a design function. Its role becomes to manage movement, access and understanding in a way that supports the wider operation of the building. How effectively it does this depends on how clearly the space works under everyday conditions.

About the author



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Tina is a marketing professional with over 20 years experience serving industry sectors as diverse as retail to manufacturing.

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New models of hybrid working see employees arriving at different times and occupying offices for shorter times

Changing patterns of arrival and occupancy

One of the most significant pressures on contemporary office entrances is the changing nature and time of arrival itself. Patterns that were once

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consistent have become variable, with daily, weekly and even hourly fluctuations in how buildings are used.

Hybrid working models mean occupancy can no longer be assumed, while shared facilities and flexible leasing arrangements introduce additional layers of complexity.

Employees arrive at different times, attend the office for shorter durations, or use the building primarily for collaboration rather than individual work. Visitors may include clients, partners, event attendees or members of the public accessing shared amenities.

Contractors, service providers and temporary staff add further variation. Each group brings different expectations, levels of familiarity and access requirements.

This diversity influences how spaces are used and the level of support different visitors may need. Some move through the building quickly and efficiently, while others may need more direction. Some move quickly through the entrance, while others pause, wait or interact. Managing these behaviours within a single space requires entrances to be more adaptable.

Many office buildings now experience pronounced peaks linked to events, meetings or shared activities. These moments can place significant strain on entrance control infrastructure. Low-occupancy periods demand entrances remain legible, secure and welcoming even when sparsely populated.

The use of security technology to access office environments makes a difference in entrance control design. The choice of mobile first and biometric technology must operate reliably within the spatial, operational and user-experience requirements of the building.

The risks of tailgating, where an unauthorised individual follows an employee through an access point, is also a common challenge. Without intelligent detection systems, such incidents can go unnoticed, threatening personnel safety and organisational assets.

Experience as a design driver at the point of entry

In discussions about contemporary workplaces, experience is often referenced but rarely defined.

At the office entrance, it is shaped by atmosphere and the narrative alongside how easily people can understand and navigate the space. It is the product of spatial clarity and design, proportion, light and movement.

When people enter a building, they quickly judge whether the environment makes sense and how to move through it. Clear sightlines, intuitive routes and consistent cues allow people to orient themselves without instruction. Changes in level, material or lighting can signal transitions and guide movement. When these elements are aligned, the entrance feels calm and purposeful.

When entrances rely heavily on signage, barriers or verbal instruction, they place a cognitive burden on users. This can impact on design, slow movement and confidence, whilst increasing congestion and points of friction. In such environments, security measures may become more visible precisely because the space lacks inherent clarity.

Designing for experience involves understanding how people behave under varying conditions and shaping the design and environment to support those behaviours naturally. In doing so, the entrance can deliver a sense of welcome and reassurance without compromising its role.

The conflict between openness and control

At the heart of contemporary entrance control design lies a persistent conflict between openness and control. Organisations seek to create environments that feel accessible and inclusive, yet they must also manage integrated risk, protect assets and ensure safety.

These objectives are not inherently opposed, but they can create tension when addressed in isolation.

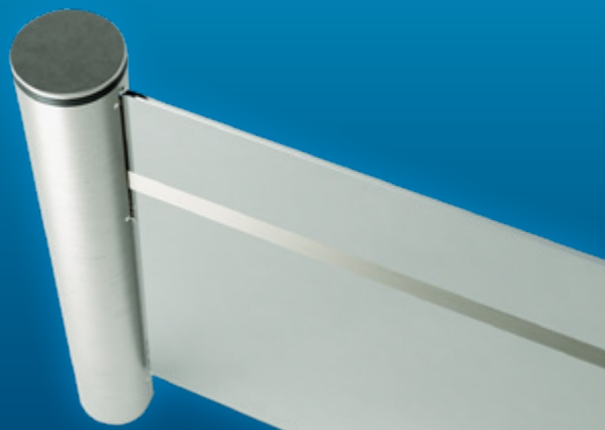
Highly visible security measures can



At the heart of contemporary entrance control design lies a persistent conflict between openness and control

Gunnebo GlasStile S

Built with a stainless steel column and a slim glass leaf, Gunnebo GlasStile S delivers seamless entry experience with configurable widths, bi-directional flow and the option for a tandem configuration.



communicate control effectively, but they may also signal restriction or distrust. Physical barriers, prominent checkpoints and overt surveillance can interrupt spatial flow and alter how people perceive the environment. In offices designed to encourage collaboration and openness, such interventions can feel incongruous.

“Rather than viewing openness and control as opposing forces, effective entrances integrate them through design choices that support both objectives simultaneously.”

At the opposite extreme, minimising visible security can support a sense of openness but introduce ambiguity. When boundaries are unclear or controls are concealed without adequate spatial cues, users may feel uncertain about where they are permitted to go or how movement is managed. This can lead to operational risk as well as discomfort.

People judge safety by how orderly and coherent the environment feels. Well-organised spaces with clear routes and consistent detailing create a stronger sense of security than areas with fragmented or ad hoc interventions.

Resolving this conflict requires a nuanced approach considering both actual security performance and perceived entrance control experience. Rather than viewing openness and control as opposing forces, effective entrances integrate them through design choices that support both objectives simultaneously.

Integrating security into architectural intent

Security is most effective when it is considered early in the design process and aligned with architectural intent. When treated as an afterthought, security measures risk appearing imposed, disrupting both spatial quality and operational efficiency.

Early integration allows security requirements to inform layout, specification, proportion and circulation in ways that feel deliberate rather than reactive.

Architectural intent provides a framework within which security can be expressed subtly. Decisions about enclosure, transparency and alignment can establish zones of access and control without the need for explicit barriers. Changes in ceiling height, floor finish or lighting can signal transitions intuitively.

Collaboration between architects, interior designers, security consultants and operational teams is essential.

Each brings a different perspective on how the entrance will be used, perceived and managed. Aligning these perspectives early helps avoid conflicts and compromises later.

Integrated security supports adaptability as when entrance control and movement management are embedded within the spatial logic of the site, they can be adjusted or scaled as requirements change. This reduces the need for intrusive retrofits and preserves the coherence of the environment over time.

Ultimately, integration is about intent rather than technology. It involves using architectural language to communicate control in ways that are consistent with the overall design vision, supporting both security and experience without privileging one at the expense of the other.

Materiality, detailing and the sensory environment

Material choices play a significant role in shaping how entrance control



The latest generation Gunnebo gates, such as this SpeedStile FL[®] Max, are developing a new design language that integrates with modern office design

technology is experienced. Beyond aesthetics, materials communicate values such as permanence, care and quality. At the point of entry, these signals influence how people feel confident and reassured.

Sustainable materials that age well can convey carbon responsibility alongside stability and reliability, especially for the belief driven employees and visitors. Finishes that are tactile and well-detailed encourage respectful interaction and consistency across elements reinforces coherence and reduces visual noise.

Transparency in entrance control considers glass and open structures that can support visibility, design and connection, but they must be balanced with privacy and control. Selective transparency allows users to anticipate what lies ahead, reducing uncertainty while maintaining appropriate separation.

Acoustic qualities consider entrances where amplified noise can feel chaotic, while those that absorb sound tend to feel calmer and more controlled. Attention to acoustics supports both comfort and communication, particularly during busy periods.

By considering stylish, sustainable materiality and detailing as part of the security narrative, designers can shape environments that feel secure without explicit messaging. The sensory environment becomes an active contributor to reassurance and order.

Lighting, movement and spatial flow

Movement through an office entrance is rarely uniform and is defined by the availability of set timed entrance control throughout the day (where appropriate

at night) or on a 24/7 basis.

People arrive with varied levels of familiarity and needs. Some move straight through the space, others slow down to orient themselves, wait for colleagues, or look for information. An effective entrance allows these behaviours to take place without friction.

Lighting plays a practical role in supporting this to help visitors understand where to move, where to pause and where decisions need to be made.

Consistent lighting along primary routes encourages confident movement, while changes in brightness or focus can signal thresholds, waiting areas or points of interaction. When lighting is poorly coordinated, spaces can feel flat or ambiguous, making it harder for people to read how they are meant to use them.

Spatial flow is shaped as much by what is removed as by what is added. Clear sightlines allow people to see what lies ahead and adjust their behaviour accordingly.

Designing for flow means considering different operating conditions. Entrances should work just as clearly when occupancy is low as they do when it is high. Spaces that rely on crowd behaviour to indicate direction or process can become confusing when they are quiet. Clear spatial cues help maintain order regardless of how many people are present.

When movement is well supported, fewer explicit controls are required. People move more predictably, queues are shorter, and the overall environment feels calmer. In this way, flow becomes

an enabler of both experience and security.

Managing complexity without visual clutter

Office entrances must accommodate a wide range of requirements. Accessibility standards, safety regulations, information provision and building services all place demands on the space.

Each requirement is valid, but when addressed individually they can accumulate into environments that feel busy, confusing or overly controlled.

Inclusive design is a central part of managing this complexity where entrances should be understandable and usable by people with different physical, sensory and cognitive needs. This is most effectively achieved through clear spatial organisation, logical routes and consistent cues, rather than reliance on additional signage or explanation.

Compliance requirements often introduce visible elements such as signage, controls and equipment. When these are treated as add-ons, they can compete for attention and disrupt spatial clarity. Integrating them into the overall design approach helps maintain a coherent environment where essential information is available without overwhelming users.

Technology presents similar challenges with devices that support access management, monitoring or communication are necessary, but their presence can be visually disruptive if not carefully considered. Locating technology where it supports natural movement, and detailing it consistently with surrounding elements, helps

prevent it from dominating the space.

Managing complexity in the entrance is largely about restraint. Clear priorities, disciplined detailing and a focus on how people use the space help ensure that necessary elements support operation without adding unnecessary visual noise.

The entrance as a long-term operational asset

Entrances are subject to constant use and gradual change. Working patterns will continue to evolve as organisations grow or contract, and regulations are updated. Over time, expectations made at the design stage may no longer apply in the same way.

Approaching the entrance as a long-term operational asset encourages more resilient decision-making. Layouts allowing for adjustment, generous clearances and adaptable zones make it easier to respond to change without major disruption.

Material selection considers how entrances experience high levels of wear and are highly visible. When finishes degrade quickly, the impact on perception is immediate. Durable materials and straightforward detailing help maintain a sense of order and care over time, supporting both experience and security.

Service maintenance should be considered as part of the design process rather than an operational afterthought. Systems and materials that are difficult to maintain often lead to temporary fixes, which can undermine the coherence of the space. A well-maintained futureproof entrance reinforces clarity and confidence daily.



Gunnebo SpeedStile manages employee access efficiently at Microsoft's Denmark offices

Seen over its full lifespan, the entrance plays a significant role in how effectively a building continues to function. Investing in clarity, adaptability and durability reduces the need for intervention and supports consistent operation.

Real-World Applications in Hybrid Offices

Waterman Workspaces, a provider of flexible office spaces, needed to secure multiple high-traffic sites. SpeedStile FL^s 1200 BA gates were installed, allowing smooth entry for members and guests while integrating with membership and billing systems. The solution improved security, reduced bottlenecks and streamlined operations.

Microsoft Denmark required a solution to combine security with design sensitivity. Gunnebo SpeedStile managed employee access efficiently, while a double-door system provided secure delivery access. The gates integrated with the open-plan design, supporting hybrid schedules without congestion.

COWI A/S in Denmark needed a secure and efficient solution for its headquarters. SpeedStile FP speed gates enabled smooth, single-person entry while maintaining accessibility. Glass barriers and stainless-steel housings complemented the building design, providing security without obstructing flow.



SpeedStile FP speed gates enabled smooth, single-person entry at COWI A/S Denmark

SafetyCulture in Sydney required a system to support its growing workforce. SpeedStile FL[®] BA gates with 1200mm high glass and a GlasStile Swing Gate were installed in the building foyer integrated with mobile access allowed fast, secure entry. The installation streamlined access, safeguarded personnel and maintained smooth movement throughout the office, supporting hybrid working patterns.

Reframing the question of arrival

As office environments continue to change, the role of the entrance will remain under pressure. New ways of working, shifting occupancy patterns and evolving expectations will continue to test how these spaces are planned and managed.

“Entrances performing well tend to do so quietly. They help people understand what to do without instruction, manage movement without drawing attention to controls, and support a sense of order without feeling restrictive.”

Understanding this required the need to see a space that must balance competing demands over time. Openness, experience and security are not fixed qualities. They are conditions that need to be adjusted in response to context, behaviour and use.

Entrances performing well tend to do so quietly. They help people understand what to do without instruction, manage

movement without drawing attention to controls, and support a sense of order without feeling restrictive. Their success lies less in how they are described and more in how they function day to day.

By focusing on performance alongside presentation, organisations and designers can create entrance environments that remain effective as conditions change. In this way, the entrance becomes a stable foundation for the new office experience, capable of adapting without losing clarity or purpose.

Contact us for more information on our solutions for office.

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[gunneboentrancecontrol.com](https://www.gunneboentrancecontrol.com)

Supporting Entrance Control from Design Through Operation

Effective entrance control in contemporary office environments depends on the choice of technology, alongside how technology is planned, integrated and supported.

Gunnebo Entrance Control works in partnership across the full lifecycle of an entrance control solution, providing structured support from early design stages through installation and ongoing operation. This approach recognises the entrance as both a spatial and operational system.

At the initial design and specification stage, engagement typically focuses on understanding how the building is intended to function. This includes patterns of arrival, occupancy variability, user groups and the broader architectural intent.

By working alongside architects, designers, security consultants and client teams, Gunnebo Entrance Control can consider layout, circulation and material decisions. Early involvement allows constraints and opportunities to be identified before they become embedded, reducing the need for later compromise or retrofit.

Sustainable specification support is centred on aligning performance requirements with the spatial context. Rather than applying standardised solutions, entrance control elements are selected and configured in response to factors such as throughput demand, accessibility needs, aesthetic priorities and integration with other building systems. This helps ensure access management supports movement and legibility without dominating the entrance environment.

During the installation phase, coordination becomes the primary focus. Entrance control systems sit at the intersection of multiple disciplines, including construction, electrical services, IT infrastructure and interior fit-out. Clear sequencing, tolerances and interfaces are critical to achieving the intended outcome. Installation support concentrates on ensuring systems are implemented as designed and operate reliably within the completed space.

Commissioning and handover attention shifts to how the entrance will be managed day to day. This includes configuring operating modes, testing under different conditions and ensuring facilities and security teams understand how the system responds to normal use and exception scenarios. Clear documentation and structured handover help reduce reliance on informal workarounds once the building is occupied.

Ongoing service and maintenance are treated as part of the original design intent. Office entrances experience constant use and are highly visible, making reliability and consistency particularly important. Regular servicing supports performance, while planned maintenance helps preserve the appearance and operational clarity of the entrance control. Where patterns of use change, systems can be adjusted to reflect new requirements without disrupting the wider environment.

Across all stages, the emphasis is on continuity and alignment. By maintaining involvement from early concept through to operation, entrance control can remain responsive to the building's evolving needs while retaining coherence with the original design vision. This lifecycle-based approach supports secure entrances that are legible, adaptable and appropriate to the office experience

For more information:
gunneboentrancecontrol.com

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