

THE FUTURE OF WORKPLACE DESIGN:



*Trends, Forecasts, and
Ways to Innovate*



As hybrid work becomes the norm, an innovative office design that attracts top talent, fosters collaboration, and enhances employee well-being is the future. Here's how leading companies are doing it.

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REINVENTING THE WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE

The workplace has seen a dramatic transformation in recent years. No longer just a location for clocking in and out, today's office must be a magnet for talented individuals, offering something beyond what their home office can provide. As hybrid work becomes standard, the purpose of the workplace is shifting from a focus on daily tasks to a hub for collaboration, celebration, and connection.

Workplace design has come a long way, but the evolution is far from over. The shift from cubicles to open-concept layouts was just the beginning. A new wave of workplace design is emerging – one that prioritizes experiential spaces, flexibility, and a culture of collaboration.

In order to attract and retain top talent, companies must embrace this evolution, designing office spaces that “earn the commute” and offer meaningful, memorable experiences. To do this, organizations need to:

1. Design for collaboration and connection.
2. Design for community and celebration.
3. Design for “wow” experiences.
4. Design for all kinds of people.
5. Design for wellness.

By understanding and implementing these strategies, companies can create a workplace that not only supports productivity, but also fosters connection, creativity, and well-being.



DESIGN FOR COLLABORATION AND CONNECTION

If there's anything the pandemic showed us, it's that a lot of work can be done from a kitchen table just the same as an office desk. And considering the benefits of working from home (comfort, flexibility, lack of commute, etc.), one might think the preference to stay

remote would be overwhelming. Yet, the studies show when it comes to in-person versus remote work, employees want the best of both worlds – and businesses are willing to cater to it:

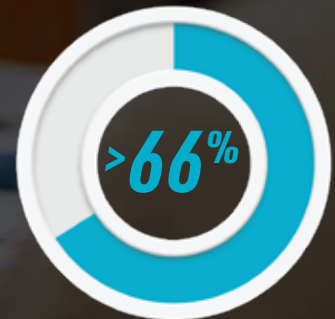
THE NUMBERS¹



More than 70% of employees are looking for flexible remote work options to continue.



Over 65% want more face-to-face time with their teams.



As a result, 66% of companies are thinking about redesigning their offices to better accommodate hybrid work.

¹Microsoft. "The Next Great Disruption is Hybrid Work—Are We Ready?" WorkLab, 2021. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work>.



This begs the question:

What is the number one reason people come into the office anymore? It's not to work on the computer, but rather to talk to people. To accomplish work that can only be done in-person and collaboratively.

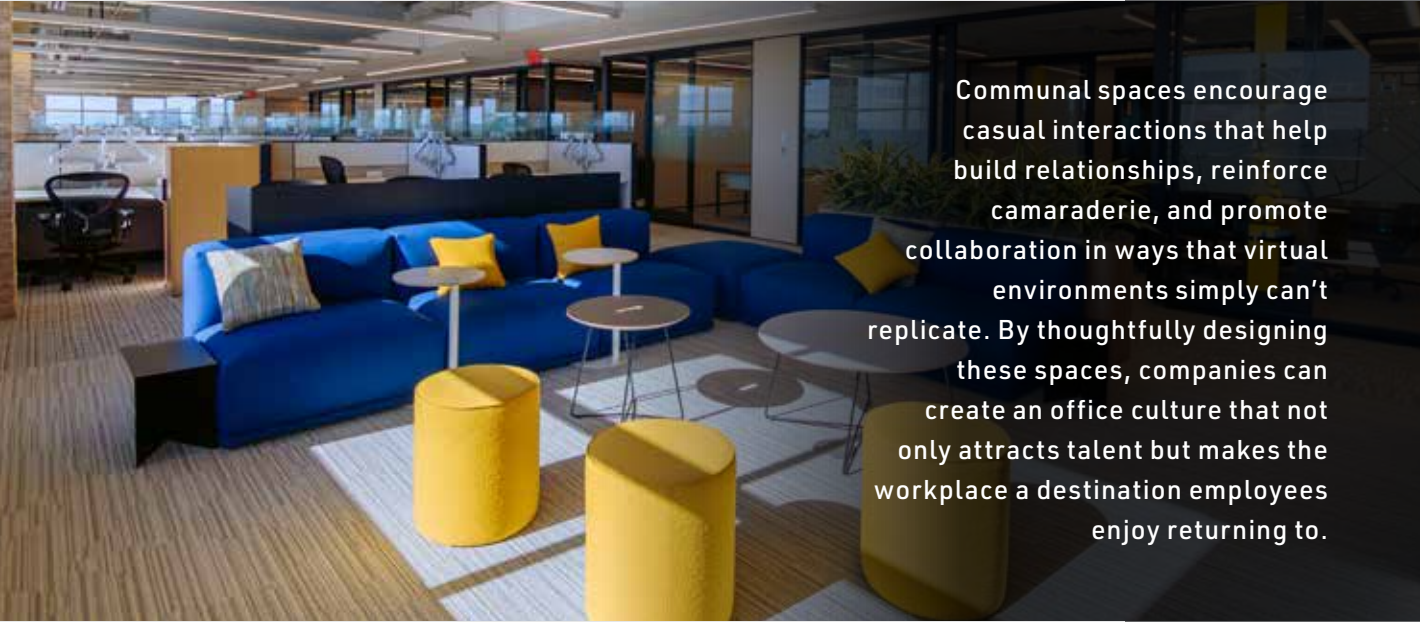
Thus, the primary function of headquarters has shifted to a place of collaboration and connection, while deep, focused work happens in the remote workspace. This means workplaces must be designed for seamless collaboration – with folks on- and off-site. Spaces for group work should be outfitted with top tech, like smart whiteboards and supercharged audio-visual equipment. With the right technology, in-person employees can feel like they are getting an experience they can't get at home, and interactions with remote employees can be smooth and hiccup-free.

The rise of hybrid work poses new challenges for traditional office design. How do you accommodate days when everyone is in the office as well as those when it's sparsely populated? One solution is to create flexible spaces that can be easily reconfigured for both peak and slower days. This will allow companies to avoid the inefficiency of having large spaces that are often empty while ensuring there is enough room to host larger gatherings when needed.



Future-proof designs focus on flexibility, allowing for easy adaptation to changing workforce dynamics. Fewer fixed elements like walls and more mobile, modular furniture make it simple to reconfigure spaces based on need.





Communal spaces encourage casual interactions that help build relationships, reinforce camaraderie, and promote collaboration in ways that virtual environments simply can't replicate. By thoughtfully designing these spaces, companies can create an office culture that not only attracts talent but makes the workplace a destination employees enjoy returning to.

DESIGN FOR COMMUNITY AND CELEBRATION

As hybrid work rapidly redefines the landscape, employers are worried about the disintegration of workplace culture. While remote work may boost productivity, it can amplify personal disconnection and make the employer-employee relationship feel transactional. Companies that want to be more than "just a paycheck" must actively create culture-building opportunities and design their workplaces with this in mind.

One of the most significant advantages of working in an office is the social aspect. Being around other people fosters a sense of belonging and helps build a strong workplace culture – something that's difficult to replicate in a home office. These in-person connections can strengthen bonds between colleagues, creating a more engaged and loyal workforce.

To support this, organizations should invest in spaces that foster community and connection. Spacious indoor and outdoor venues with communal seating are ideal for corporate events, office parties, and celebrations. Casual hangout zones – complete with espresso machines, gaming systems, and innovative seating – give employees a chance to unwind and build relationships in a relaxed setting.





DESIGN FOR "WOW" EXPERIENCES

To entice employees back to the office, companies must create environments that are not only functional but also enjoyable – spaces that make employees want to come in rather than feel obligated to. Today's workplace design is increasingly inspired by the hospitality industry, with interiors that feel more homelike, more experiential, and less work driven.

Offering amenities like bike storage, high-quality showers, and full locker rooms that resemble those of an upscale athletic club can make the commute more appealing and comfortable. These features help employees feel at ease while maintaining professionalism, creating a sense of luxury even in practical spaces. Biking to work might be specific to certain companies, but the broader principle remains the same: workplaces should be tailored to the needs and lifestyles of their employees.

The aesthetic shift is clear. Twenty years ago, it was unheard of for an employee to say, "This office is so much better than my home," but trending workplace design can evoke that sentiment. By incorporating cozy seating areas, ambient lighting, modern décor, and other elements drawn from luxury hotels or high-end apartments, companies can create inviting spaces that employees enjoy spending time in. The goal is to make the office experience better than what employees have at home.

This transformation from purely functional spaces into desirable destinations is helping to redefine what the workplace can be. When employees walk into a beautifully designed office with amenities and comforts they don't have at home, the space becomes more than just a place to work—it becomes a place where they feel excited to be, fostering both productivity and loyalty.





DESIGN FOR ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE

A one-size-fits-all approach to office design no longer works in today's diverse work environment. Employees need spaces that cater to different types of tasks – whether it's deep, focused work or collaborative teamwork – so workplace design must be flexible enough to accommodate various working styles. The days of designing offices purely to serve the needs of management are over; today's offices must be created with the worker in mind, designed to enhance their productivity and well-being.

Quiet, private spaces are essential for those who need to focus without distractions, while

open, collaborative areas enable group work and creative brainstorming. Offices designed with this balance in mind ensure employees have the right environment for the task at hand, improving both productivity and overall job satisfaction.

In recent years, there has been a greater understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace. Neurodiversity, which refers to the natural variation in human thinking, includes about 15–20% of the population.² Many neurodivergent individuals, such as those on the autism spectrum, are often among the most creative and innovative thinkers in the workforce, but traditional open-designs can be

DESIGNED FOR THE NEURODIVERGENT

Office spaces can offer intimate, distraction-free zones for deep work. These areas provide an alternative for employees who find open-concept designs challenging.





overwhelming for them. For these employees, quiet, low-sensory spaces are essential for doing their best work.

A flexible, neurodiversity-conscious design is critical for tapping into the potential of introspective workers – many of whom are key contributors. These individuals may thrive in environments that allow them to work in solitude. Removing their “head-down” cubicle in favor of an open-plan layout just because it’s trendy may backfire. By evaluating workplace design through the lens of neurodiversity, companies can create spaces that not only

accommodate different working styles but also enhance performance across the board.

Additionally, productivity depends largely on the type of work being done. For highly collaborative roles, working from home can lead to dips in productivity, while for professions that require deep, concentrated work, home offices might prove more efficient. Distractions can occur in any environment, but by designing workplaces that offer both quiet zones and collaborative spaces, companies can solve this problem and provide employees with the best of both worlds.

Work Design Magazine. “Workplace Trends and Strategies.” Work Design, https://www.workdesign.com/page/33/?eventDate=bxmahgwfkb&page_number_2=3.



DESIGN FOR WELLNESS

Workplace wellness has become a top priority, with companies focusing on both mental and physical health. Natural light plays a crucial role in improving mood, reducing stress, and boosting productivity. Remember when only executives enjoyed window offices? Now, open desk areas and collaboration spaces are placed near windows, ensuring all employees benefit from natural light. Glass-walled conference rooms also help bring sunlight into the building's center, creating a brighter, more welcoming atmosphere.

The rising popularity of WELL Certification – which covers ten topics, including air quality, water, nourishment, light, thermal comfort, and sound³ – further illustrates how companies are prioritizing wellness. By focusing on these elements, companies address employees' basic needs, attracting them back to the office and improving overall well-being.

³International WELL Building Institute. "WELL v2™ Overview." WELL Certified, <https://v2.wellcertified.com/en/wellv2/overview>.

Outdoor spaces also contribute to health and wellness, offering areas for employees to get fresh air and mental recharge. Time spent outdoors has been proven to reduce stress and improve creativity, making patios and recreational areas valuable assets. Organizations are designing these spaces with seasonality in mind, incorporating features that ensure year-round use regardless of the climate, like natural and artificial shading, fans and misters, and heaters.

Mental wellness is especially important post-pandemic, with isolation exacerbating issues like depression. While office design alone can't solve these problems, providing spaces for social interaction and outdoor recreation can significantly improve employees' mental health, making the workplace a more appealing and supportive environment.



WELL-certified spaces emphasize health and sustainability, showcasing the best practices for creating a wellness-focused work environment.



All-seasons outdoor spaces are a cornerstone of modern office design, allowing employees to take breaks or hold meetings outside regardless of the weather.



CREATE A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO BE

As hybrid work becomes the norm, the office must evolve to remain relevant. The key to drawing employees back to the workplace is designing spaces that foster collaboration, build community, and prioritize wellness. By focusing on flexibility, creating “wow” experiences, and considering the diverse needs of employees, companies can create a workplace that makes the commute worthwhile and inspires people to come back. The future of work is about more than productivity – it’s about creating a place where people genuinely want to be.



ABOUT NEWGROUND INTERNATIONAL

NewGround International helps brands plan, design, and build innovative spaces that turn heads and accelerate growth. Our Design expertise creates flexible, tech-friendly, experiential corporate spaces that foster connection, collaboration, and success – in every sector.



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