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work better



The New Workspace:

How will the future workspace drive better people performance?

officeworkspace.com

This is **Manchester.**
We do things differently here

Anthony H



Creating the future workspace

Are our workspaces genuinely ready for the workers of tomorrow?

The concept of the 'future-ready' workspace is one that's been around for some time now, and in fairness it can often seem like a slightly vague idea. After all, how can we prepare for an uncertain future without concrete details to work with? Aren't we better off looking to solve the workplace problems of the here and now?

The events of the pandemic, however, have shown just how important it is to be able to flex and adapt to an unpredictable future. Businesses of all kinds have had to learn quickly how to move to new ways of working, embracing hybrid models and virtual workspaces, while realigning their physical workspaces to better support these new working patterns. Some businesses were already one step ahead, while others had to run to catch up. But if the events of the last two years have taught us anything, it's that there's no excuse for not being ready for the unexpected from now on.

We need to plan for an unpredictable future

The future-ready workspace is about building in the flexibility and adaptability needed to face an unpredictable, sometimes dramatically changing world head on. But more than that, it's about **building the workspace around people**, offering choices in how and where work gets done, in order to provide the best possible environments for different roles and activities, and for different working personas.

People are remarkably adaptable and resilient. We can usually find the best way through in any given situation, no matter how out of the ordinary. Our workspaces need to catch up with that ability, so that they enable, rather than hinder, our natural human adaptability.

The workspaces of tomorrow will be built around **people and adaptability**.

In this eGuide, we discover how.



The evolution of work

The tide of workplace change didn't start with the pandemic. Recent events have only served to accelerate a trend that had already been in motion for some time, driven by longer term changes in the nature of work. These changes are largely the result of advances in technology, and its impact on the type of work carried out by knowledge workers, as well as a revolution in where, how and when that work gets done.

The role of automation

Advances in AI and workplace technology mean that many basic and repetitive procedural tasks that used to require hands-on human effort have now been replaced with more time- and cost-effective automation systems. With less of a focus on admin work, people are freed up to concentrate on higher level tasks including decision-making, problem-solving, creative thinking and collaboration.



This has meant a change in focus for knowledge workers across a broad range of industries. The shift towards higher level knowledge work, collaborative decision-making and problem-solving means that workers come together in new ways that are often location-independent, to discuss and plan. It also means that individual concentrated work is back in the spotlight – it isn't all about brainstorming and meetings.

The advance of cloud-based technologies

Another key trend in the evolution of work is the rise of location-independent working, fundamentally changing where and how work takes place. Advances in cloud-based communication, collaboration and data hosting have given rise to a more fluid, dynamic workforce that benefits from a range of work settings, both within and beyond the physical office – enabling us to work where and how best suits the task in hand, as well as catering to our individual work preferences.

The rise of the cognitive worker

For many roles, the definition of productivity has changed – moving away from maximising the output of simple procedural tasks, towards optimising decision-making and mental performance. This shift from a purely **quantitative** to a more **qualitative** measure of output has implications for the workspace, both physical and virtual, and how it best enables and supports the work we do. Fixed teams and unchanging patterns of work no longer work for us, and the workspaces of tomorrow need to reflect this move towards agile, adaptable work settings and environments, that reflect this more fluid, dynamic way of working.

In the new paradigm, workspaces need to look, feel and function differently in order to help us to do our best work.

Workspace fundamentals

A blueprint for people performance.

Productive workspaces are built around people and their needs. Some of these needs vary between different roles and individuals, whereas others are more universal.

Universal attributes are ones that every workspace needs to provide an optimal environment for people to perform at their best. Intelligent workspace design must consider each of these factors individually and in combination in order to provide an optimised workspace that drives people performance:

1. Productivity

The workspace must be designed with productivity at its heart. What this looks like in practice will be different depending on the organisational profile. Workplace consultancy provides a framework within which to identify the types of work carried out, individual and group dependencies, working patterns and processes. This feeds into considerations in layout, design, and function within the workspace.

2. Agility

Agile workspaces enable people to move seamlessly between different work settings and roles, choosing the optimal environment for the task at hand. Organisations need to consider how their employees will transition smoothly between different tasks and zones, how they will connect both on- and off-site. Connectivity and flexibility are key to supporting an agile work style, allowing people to take their work with them from one space to another, with access to plug and play technology and cloud-based data storage, as well as multi-functional, adaptable spaces.

3. Collaboration

Collaboration is key for creative, problem-solving work. The ability to connect with teams, both in the physical and virtual space, for enhanced collaboration, is essential to drive productivity. This means a workspace that fosters teamwork in the physical space, while also bringing people together in the virtual space, so that dispersed teams can work together as easily as if sharing a room. Working beyond single locations will become increasingly important in scaling business operations and drawing talent from a wider geographical pool.

4. Belonging

The physical workspace acts as a hub for a company's values, culture, ethos and community. The rise of the destination office reflects this shift away from the workplace as purely functional space that people are required to attend, towards a more aspirational space that people choose to attend in order to reconnect with their colleagues, forge a sense of shared purpose and belonging that boosts engagement and commitment to the business. In an increasingly competitive talent market, organisations need to work harder than ever to give people reasons to stay, beyond just pay packet and perks, and a sense of shared values is central to this.



5. Autonomy

Now more than ever, people value the freedom to choose the right locations, work settings and tools for the work they undertake. Since the events of the pandemic, location-independent working and the array of tools and technologies that support this have come to be expected by workers, who have discovered productivity gains and a better work-life balance by ditching the daily commute. Enabling hybrid working for the roles that it is suitable for shows trust and confidence in people that is rewarded by more motivated, empowered staff who are more likely to go the extra mile.

6. Wellbeing

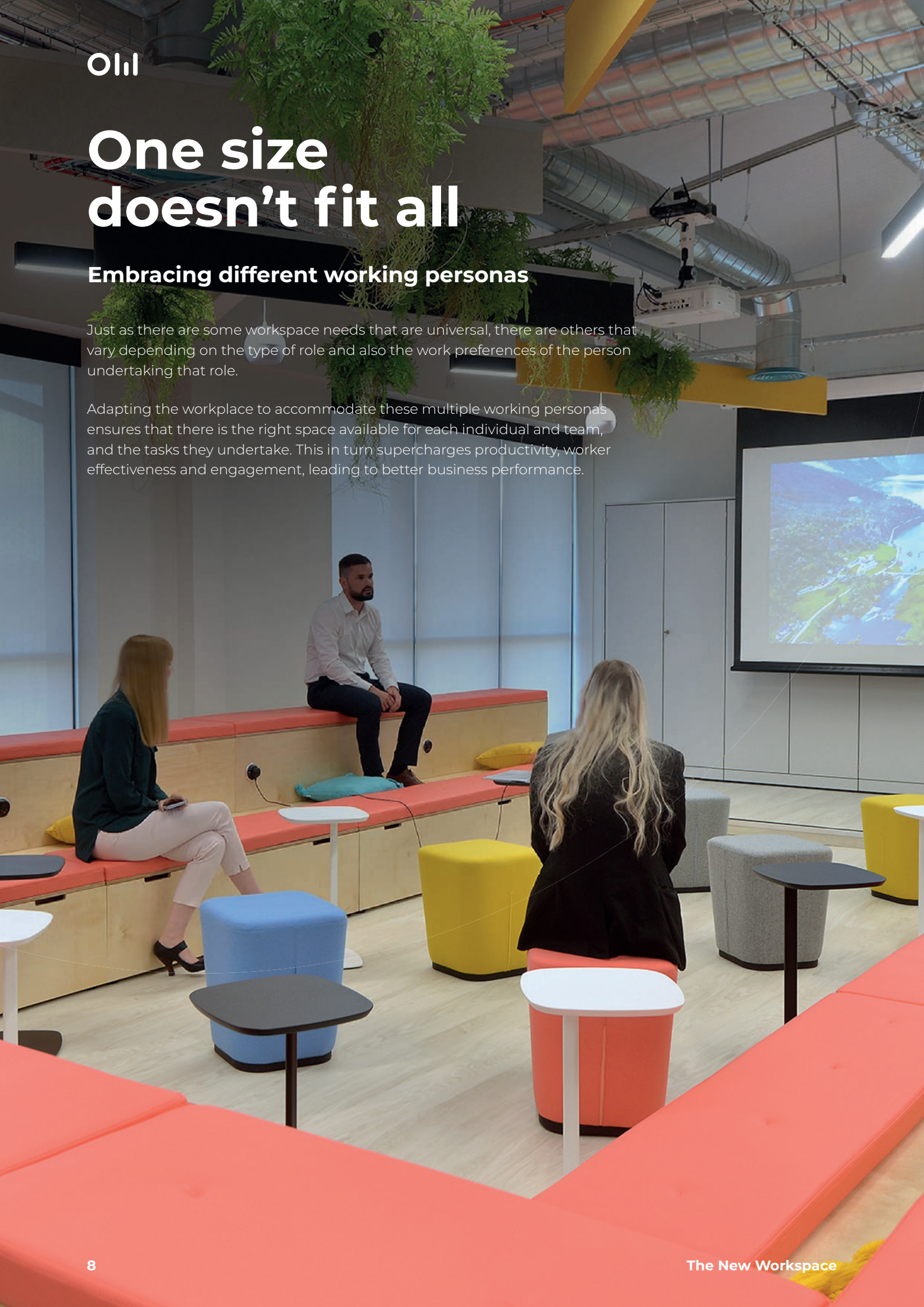
The pandemic provided an opportunity for many people to reevaluate their relationship with work, considering issues such as wellbeing, work-life balance and the way they allocate their time to different commitments. Many people found working from home improved their productivity, while dropping the daily commute provided hours of additional time. In the war for talent, being able to offer hybrid working is now on many candidates' wish lists. Furthermore, office environments are beginning to reflect more of the comforts of the home environment, from enhanced amenities and recreational facilities to a wider range of non-desk work settings, breakout spaces and zones.

One size doesn't fit all

Embracing different working personas

Just as there are some workspace needs that are universal, there are others that vary depending on the type of role and also the work preferences of the person undertaking that role.

Adapting the workplace to accommodate these multiple working personas ensures that there is the right space available for each individual and team, and the tasks they undertake. This in turn supercharges productivity, worker effectiveness and engagement, leading to better business performance.



Leading global management consulting firm Bain & Company (2022) identified 6 types of workers in their report based on how we can “rehumanise” work. Each persona brings different strengths to the table and excels at different kinds of work, and most businesses require a mixture of these in order to function optimally. Furthermore, each persona has different needs and preferences in order to flourish, which has a clear impact on the shape of the work environment.



Operators

Operators are practical thinkers, engaging in work tasks that are primarily focused on ‘getting the job done’. Operators tend to need more productivity-enhancing tools that help them maximise efficiency in the day-to-day features of their role. Removing obstacles to speed and efficiency is key for this persona.



Givers

Givers are focused on creating positive change through work. They are highly empathetic and therefore perform well within team-related projects. Collaborative, selfless, and least motivated by monetary means, Givers seek meaningful opportunities and roles where they feel they can help. Teamwork and communication are key requirements for this persona.



Artisans

Artisans are empowered by passion for their work – often ending up in roles they’re inspired by. This drive to constantly refine their expertise means artisans are able to solve complex issues at work, though they require more autonomy to do so. They’re less team-oriented, and more focused on mastering their own capabilities. They often require quiet space to concentrate, and specialist tools and work settings to perform at their best.



Explorers

Explorers embrace freedom, thriving when they are able to manage their own autonomy at work. They prefer flexibility in the tasks they take on, leaning towards roles that require more variety. Explorers tend to switch occupations most frequently, so they may have a range of expertise that means they’re an ideal all-rounder. Explorers need variety, and the flexibility to choose different work settings, both on- and off-site.



Strivers

Strivers are motivated by the idea of success, constantly re-evaluating how they can improve their professional activities. They are led by long-term goals, so resist the temptation to be put off by a lack of variety at work. Strivers are highly competitive but will also work well in a team with a view to building status and professional development. They tend to perform at their best when located together to motivate one another.



Pioneers

Pioneers are future-minded and ambitious. They are often outspoken with regards to their strong opinions and views, and work best in environments they feel they have control over. They are often high achievers at work due to their unwavering commitment to achieve their ‘vision’. Pioneers thrive on change, work best in fast-paced, flexible environments and need the ability to adapt their work settings as needed to progress their aims.

Different companies will have different proportions of these personas, with some being more driven by one type than another. The first step towards building the optimal workspace is to understand the people who make up your business, both as individuals and as teams, in order to build up an organisational profile that will inform the blueprint for your ideal work environment and the work settings it contains.



The new modes of working

How workspaces are responding to change

All of these changes in the way people work, from the nature of the work we undertake, to changing attitudes and priorities, evolving technologies, the need to innovate and to mitigate future risks in the light of recent events, mean that the workspace must adapt in order for people and businesses to thrive.

Work is an activity, not a place – and organisations that are able to move away from reliance on static, unresponsive work environments towards a new, more adaptable way of working stand to reap the rewards in terms of productivity, innovation, talent attraction and retention, and business performance.

Traditional office design is increasingly giving way to a host of new modes and models of work, each tailored to different individual and organisational needs. These new paradigms include agile working, activity-based working, hybrid and remote working, and the concept of the ‘destination office.’

What this looks like in reality will vary from one business to the next, with many choosing some combination of all these approaches to best suit their specific needs.

Agile working

It may have been around for quite a while now, but the concept of agile working is more relevant today than ever. Agile working focuses on providing flexibility and choice to individuals and teams to curate the ideal work environment for the task at hand. It involves a combination of physical spaces and technology overlay to provide versatile work settings with adaptability at their heart.

Modular furniture and work settings are a regular feature of an agile work environment, with the ability to rearrange a space to suit different tasks. There is also a focus on technology, allowing people to collaborate more effectively both in person and from remote locations, whether that be home working, working at client sites or other locations.

There is some overlap between the concept of agile and activity-based working, but with agile working the focus is particularly on flexibility, on combining in-person and location-independent working, and on enabling teams to collaborate more effectively, removing silos and barriers between different departments and job functions.



Hybrid working

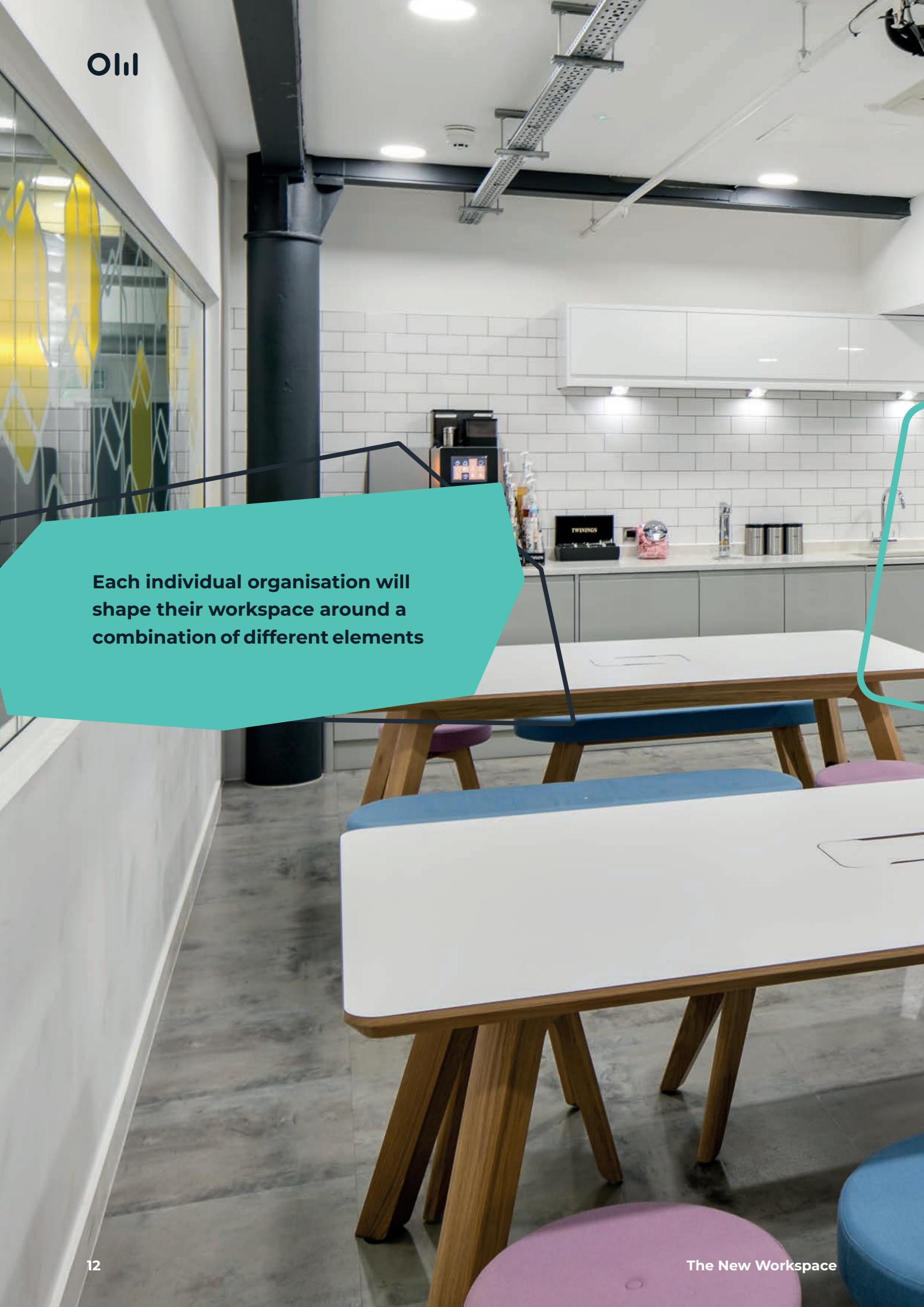
The last few years have seen a meteoric rise in hybrid working. The pandemic forced many companies to adopt a system of at least partial remote working, with individuals and teams taking turns to work on- and off-site on different days. Many were surprised by how easy the transition was.

The discovery that much knowledge work can be performed just as effectively from home, from a café, or while on the train, provides greater freedom to individuals, while also providing an opportunity for companies to rationalise their office space requirements, with many handing back part of their floorplate to the landlord, or subletting it to turn a profit.

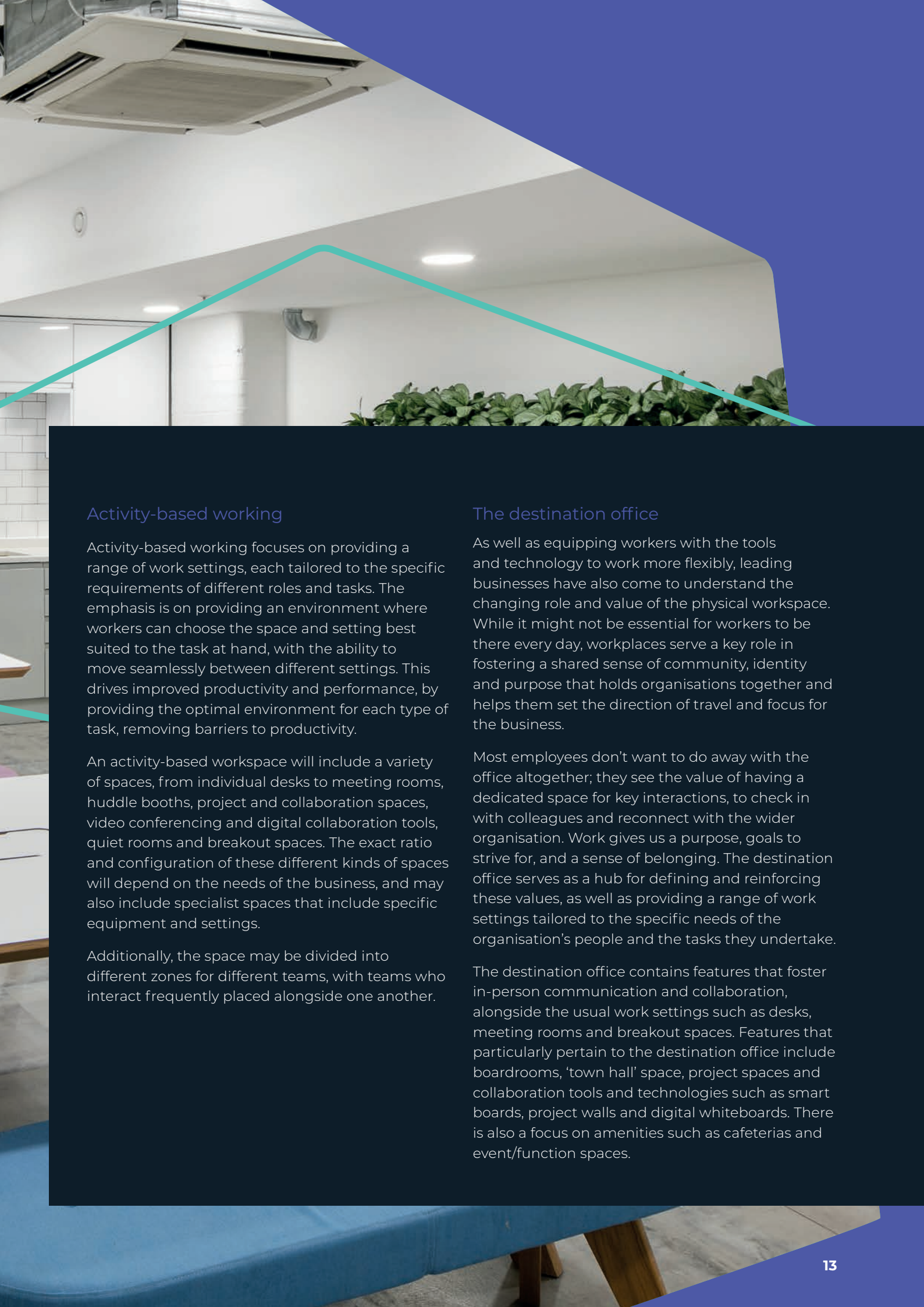
Location-independent working reduces lost time from commuting, as well as opening up opportunities to work during the hours that best mesh with a worker's non-work commitments. Giving workers more control over where (and when) they work boosts job satisfaction and engagement, while also improving productivity and performance.

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The hybrid workspace offers a mixture of flexible settings on-site, such as hot desks, collaboration areas and quiet booths, while also providing the technology to enable workers to access their virtual desktops, complete with all appropriate software, files and communication tools, from any location. This also means providing an in-office technology overlay that enables workers on-site to communicate and collaborate freely with those working remotely, including video conferencing rooms, virtual collaboration tools and at-desk video calling.

A photograph of a modern office interior. In the foreground, there are two long, white-topped tables with wooden legs. Underneath the tables are blue and pink upholstered stools. In the background, there is a kitchen area with white subway tile walls, white upper cabinets, and grey lower cabinets. On the counter, there is a coffee machine, a Twinnings tea box, and other small items. A large black pillar is visible on the left side of the kitchen area. The ceiling has exposed black beams and track lighting. A teal callout box with a black outline is positioned over the middle of the image, containing text.

**Each individual organisation will
shape their workspace around a
combination of different elements**



Activity-based working

Activity-based working focuses on providing a range of work settings, each tailored to the specific requirements of different roles and tasks. The emphasis is on providing an environment where workers can choose the space and setting best suited to the task at hand, with the ability to move seamlessly between different settings. This drives improved productivity and performance, by providing the optimal environment for each type of task, removing barriers to productivity.

An activity-based workspace will include a variety of spaces, from individual desks to meeting rooms, huddle booths, project and collaboration spaces, video conferencing and digital collaboration tools, quiet rooms and breakout spaces. The exact ratio and configuration of these different kinds of spaces will depend on the needs of the business, and may also include specialist spaces that include specific equipment and settings.

Additionally, the space may be divided into different zones for different teams, with teams who interact frequently placed alongside one another.

The destination office

As well as equipping workers with the tools and technology to work more flexibly, leading businesses have also come to understand the changing role and value of the physical workspace. While it might not be essential for workers to be there every day, workplaces serve a key role in fostering a shared sense of community, identity and purpose that holds organisations together and helps them set the direction of travel and focus for the business.

Most employees don't want to do away with the office altogether; they see the value of having a dedicated space for key interactions, to check in with colleagues and reconnect with the wider organisation. Work gives us a purpose, goals to strive for, and a sense of belonging. The destination office serves as a hub for defining and reinforcing these values, as well as providing a range of work settings tailored to the specific needs of the organisation's people and the tasks they undertake.

The destination office contains features that foster in-person communication and collaboration, alongside the usual work settings such as desks, meeting rooms and breakout spaces. Features that particularly pertain to the destination office include boardrooms, 'town hall' space, project spaces and collaboration tools and technologies such as smart boards, project walls and digital whiteboards. There is also a focus on amenities such as cafeterias and event/function spaces.

the idea of coworking is now a widespread solution that larger corporates are getting in on

Coworking

Coworking spaces have grown in popularity enormously in recent years. They've gone from being a niche option for independent workers and small start-ups, to becoming one of the most desirable workspaces for a breadth of businesses and employees alike.

Having initially appealed to solo entrepreneurs and small-scale start-ups, the idea of coworking is now a widespread solution that larger corporates are getting in on: as flex space to accommodate growing headcounts and new teams; as a way of breaking into new geographies with minimal set-up costs; as a way of connecting with the interesting ventures and talented individuals that occupy these spaces.

Coworking spaces contain a mixture of shared facilities and private spaces. For some users, the ability to hot-desk, to connect and network with peers using the space is of prime importance, and an open plan space with high-end amenities is essential for this. For other teams, having a private space for collaboration and meetings is central, and coworking spaces often emphasise provision of private rooms to accommodate these users. Connectivity and the ability to configure and adapt different work areas are essential requirements for any coworking space.



A modern office interior featuring a woman working in a white pod. The office has a grey carpet, a white ceiling with square light panels, and large indoor plants. A black desk with a white lamp is in the foreground. A teal line graphic is at the bottom.

Traditional

For some businesses, the traditional office is still the best option for them. Traditional office configurations still have much to recommend them. For teams and departments that collaborate closely, having all your people in the same space can facilitate communication and team working.

In some sectors, such as the legal sector, firms work extensively with confidential data and often have to keep paper files, in which case a traditional office has many advantages for data security and accessibility. The traditional office can also serve as a flagship for the brand, with the ability to host client meetings as well as reinforcing a sense of shared community and purpose among workers.

Traditional offices still contain a range of different work settings, from fixed and flexible desking, to meeting rooms, breakout spaces, boardrooms, 'town hall' spaces, social spaces and amenities.

Each individual organisation will shape their workspace around a combination of different elements, often combining elements of different approaches to find the optimal space for their specific needs. The key to getting it right is to carefully analyse the needs of the business and its people, and then translate those into a work environment that best supports those needs.

Reaping the rewards of new ways of working

Evolving the way your organisation and your people operate provides a host of benefits that easily repay the investment required.

The business case covers everything from bottom-line metrics such as productivity, efficiency and profitability, to less tangible but equally important aspects such as talent acquisition and retention, staff engagement and wellbeing. Here are some of the key benefits of rethinking the workspace:

Enhanced productivity and performance

Adopting new, more flexible ways of working is proven to improve productivity and business performance, making organisations more adaptable and able to cope with change, more open to innovation, and better able to manage unforeseen challenges that may prompt dramatic restructuring of how and where work gets done.

Thinking differently about the way your workspace supports your people, and especially applying data-driven methods of assessing what your people and business need, has the power to significantly improve overall business performance, providing a quantifiable positive return on investment.

Furthermore, there are innovative ways of financing your investment so that the cost is offset over the working lifetime of the space, enabling you to reap the benefits now, rather than waiting to make changes.

Futureproof workspaces

Even established, market-leading businesses aren't immune to competition and disruption in the markets they operate in, and the churn of successful businesses is higher than you might think. In order to stay ahead of the competition, businesses need to continually evolve and innovate the way they work.

The workplace plays a key role in enabling this future-facing mindset. A work environment that not only caters for but encourages innovation and a creative approach will better future-proof your business.

Key components here are flexibility, adaptability, communication and collaboration.

Talent attraction and retention

Low talent retention rates are costly. With increased staff turnover, the company faces significant additional costs through ongoing recruitment, onboarding and training. Furthermore, when good employees leave the business, they take with them all of the expertise and experience they've built up, often to go to a competitor who benefits from your investment.

Workplaces that provide the right tools and technologies, in a conducive work environment that people are excited to be a part of, go a long way towards attracting and retaining the top talent in your industry.

When people are proud of where they work, it shows in their attitude, and in the atmosphere and energy of the workspace.

Engagement and purpose

Engaged employees and cohesive teams are able to deliver significantly better performance than unmotivated, disengaged staff.

The workplace needs to reflect the values and vision of the organisation, providing a clear sense of purpose and direction that will drive your people to give their best efforts and go the extra mile.

Investing in top-class facilities, both in the workspace and in breakout spaces, amenities and social spaces, helps to foster this shared sense of community and purpose, which is ultimately what makes leading businesses stand apart from their competitors.

It may be hard to measure, but a workplace that functions as a flagship destination for your people will benefit every area of your business.





How Office Workspace can help

What the ideal workspace looks like can vary greatly from one organisation to the next. It needs to be carefully aligned to the specifics and nuances of your business in order to provide the maximum value and benefit to the way you work.

We help our clients to achieve these goals using our extensive suite of workplace consultancy solutions to gain a deep level of understanding of your organisation, your people, their roles and personas, as well as dependencies between different activities and teams. The insights generated then inform the blueprint for your new workspace.

Our approach involves analysing how your workforce currently operates and performs, identifying barriers to productivity and areas with the greatest opportunity for improvement.

Our consultants deliver concrete, actionable recommendations that feed into the design process, so that you can be sure that the workspace we deliver will optimally support your business, both now and in the future.

For more details on our full portfolio of workspace consultancy, design and build services, please visit our website.



At Office Workspace, our goal is to enable your people to achieve more – to be more productive, more connected, more engaged, more creative. To work better.

We create workspaces that deliver on these promises, bringing together the latest insights in workspace psychology, evidence-based design, innovative workspace technology and proven change management techniques, to help drive improved people performance.

Modern workspace strategies are all about people. By providing choices in where, when, and how people work, we empower them to find the best way to achieve their goals, enabling them to flex and adapt to the opportunities and challenges they face.

Successful businesses recognise the value that a future-ready, people-centric workspace can bring. At Office Workspace, we can help guide you and your people to a better way of working.

To find out more about how we can help your business to perform better, get in touch today on **+44 (0) 20 8309 0000** or email **hello@officeworkspace.com**.







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