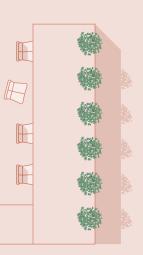
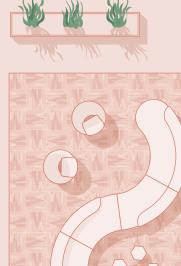


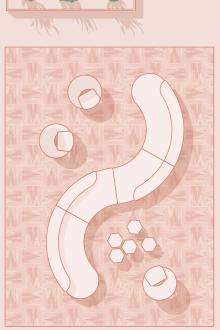


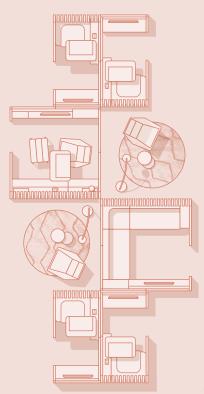
Emerging Opportunities to Advance the Human-centered Workplace

















UNOFFICE THE OFFICE:

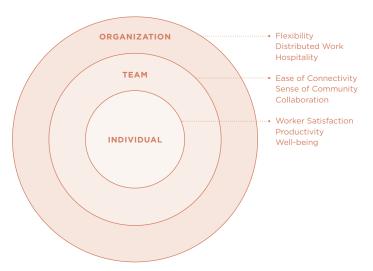
Emerging Opportunities to Advance the Human-centered Workplace

INTRODUCTION

Today, most people are not working in an office setting that works for them. But we can change that.

In the past few decades, the sweeping transformations experienced by virtually every industry have rarely been matched by complementary, comprehensive workplace redesigns. Opportunities are now more plentiful than ever to create ideal workspaces that can be leveraged to advance work across sectors—if we use a human-centered, occupant-driven focus to design them. Amid the complexities of comprehensive design—materials, technology, personalities, organizational culture—simplification is key. west elm workspace is "unofficing" the office by recentering it on people and nature: the essentials. In a phrase, we're humanizing the workplace.

Our research into how work happens in modern organizations and the factors important to success reveals that companies operate on three general scales: the individual, the team, and the organization. The individual scale revolves around worker satisfaction, productivity, and well-being. The team scale revolves around the abilities to connect, establish a sense of community, and collaborate. The organization scale revolves around flexibility, distributed work, and hospitality.



Because these scales have distinct but overlapping characteristics, their needs are best met with design methods and products that account for interrelated, human-centric goals: collaboration made possible by community; concentration encouraged by retreat; and, the ability to access helpful information through people as well as technology. In every case, considering the nature of people and our preferences is essential.

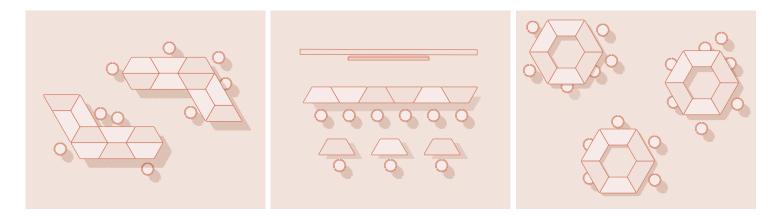
The proceeding sections of this paper outline six key challenges the modern workplace faces, along with west elm's approach to each. Based on our research and studies undertaken by our partner consultants, the six segments describe ways to leverage environmental psychology, cognitive science, and contemporary socioeconomic trends to address the emerging workplace problems that are unaccounted for by traditional design.

X TRANSFORMABLE SPACES

Organization scale; collaboration and choice principles

Now, the room that serves as your workplace's cafeteria during the day is also its event space by night. What used to be a dedicated desk for one employee now hosts a rotating cast of staff members and meetings. A conference room is a lunch retreat destination is an after-work lounge space.

Businesses can no longer afford to pay for real estate that serves just one function—particularly the high-performing startup organizations driving innovation across industries.



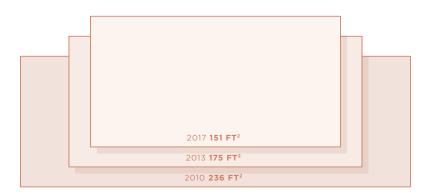
We're saying goodbye to the "bigger is better" excesses of traditional American life, and ushering in the era of the sharing and experience economies. In this new age of ultimate reusability, there's no benefit to segregating space by use, and everything to gain by integrating it to the fullest extent possible.

Dedicated office space allotment per worker in 2017 will likely average 151 square feet—a drop from the averages of 175 in 2013 and 236 in 2010.¹ Within the next five years, that number is predicted to drop to below 100.² The drivers for this downsizing trend include the appeal of saving money on real estate, new technology that requires less space, and a shift toward agile working practices.³

Architect.nd.edu/ Assets/101863/ Work_space_and_furniture_standards_final.pdf

ccim.com/cire-magazine/ articles/310928/2013/05/ how-much-spacedo-we-need/

gsa.gov/graphics/ogp/ Workspace_Utilization_ Banchmark_July_2012.pdf



Outside the office, too, we see the repurposing of space—and the ability of technology to support it—all over the sharing economy: residential occupants transform their extra bedroom into lodging for travelers with Airbnb; car owners turn their workaday wheels into taxis for hire with Uber. The profitability inherent in repurposable spaces can be amplified exponentially with the right technology—and the benefits can far surpass financial gain.

As social technologies become more ingrained in daily life, people become more aware of helpful new products and services. As they become used to the agency and level of control that increasing tech enablement provides, they build increasingly high user

experience expectations across the board—from their restaurant-rating app to their office space. Occupants now expect that their workplaces will be flexible, high-performance, customizable, and technology-integrated. ⁴

workdesign.com/2017/03/ post-recession-rise-coworking/ [paywall]

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workdesign.com/2017/03/ post-recession-rise-coworking/ [paywall]

The seeds for another motivator of transformable space were planted almost a decade ago, before much of today's social media existed. The 2008 recession gave many workers an unintended taste of a variety of working environments: whether they were self-employed, unemployed, or back in school, the number of people working (or job hunting, or doing homework) in cafés, college campuses, public libraries, and their own living rooms experienced a spike. When these people arrived at, or returned to, a more traditional work environment, many found themselves under-stimulated and disappointed by its shortcomings. Being able to compare their experience of different places changed users' expectations of the workplace at large. As a result, many now prize performance over ownership, flexibility over consistency, and a sense of professional freedom over an established hierarchy.⁵

This phenomenon has fed a cultural shift in individual consumer preference from private ownership to on-demand performance.

People are okay with relinquishing physical ownership of something if it means they'll gain efficiency (e.g., renting an Airbnb vs. owning a timeshare). This shift accounts for much of the rise of the sharing economy as whole.

A related movement, the experience economy, was encapsulated this way by Harvard 6 Business Review: "A company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event." In a prime example of this, real estate strategy consultancy PLASTARC worked with consumer goods giant Unilever to make one of the company's large conference rooms available to the surrounding community for after-hours events. Unilever made conscious extra investments in the transformability of the room's design, and reaped the benefits of greater visibility and goodwill with its neighbors.

hbr.org/1998/07/ welcome-to-the-experience-economy

A multipurpose space encourages occupants to see the full utility of the objects within it and to decide how best to use them—it doesn't dictate (as a traditional space might) what each thing "is" and what it's "for." Transformable spaces dovetail beautifully with organizations' increasingly cost-conscious and DIY-inspired approach to work and workplace.

Organizations like Mozilla⁷ have been successfully embedding this hackable approach in their workplace design for years. Their methods include allocating ten percent of their workplace budget for post-move adjustments, habituating a "fail fast" design approach that encourages risk-taking, and giving employees the choice to opt in (or not) to certain workplace protocols like hot desking.

plastarc.com/ articles/mozilla-open-source-workplace

Working in a transformable space increases the number of choices an employee has during their workday. Having more choices spurs spontaneous collaboration, fosters a greater sense of ownership over work, and ultimately creates a stronger feeling of togetherness in the workplace.

BEING ALONE + TOGETHER

Individual and team scales; community and retreat principles

People want and need to work independently much of the time, but we still benefit from having others nearby. Modern technologies enable both better independent work and on-demand connection: we can create our own micro-environments for maximal comfort and concentration with the aid of headphones, personal humidifiers, and aromatherapy products, yet we can stay connected to coworkers on the next floor or halfway around the world via phone, email, and video chat. Technology can help us feel like we have a personal place in a shared environment, but when taken to an extreme, it can reduce our face-to-face time so much that we yearn for personal reconnection. One of the great challenges the modern workplace faces is balancing the "alone" and "together" forces technology exerts.

Smart young organizations all over the world are using the gamification of inter-office communication as a way for employees to bond socially across spatial divides. A good gamification strategy can leverage the same elements that keep video game players going round after round, but toward the goals of improved communication, knowledge sharing, and engagement between employees working in different offices.8 Australia's Macquarie Group takes another, more literal tack with their "virtual hallway"—a live video feed from one office's hallway that's projected by a big screen into another. The display allows workers to see each other in a more casual, transitional setting, outside formal meetings and phone calls.

edelman.com/post/gamifving-employee-communications-engagement/

Of course, there are pros and cons to connecting digitally across spaces. Now even the tiniest of startups can offer their employees the opportunity to get acquainted and bond with coworkers in a faraway office; such actions no longer require pricey long-distance calls or plane tickets. But of course, the key word in virtual reality is virtual: your coworker in another office is not really sitting on the couch next to you; you are interacting with a computer.

All of these factors are propelling highly variable group work to become the dominant and preferred working style of most organizations.

The downside of this new geographic and temporal communication freedom is the very real possibility of energy depletion and burnout as we try to do everything and talk to everyone all at once. Counterintuitively, relentless digital connectivity can spur feelings of greater emotional isolation. 9

In addition to technology, the advent of distributed, variable, and group-based work models, as well as the widespread flattening of organizations, are also influencing the "alone/ together" dynamic. Network-based projects can move as quickly as information can flow; responsibilities can be distributed around a group; increased access to outside resources and partners can drive innovation. All of these factors are propelling highly variable group work to become the dominant and preferred working style of most organizations. All areas of the office are ripe with opportunity to support this kind of work if we understand how to make the best use of them.

Add to the mix that serendipitous interactions between people and information in the workplace can be just as beneficial as such interactions between people. These "collisions" can be fostered in many ways, including by simply posting visual reminders and representations of an organization's work throughout its space. Even just glimpsing a framed award or a poster illustrating core values provides a reminder of the company's raison d'être and helps create a sense of shared knowledge and ownership of good work being done. 10

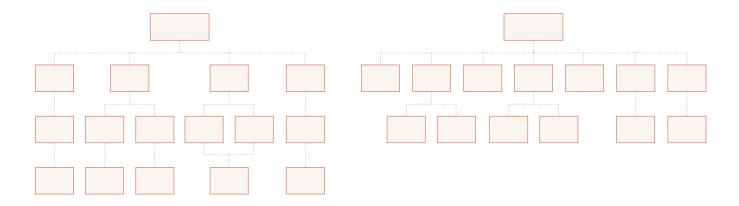
The National Bureau of Economic Research reports: "The number of managers in a company who report directly to the CEO has increased from an average of four in 1986 to an average of seven today... The number of division heads who report directly to the CEO has increased by 300 percent. The number of levels in the management hierarchy between division heads and CEOS has declined by 25 percent." There is a growing body of evidence that organizations with flat structures outperform those with more traditional hierarchies in most situations.¹²

Turkle, Sherry. Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other, New York: Basic Books, 2012. Print.

PLASTARC Research Report, February 2016

http://www.nber.org/ digest/oct03/w9633.html

https://hbr.org/2013/11/ hierarchy-is-overrated



All of the above is great news for organizational productivity and worker satisfaction, but workplaces also need to change to suit the different needs of the collaborative, flat, tech-connected office. Promoting concentrative work in shared environments enables the benefits of togetherness while limiting the demands and distractions associated with traditional open plans.

Smart, human-centric design can support us as we balance our needs to concentrate, connect with our community, and access information. Being alone and together is an evershifting dance, but it is possible to do it with grace, if we do it by design.

DESCRIPTION LIFE BETWEEN OFFICES

Individual scale; concentration, wellness, access to information through technology principles

If you've ever been struck by a good idea in the shower—or while walking on an airport runway, sitting on a train, or watching passersby from a park bench—you know that our best thoughts can take shape when we're in a state of transition. There are multiple reasons for this.

For one, being in dynamic "journey" mode (versus static "destination" mode) means more opportunities. When we're on the move, we're more likely to have chance encounters, to feel unbridled and relaxed—and when those things happen, it sparks our creativity. Often, just changing our perspective (literally) helps us to think differently.¹³

In addition, research shows that when we travel through a passageway between fixed spaces, we hit a kind of "pause" button in our brains. (This explains why it's easy to forget something you walked into another room to get. 14) This can be annoying when it takes us by surprise, but it can be quite an effective productivity tool when wielded intentionally.

Albin, Jamie & Bailey, Eileen. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. London: Penguin, 2014. Print.

14 forbes.com/sites/daviddisalvo/2015/01/22/ yes-walking-through-adoorway-really-doesmake-you-forget-hereswhy/#1f5c1d9959c6

Our best thoughts can take shape when we're in a state of transition.

These tendencies figure largely in today's distributed workforce: almost a quarter of US employees now telecommute, and our work is increasingly global. Often, our days extend beyond one time zone or physical environment. If unmanaged, these conditions can easily lead to mental and organizational fragmentation. But when adequately accounted for, they can actually spur us to do our best work.

Latest Telecommuting Statistics (2016, January). In Global Workplace Analytics. Retrieved April 25, 2017.

For example, the freedom (or necessity) to move between spaces that characterizes work today is apt to give people more control over their schedules and reduce instances of workfamily conflict. This can have a pronounced positive effect on health, according to the Journal of Health and Social Behavior, which published a study that demonstrated "organizational changes in the structuring of time can promote employee wellness."¹⁶

Design's role in fostering the positive possibilities of life between offices revolves around creating exceptionally built environments that:

Invite chance encounters—both between those physically present and those connecting from afar. This can involve office configurations that encourage "collisions" between employees; making sure the view between different areas is unobstructed; and investing in the necessary technology to allow remote workers easy access to HQ. Harvard Business Review reports that: "Face-to-face interactions are by far the most important activity in an office... Our data suggest that creating collisions—chance encounters and unplanned interactions between knowledge workers, both inside and outside the organization—improves performance." 17

- Include multisensory elements to evoke the dynamic qualities of nature, disrupt
 the static feel of the indoors, and awaken our dormant faculties. Sunlight, plants,
 scents, snacks, music, and natural materials like wood and wool can all play a role
 in creating a wholly stimulating work environment.
- Mimic New Urbanism-inspired neighborhood layouts in their emphasis on spatial diversity, walkability, and accessible public spaces.¹⁸
- Offer comfortable retreat areas to take the energy gleaned from collisions and sensory input and distill it into Grade A individual work.
- Now that we know the connecting spaces we travel through are just as important
 to our work as the collaborative spaces we've earmarked to work in, we can pay
 more attention to thoughtfully designing liminal areas like hallways for maximum
 human benefit—instead of treating them as afterthoughts in the design process.
 Now that we know how to harness the disruptive powers of transitional spaces
 to stimulate well-being and creativity, the modern workplace is poised to be
 history's most productive—and creative—yet.

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Phyllis Moen, Erin Kelly, Eric Tranby, and Qinlei Huang. 2011. "Changing Work, Changing Health: Can Real Work-Time Flexibility Promote Health Behaviors and Well- Being?" Journal of Health and Social Behavior, vol. 52, no. 4, pp. 404-429.

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hbr.org/2014/10/workspaces-that-move-people

18

cnu.org/who-we-are/

THE KITCHEN TABLE

Team scale; community, residential inspiration, access to information through people principles

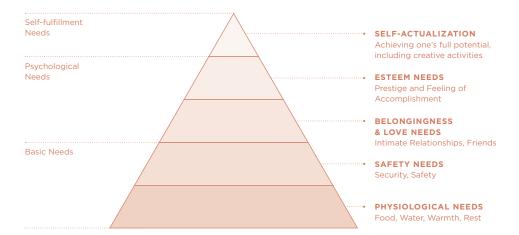
Collaboration is a key goal for almost every workplace, but you can't achieve it without first fostering community. To do that—especially in work environments that increasingly host four generations of workers, many of whom have complex task profiles—we must first study the needs of the individual and how to meet them. From there, we can build up to meeting the needs of the entire team.

We can translate this community-centric spatial model... from the home to the workplace by providing employees with functional, multipurpose, group-sized amenities.

Great inspiration for this research can come from one particularly multipurpose and unifying item of furniture: the ubiquitous kitchen table. In our homes, this one object is the literal and figurative epicenter of activity for both individual and collaborative work. We don't have different tables for each task we do; we just clear the surface off and start something else! Why does this method work, and work so easily?

Building on the basic hierarchy of human needs described by Abraham Maslow in the 1940s, modern psychologists have posited that spiritual and cultural values must be integrated into design to give individuals a sense of a space's meaning and of "collective well-being"—a combination of social cohesion, a sense of community and rootedness, and the presence of enduring links to place. 19 Collective well-being is a broad and essential goal of workplace design, but it's not a complicated one to meet.

Stokols, D. (1992). Establishing and maintaining healthy environments: towards a social ecology of health promotion.
American Psychologist, 47(1), 66-22.



Within families, individuals feel a sense of shared values and a sense of rootedness; at our kitchen tables, we feel the presence of an enduring place, one we can rely on to support whatever work we're doing, be it individual or group-based. We can translate this community-centric spatial model—this central activity hub for meeting, talking, learning, creating (and, of course, eating)—from the home to the workplace by providing employees with functional, multipurpose, group-sized amenities. Simple furnishings that are easy to transform radiate a sense of residential familiarity that can do wonders for engendering professional cooperation.

Studies show²⁰ that when people share a table (especially for meals), a sense of community follows. While working or eating alone can feel alienating, sharing a common space while doing so is an almost-inevitable unifier. Taking the building blocks of community—social ritual and multifunctionality—that we find embodied by our kitchen tables at home and bringing them into the workplace is simply a matter of putting human factors at the heart of our design thinking. Community-centric spatial layouts and easy to use, multipurpose furnishings encourage a sense of community that results in effective collaboration.

theatlantic.com/health/ archive/2014/07/ the-importance-of-eating-together/374256/

NISUAL TOUCH

Individual scale; retreat, residential inspiration, wellness principles

We are living in a golden era of workplace design. As we shift away from having to design for heavy machinery and computers and toward being able to design for people, we have the opportunity to enrich the human experience of the built environment greatly. One of the primary ways to accomplish this is by imbuing our environments with diverse sensory elements that appeal to everybody. Welcome to the multisensory office.

While design has increasingly come to be synonymous with how something looks, we do well not to forget that all of our five senses—sight, smell, taste, hearing, and touch—are connected and constantly informing each other. Such is very much the case with visual touch: the idea that when we see something, we automatically imagine what it would feel like to touch it. (The same notion can be extrapolated to include what it would sound like,

taste like, and smell like.) The impact of this rich sensorial experience on our brains, bodies, and creativity should not be underestimated as a force for good in the workplace.

When we see a wrought iron stair railing, we might imagine the process of the welder who crafted it. When we see a brick next to a cinder block, we'll likely feel more drawn to the one that was made by hand (the hand-sized brick) than the one made by a machine (the clunkier cinder block). In the digital age, these innate reactions are feeding an appetite for the "real" aesthetics of former industrial and warehouse spaces, whose earthy qualities speak to a hands-on heritage. To balance tech-connected lives, consumers are gravitating away from impersonal "corporate" interiors and toward warm residential touches—even when away from home. The rising popularity of siting office spaces in historic buildings instead of slick Class A ones and the current consumer predilection for "authenticity" further illustrate the value we see (and can almost feel) in human-crafted things.

The impact of this rich sensorial experience on our brains, bodies, and creativity should not be underestimated as a force for good in the workplace.

From a cognitive psychology perspective, none of this comes as a surprise. The pleasing visual and physical tactility of natural materials like cotton and marble, and the presence of elements like rough-hewn structural beams that emulate trees, can trigger positive associations with the earth and our fellow humans, creating a sense of comfort and belonging that makes it easier to relax, concentrate, and feel inspired. By the same token, residential influences can trigger good memories and feelings of familiarity, which also help set the stage for comfort and creativity.

PBS's Antiques Roadshow has been on the air for 20 years. The enduring appeal of a series that centers on the authenticity of objects shows that provenance is important to people. Similarly, in a recent study with eBay,²¹ researchers found that items for sale on the site accompanied by a story sold for substantially more than those without. Clearly, whether it's a hot-rolled steel table base that recalls a blacksmith's handiwork or a welcoming sectional that recalls a family's sitting room, we place more value on objects and environments we perceive as holding some link to the past—a history, a context, a story to tell.

Importantly, these stories do not have to be others' to be valuable to us: they can (and often are) our own. According to a study in Environment and Behavior, "Almost all (98%) of employees personalize their workplaces and people who are more committed to their employer personalize more than those who are less committed. This behavior is linked to coping with stress, making a workplace seem more pleasant, providing control over the environment, supporting social interaction, and helping people adjust and bond to new employers, as well as team creativity, and higher levels of job satisfaction and psychological/physical well-being."²² The Journal of Environmental Psychology puts it more succinctly: "There is a positive correlation between perceived personal control over the physical environment and self-reported job satisfaction."²³

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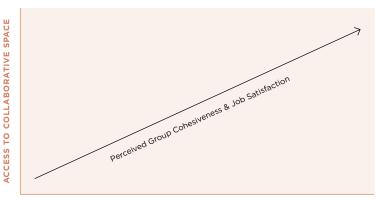
Montague, Ty. "If You Want to Raise Prices, Tell a Better Story." Harvard Business Review, 21 July 2013. hbr.org/2013/07/wantto-raise-prices-tell-a-be.

2:

Meredith Wells, Luke Thelen, and Jennifer Ruark. 2007. "Workplace Personalization and Organizational Culture: Does Your Workspace Reflect You or Your Company?" Environment and Behavior, vol. 30, no. 5, pp. 616-634.

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Lee, S.Y., Brand, J.L. (2005) "Effects of control over office workspace on perceptions of the work environment and work outcomes." Journal of Environmental Psychology, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 323–333.



PERCEIVED CONTROL OVER PHYSICAL WORKSPACE

Just as objects in a home can tell the story of a family, objects in an office can tell the story of a company. By making our workplaces human-scale, embellishing them with hand-wrought objects made from natural materials, accenting them with pleasing sensory touches from scents to sounds to tastes, and encouraging employees to add their own personal touches, we create an environment where people feel cared for, engaged, and comfortable. In other words, where they feel at home.

NATURE INFUSED

Organization scale; retreat and wellness principles

Humans were meant to live out of doors. We originally designed buildings simply to keep us safe from extreme weather conditions, but they have become the site of so many of our activities that the average American now spends a paltry twenty minutes per day outside. This shift has effectively "denatured" our lives and begun eliciting troubles ranging from depression to weakened attention spans to obesity to myopia. Add to this mix recent research on sustainability, which has advanced to include the specific and profound importance of workplaces being tailored to encourage wellness, and you have a recipe for the nature-infused office. ²⁴

Mejia, Robin."Green Exercise May Be Good for Your Head." Environmental Science & Technology, 21 April 2010, pp. 3649–3649.

Workplaces are at their most useful when they can offer a chance to restore and refresh through amenities like proper ventilation, circadian rhythm lightning, and even cloud projections on the walls. The more we understand the many aspects of biophilic design that can help people feel refreshed and energized at work, the more we see companies blurring the lines between indoors and out. They're adding plants (real as well as artificial, and printed on wallpaper as well as sitting in pots) to their design agendas, and scenting restrooms and lobbies with invigorating or calming natural aromas like citrus and lavender. They're strategically placing work areas near windows: exposure to sunlight and a view of natural elements outdoors have been shown to increase job satisfaction and general well-being while decreasing workers' likelihood of quitting.²⁵

Sunlight in the workplace positively influences job satisfaction and wellbeing.
- P. Leather, M. Pyrgas, D. Beale, and C. Lawrence. 1998. "Windows in the Workplace." Environment and Behavior, vol. 30, no. 6, pp. 739-762.

Even opting for reclaimed wood for a conference table top can be a powerful choice. Weathered wood fully expresses the material's inherent grain and uniqueness, making it visually stimulating and undeniably reminiscent of nature. Whether literal (a bouquet of flowers) or abstract (a photo of flowers in a field), people are innately drawn to biophilic imagery—so much so that even representations of nature recall healthy associations, helping us to relax whether we're indoors or out.

ft.com/content/ 237b0a8-e357-11e4-9a82-00144feab7de [paywall]

The spaces we work in *can* make us healthier, happier, and higher-performing—if we design them

As our focus on building sustainably grows to include human as well as environmental wellness, reestablishing our connection to nature in our physical environment is key. The spaces we work in can make us healthier, happier, and higher-performing—if we design them with human factors at the fore. Whether it's via a view of the atmosphere through a widened skylight, the sound of a babbling brook running down a hallway, or a beautifully designed wooden chair covered by comfortable cotton blend upholstery, we now understand that a connection to nature in the workplace is a real driver of performance—as well as an amenity increasingly expected by employees today.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

WELLNESS IS INCREASINGLY COMPREHENSIVE "Wellness" can no longer be considered a purely physical measure; modern assessments also take psychological well-being into account. As companies strive to promote wellness within the workplace, understanding its key drivers is essential. Human needs now jump to the forefront of conversation, and the question of office design shifts from, "How do we best support our business needs?" to "How do we best support employee needs (which will in turn serve our business goals)?" Wellness can be fostered in the workplace by designing for individual choice, spontaneous encounters, and sensory variability.

PERSONALIZATION IS ESSENTIAL IN A VARIETY OF WAYS Open floor plans are now the standard. Assigned personal space continues to shrink. Real estate is too valuable to be allocated to just one function. To avoid employee burnout and create a sense of privacy, choice, and control in these new environments, designers must be mindful of how users can interact with the office space at large. When employees can do things like set the temperature of a conference room, choose the types of snacks in the pantry, and select a work area appropriate for their given task, they are more satisfied and productive.

COLLABORATION IS PHYSICAL, VIRTUAL, AND CULTURAL Highly variable, group-based work is emerging as the leading (and preferred) style of work for most organizations. Fueled by advances in technology, collaborative and network-based projects can move as quickly as information can flow—even when outside resources and partners are involved. Every corner of the workplace is ripe with opportunities to support collaboration: companies' increasingly "flat" organizational structure is complemented by egalitarian floor plans; start-up culture and the experience economy thrive when resources are made to be shared. Designers can mirror these work styles and values with communal layouts and amenities.

WHEN YOU CAN WORK ANYWHERE, PLACE MATTERS Amid increasing globalization and the mobilization of industries, as well as greater public awareness of the power of design, workplaces must work to remain the central hub for employees. By designing for its real advantages—a sense of community, access to people and information, a sanctuary for focused work—and creating a welcoming and hospitable environment, designers can ensure the office remains an attractive option for workers with more choices than ever.

CONCLUSION

Whenever a seismic shift, great upheaval, or revolution occurs, there is inevitably disruption, discomfort, and a long list of questions. Also inevitably, there is heightened awareness, peak innovation, and tremendous opportunity.

As industries around the world adjust to the many cultural changes globalization is bringing to their doorsteps, learning to make the most of new technologies, and endeavoring to keep operations running while adapting to ever-changing circumstances in real time, design has an unprecedented ability to influence workplaces for the better: for people, for organizations, and for the environment. Designers can drive a human-centric revolution that works in concert with the ones technology and industry are already in the midst of—as long as we commit to putting people first.

By studying and leveraging research in environmental **PSYCHOLOGY**, **COGNITIVE SCIENCE**, and current socioeconomic trends, west elm **WORKSPACE** is forging a new and novel space planning approach that cultivates community, creates choice, embraces change, and honors nature. By letting a human-centered approach lead our work, we are not only addressing today's workplace challenges, we are designing to surpass previous standards and elevate the human experience of the built environment to new levels. By creating multifunctional, high-performing work environments that incorporate the best of residential and hospitality models, we are capitalizing on this new golden age of design and "unofficing" the office. By bringing the focus back to people, we are, finally, humanizing the workplace.

By Melissa Marsh, with contributions from Claire Rowell, Kristin Mueller, and April Greene.

Melissa Marsh is FOUNDER and EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLASTARC, a workplace innovation and organizational strategy firm that helps clients leverage their spaces for optimal experience and performance through the power of social research and design analytics. She also leads the Occupant Experience discipline at Savills Studley, which leverages the tools of social science and business strategy to help organizations make more informed, data-driven, and people-centric real estate decisions. Savills Studley is the nation's leading commercial real estate services firm specializing in tenant representation.

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