

Trend Report

Q4 2022

Unworking

What we relearnt this year about
work and the workplace



Prepared for:

Executive Summary for AREA



The past year has been a period of instability, change and experiment in work and the workplace. In examining those aspects that companies have been forced to unwork or relearn, our Trend Report for Q4 2022 presents some emerging business opportunities for Area.

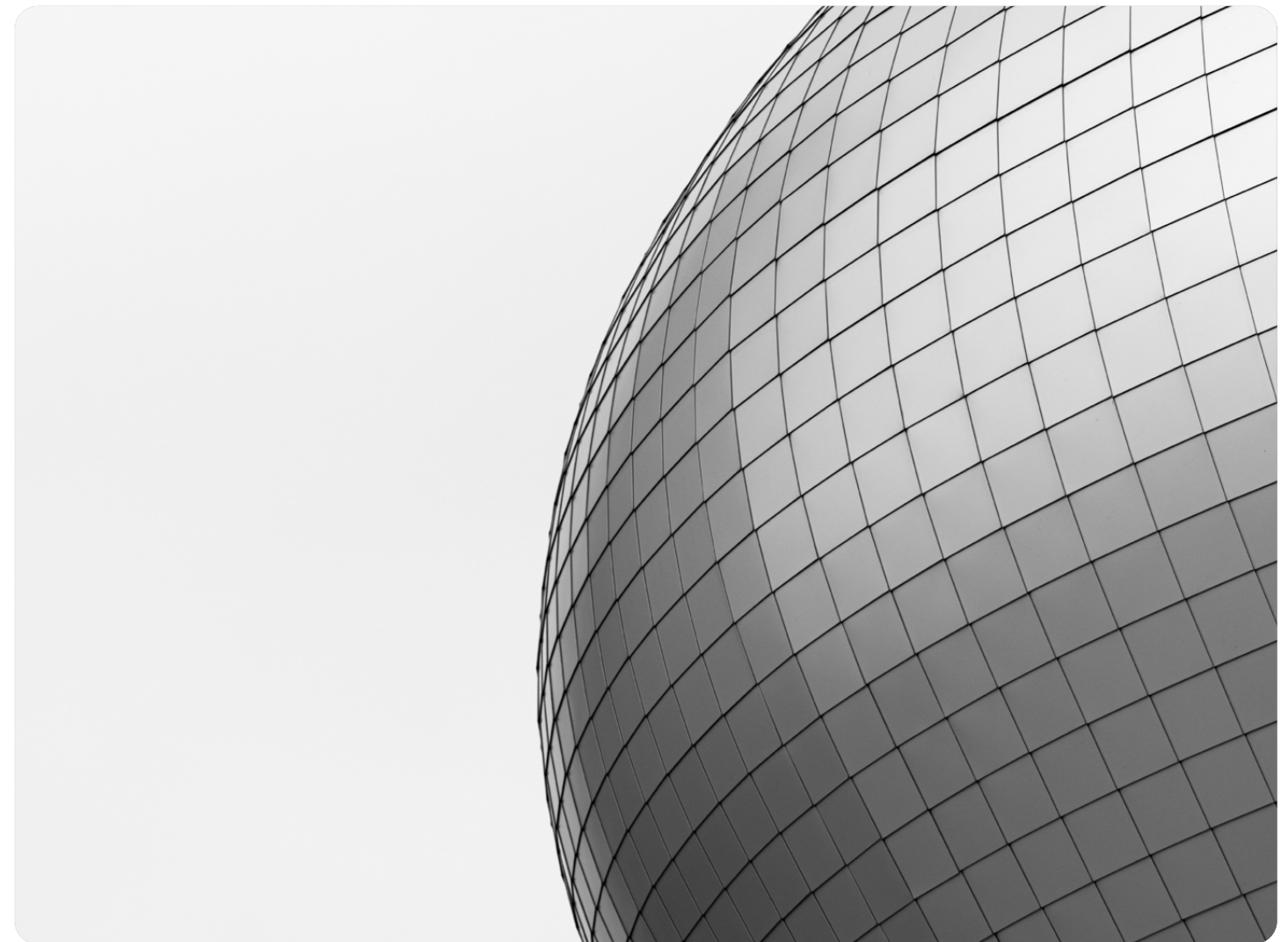
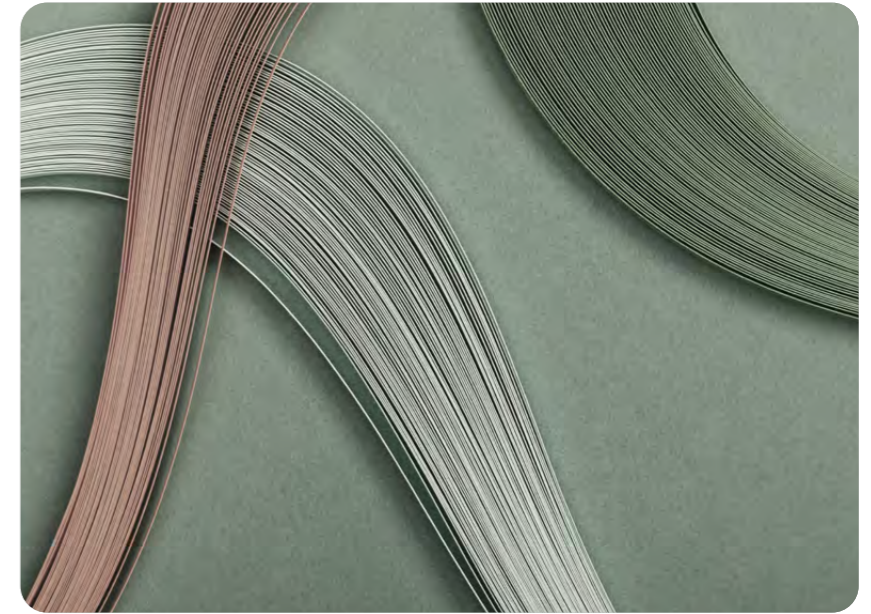
The drive to rethink how we learn in the workplace, moving away from open-plan eavesdropping to embrace new, immersive remote learning techniques, creates an opportunity for Area to talk to new and existing customers about how they can create work environments that reposition them as learning organisations with self-directed workforces.

The changing parameters of leadership provide a further platform for Area to innovate. Today's management cadre must abandon the certainties of hierarchical office planning to navigate a new, more ambiguous landscape of work. Consulting in this fraught field is an open door, as leaders feel caught in the crossfire between company and employee needs and seek reassurance on design strategy.

This opportunity builds on the [thought leadership report](#) Fourfront Group produced with WORKTECH Academy entitled 'Leadership and Design: Are we ready for a new relationship?' This report explored aligning workplace design more closely with different styles of leadership.

The drive to unwork traditional box-like spatial forms in the office could bring a dividend for Area in that occupiers will be more open to design solutions that are not based around the rectangular meeting table in the glass meeting box. More rounded forms, more surprising spatial formats and less formulaic design will result from the willingness for companies to experiment in the interests of achieving better staff satisfaction and wellbeing.

Finally, the migration of IT infrastructure from the office building to the cloud opens up a host of new possibilities for Area to exploit. The workplace can become a different typology, freed from housing the technology of work to concentrate on serving the needs of people.



What we relearnt this year about work and workplace

Welcome to your Q4 2022 Trend Report from WORKTECH Academy, which looks at the concept of 'unworking' key aspects of office life – from the scale of interior space to the scale of the city and the cloud

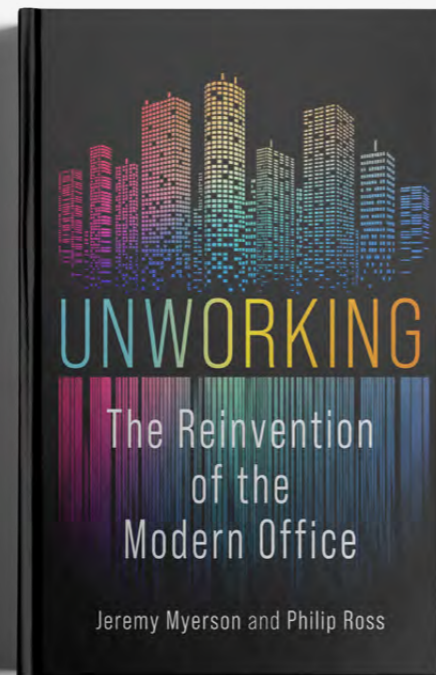
As we bring down the curtain on 2022, our latest Trend Report looks at those aspects of work and the workplace that we've been forced to relearn over a tumultuous past 12 months.

This process of relearning covers a wide range of areas and it even has its own name – unworking – which is taken from the title of a new book I have co-written with WORKTECH Academy co-founder Philip Ross, *Unworking: The Reinvention of the Modern Office* (Reaction Books, 2022).

This Trend Report draws on some of the most important themes in the book as well as from a mix of academic research, market insights, media reports and stories from around the global Academy network.

In our book we define the term 'unworking' as unravelling how we work, unbundling the assumptions that are baked into the modern office, and unlearning the habits, management styles and workplace cultures that have traditionally defined our behaviour at work.

The front cover shows a skyline of office towers being fed through a shredder and emerging as code – a metaphor for the office moving from a



physical container for work to something that is independent of place and driven by software.

The task of unworking is therefore to reimagine what work and the workplace could be in the future. So, what assumptions did we unravel in 2022, and what did we relearn? Five essential acts of unworking are discussed in this report, which considers topics in the order of ascending

scale from learning, design and leadership in the workplace to the scale of the city and the cloud.

The first is about how we might learn in the future workplace, no longer relying on people turning up in the physical office for some open-plan, over-the-shoulder eavesdropping, but instead embracing new forms of immersive digital training that instructs a hybrid and distributed workforce.

The second relearning is around breaking out of an efficient spatial plan with rectangular spaces in box-like buildings to inject variety and surprise after decades of dull design conformity. Employees given a choice of whether or not to attend the office are seeking more fluid, democratic and adaptable spaces when they do turn up in the workplace.

The third aspect to be unworked is leadership. Leaders could be forgiven for feeling lost at the end of 2022. They need to unlearn the relationship between hierarchy, office space and status, and start developing new strategies to improve staff wellbeing and inclusion within radically altered organisational structures.

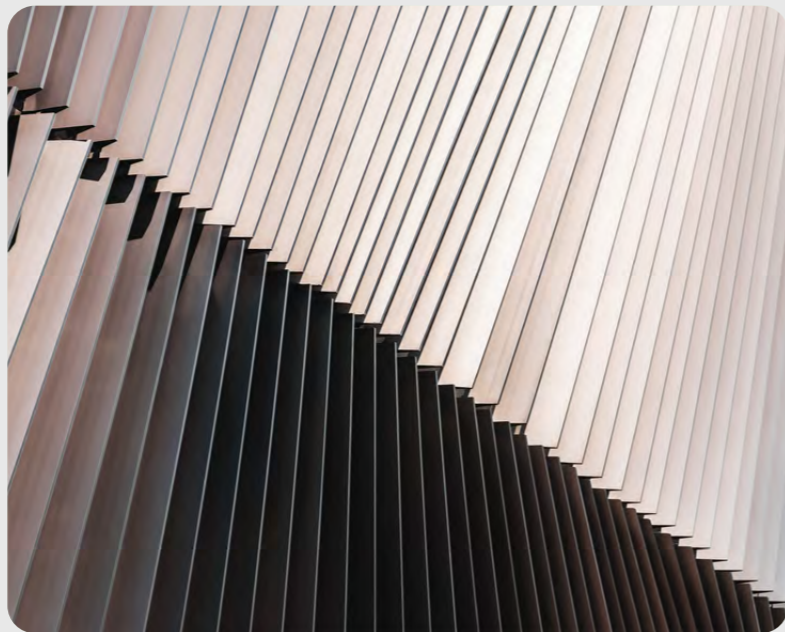
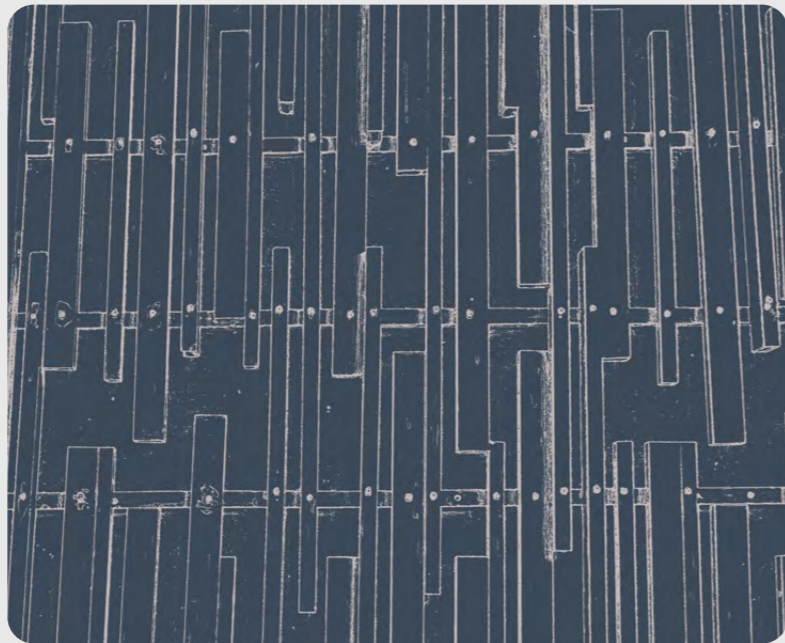
The fourth relearning is at the scale of the city. Inflexible zoning, planning and commuting patterns are set to be redrawn. The radial city, with its Central Business District, is being reinvented with a focus on permeability, interoperability and mixed use. Digital technology is advancing the idea of a rebooted City 2.0.



The final aspect to be unworked is IT infrastructure, which is rapidly being liberated from the office building and is heading for the location-agnostic cloud. There are many opportunities for companies in the advance of cloud-based services and technology, but also threats.

As we look ahead to 2023, we welcome your feedback on this Trend Report and we look forward to discussing it with you in our quarterly online Trend Report Briefing.

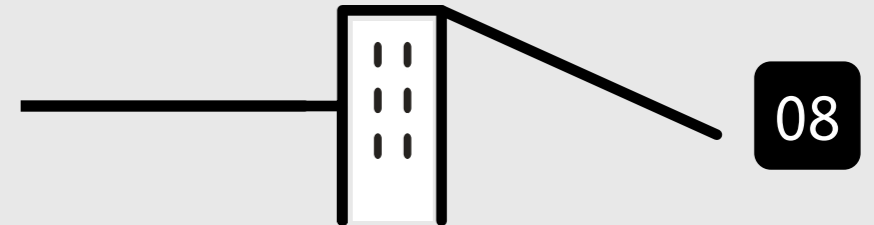
Professor Jeremy Myerson
Director, WORKTECH Academy



Contents

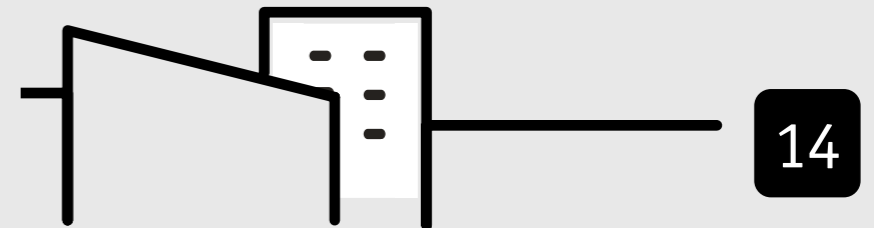
LEARNING

How to learn
is questioned



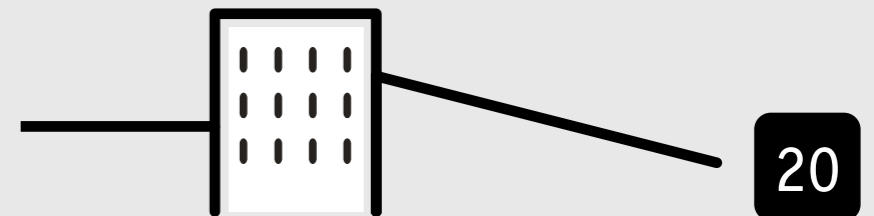
WORKSPACE

Challenging
the office box



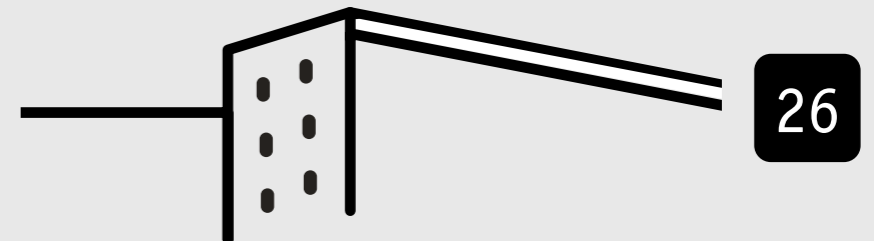
LEADERSHIP

Leaders pivot
to a new look



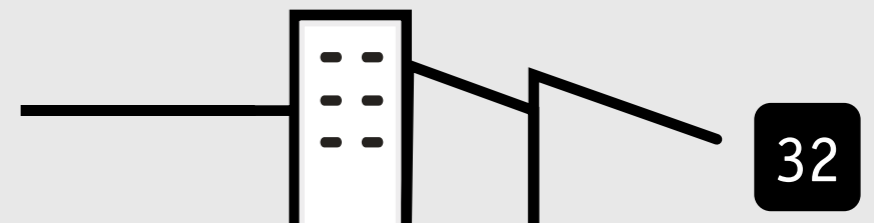
CITIES

Reimagining
the city plan



CLOUD

Work heads
to the cloud



‘Typically, employees learn by working alongside more senior people, often through open plan “eavesdropping” that transfers tacit knowledge. The workplace of tomorrow will replicate informal learning through new digital formats...’

Unworking: The Reinvention of the Modern Office

How to learn is questioned

Junior staff typically learnt from senior partners over-the-shoulder in the open plan office. Now, in the hybrid world, remote learning is coming to the fore

How people learn in the workplace has been placed right on the fault line of the debate this year about how companies should respond to the rise of hybrid working.

On one side of the argument, those firms mandating everyone back to the office full-time claim that learning and mentoring is hampered by a lack of daily face-to-face interaction between junior and more experienced staff.

On the other side are those firms who are advocating a more choice-driven agenda in which staff can work anytime and anywhere; they argue that virtual tools and systems are emerging that can replicate and replace those traditional and now outdated models of workplace learning. So, who is right?

Typically, employees learn by working alongside more senior people, especially new recruits. They have formal training and mentoring as well as informal learning, often through osmosis and the type of open plan ‘eavesdropping’ that transfers tacit knowledge. In such sectors as law and banking, this is a long-established model that is hard to let go.

But in 2022, there have been signs that in-person workplace learning itself is beginning

to be relearnt as digital tools and platforms become more sophisticated. Innovations in education, such as the HoloHuman for medical students, discussed in this section, point a way forward.

There will learning challenges in a hybrid workplace around social and cultural capital. The formation of networks, of reputation and trust is central to professional development – how will this social capital be built without a predictable everyday office population? And how can people develop their skills without watching others and listening to their conversations – the cultural capital that can’t easily be replaced by virtual spaces?

However, the task of replicating learning and development through new virtual formats is already underway. This section discusses the companies which are pioneering alternative forms of training and mentoring from virtual reality headsets for staff onboarding to dedicated social learning platforms. It also compiles advice from experts on how to make the virtual learning environment better than being in a physical classroom. Learning is now right on the frontier of developing the new office.



Designing a virtual learning environment

If you think that virtual learning will never be as effective as in-person learning, you might want to rethink your position. Research has shown that well-designed virtual learning courses can be up to 19 per cent more effective than teaching the same content in-person.

The key factor is whether the course is 'well designed'. This applies to both the content and structure of the e-learning which must be in line with contemporary research on how we learn and what environments help us learn most effectively.

According to the *Harvard Business Review*, there are three essential considerations in getting virtual learning right: holding attention; managing energy; and making the social elements comfortable. Sessions must be engaging and interesting, and limit distractions. There's no point in telling people what they already know or making them flip through slide after slide. Content needs to be

interactive and surprising, delivering new and important information to the people who need it.

Virtual learning is also not an excuse to flood people with information for hours on end. Giving people regular breaks is crucial not only to their wellbeing but will increase their retention of information.

Social engagement also needs to be fun. We all hate being in a breakout room where nobody speaks so help reduce any tension by providing a structure for how the interaction is meant to go and what is meant to be said when.

Having a more in-depth approach to virtual learning where you consider the experience as a whole for the learners in question will aid the delivery of online teaching and potentially boost the effectiveness of learning programmes overall.

Source: *Harvard Business Review*

The firms pioneering new ways to learn

Making online learning as efficient as in-person learning requires innovation. Here are four companies using little tricks and tips as well as large-scale investments to ensure that they're not compromising on quality when it comes to training their staff:

Compass Lexecon: Global economic consulting firm Compass Lexecon recognised the important role over-the-shoulder learning played in their firm, especially for new staff. In order to recreate this feeling online they are providing new starters with at least two monitors; this means that on one screen you can be on a call with a senior colleague and on the other screen you can be correcting your work in real time or sharing your screen to get a new perspective.

Accenture: Professional services firm Accenture has adopted a novel approach to onboarding with its new US staff: it is investing in virtual reality headsets to allow them to complete their onboarding virtually without missing out on face-to-face interaction or casual relationship

building. New graduates joining Accenture even said that the VR onboarding was the best experience they had, above on-boarding in person.

Inditex: As the owner of some of the most well-known brands in the fashion industry, including Zara and Massimi Dutti, Inditex takes its training seriously and has created its own social learning platform called INview. This platform allows training videos to be uploaded and shared with all Inditex staff across the UK and Ireland, providing mobile access 24/7 to a library of practical knowledge and insights as well as an opportunity to ask questions and have a video walk-through sent to you in response.

PayPal: American finance giant PayPal has also embraced online learning, this time using social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook to create private groups where people can ask questions quickly and easily, build an online community and participate in expert-led classes through platforms already familiar and user-friendly to their staff.



HoloHuman: showing the potential of virtual learning

New innovations in the education sector provide a window into the potential future of learning in the working world.

HoloHuman has created the world's first 3D model of the human anatomy that uses full-size holograms to allow medical students to explore and learn about parts of the body in an immersive and fascinating way. The approach uses mixed reality headsets to give students the ultimate learning experience and provides an insight into the human body that is almost unparalleled.

The company also highlights how this is a collaborative tool that encourages groups to explore together in order to foster a sense of

community, regardless of whether the team is in the room together or thousands of miles apart.

This tool sets a template for everything that companies are trying to create in their learning programmes – it creates a sense of community online and in person, it offers an exciting experience and is truly an effective learning tool. So, will we see more models like this being created in the future?

The approach could be used in a number of technical industries, helping introduce new staff to complex equipment or processes as part of a virtual, immersive and interactive learning experience.



Key Links

[Designing Learning Programs for a Hybrid Workplace](#)

[Virtual Reality: THE Learning Aid Of The 21st Century](#)

[Going Beyond with Extended Reality | Let there be change](#)

[HoloHuman](#)

'There was an obsession with linear and rectangular space as the main topology of the office...we will need something different for tomorrow's knowledge workers...'

Unworking: The Reinvention of the Modern Office

Challenging the office box

Rectangular spaces in a box-like building set the template for the efficient modern office. Now designers are breaking out on spatial form

One of the great unlearnings of 2022 has been around the spatial parameters of the new workplace as designers seek to break free from the shackles of a century of design orthodoxy.

The spatial template for the modern office was set early in the age of efficiency: there was an obsession with linear and rectangular space as the main topology, with its efficient plan and ease of tessellation fitting into predominantly box-like buildings. This limited the ambitions of designers, funnelling them towards the predictable over decades of office development.

Architects and space planners today recognise that while this approach might have been a perfect fit for the era of time-and-motion, we will need something different for tomorrow's knowledge workers, who are expressing a different set of requirements in the hybrid era.

This awareness is now a fundamental driver of change in the office design sphere as workspaces are repurposed in a new landscape of work. The relationship between space and time, and between space and technology, is changing. And the realisation that office layout must also change

has prompted innovation, with companies looking for new models of fluid, adaptable, demountable design.

The rectangle and the square are being challenged by the democracy of the circle as a spatial form; in this section, we also discuss the metaphor of the campsite and the campfire, as well as architect David Dwayne's Eudaimonia Machine, as standout examples of rethinking office layouts according to new parameters and needs. According to research, curves matter when it comes to innovation: a rounded environment is apparently more likely to enhance divergent creativity than the traditionally angular physical work environment with sharp corners.

In JLL's Future of Work Survey 2022, more than three-quarters of firms said that investing in quality space would be a greater priority than expanding total footprint in the near term. There is already a 'flight to quality' in workspace as employees demand more interesting, connected and creatives environment in which to work. It is within this context that the old orthodoxies of spatial form will increasingly be challenged.



Google's new meeting room concept called Campfire

From the rectangle to the circle

New employee expectations in the aftermath of the pandemic are pushing designers to reimagine the office in different and more beneficial ways. In their sights is a traditional obsession with linear, rectangular office spaces.

Designers are now unlearning the idea that box-like buildings and hierarchical strata are the height of efficiency for the workplace – they are shaking off the image of the long, rectangular boardroom table as the ultimate image of business success.

Unlearning our preconceptions about spatial layout and considering alternatives leads to the free and fluid form of the circle. Unlike with rectangles, there can be no head of the table, space is equally split between participants who can all see and interact with each other equally. In terms of meeting spaces, this is a far more interactive and equitable way to conduct business.

Harrison Owen, author of *Open Space Technology* (2008), explains that the circle has historically

been the ‘fundamental geometry of human communication’ and can therefore engender better relationships, better communications and a better sense of value between communicating parties.

As companies transition to hybrid working, this question of who is heard and who is excluded from meetings has become increasingly stark. Ensuring that participants joining from home have an equal say in a meeting is difficult, but in trying to solve this problem companies have been returning to the circle as the model for equity.

Google's new Campfire technology seats both in-person and virtual participants around an imaginary campfire, allowing all participants to see each other and interact no matter how far away they are in reality. As we unlearn the rationale behind the strict models of past spatial typologies, the circle will become more prominent in our imagination of the office.



Salesforce Trailblazer Ranch, California



Google's Big View campus, California



AirBnB, San Francisco

Campsite creativity

As companies turn away from static and boxy workspaces, many are taking inspiration from the campsite as a model of adaptable and sociable spatial design.

Salesforce's Trailblazer Ranch, California – taking up 75 acres of redwood forest in Scotts Valley, California, Salesforce's new ranch provides an intimate, cosy and rustic retreat for staff who need to escape and decompress. The Ranch hosts onboarding, training and development classes and allow employees the space to connect and build professional relationships.

AirBnB, San Francisco – Ever considered taking a meeting in a tent? In AirBnB's headquarters, tents are part of the office space as the company tries to provide a series of different environments to allow staff to feel connected but conduct their work privately when needed.

Accenture, Dublin – The campfire is another camping staple, making an appearance in this state-of-the-art office space in Ireland. It enables people to sit together, reflect and chat. This space is designed to bring the comfort and intimacy of the camping ground into the office space, creating a warm and welcoming environment for difficult discussions and bonding exercises.

Google's Big View campus, California – Designed by Bjark Ingels and Thomas Heatherwick, Google's compact new HQ is designed around the camping concept. With tent-like canopies and a design concept that brings the outdoors into the space, Google is creating a light, open office that embraces fluidity by ensuring that the entire development is de-mountable. Google really can pack up its office and move elsewhere if needed.

The Eudaimonia Machine

As we begin to disentangle ourselves from historic ways of designing office space, an important question arises: what types of thinking and working do we need to facilitate as part of our working day?

This question is central to the Eudaimonia Machine, the creation of architect David Dwane who sets out a work layout designed to challenge the acceptance of the classic open-plan office layout.

At the core of the design is the idea that different mental states are needed to conduct different types of work, and that during your working day you move from state to state, requiring different spaces to facilitate your varying levels of concentration.

Each space in this model has a name and workers are encouraged to move through them according to need. First is the gallery, which showcases the

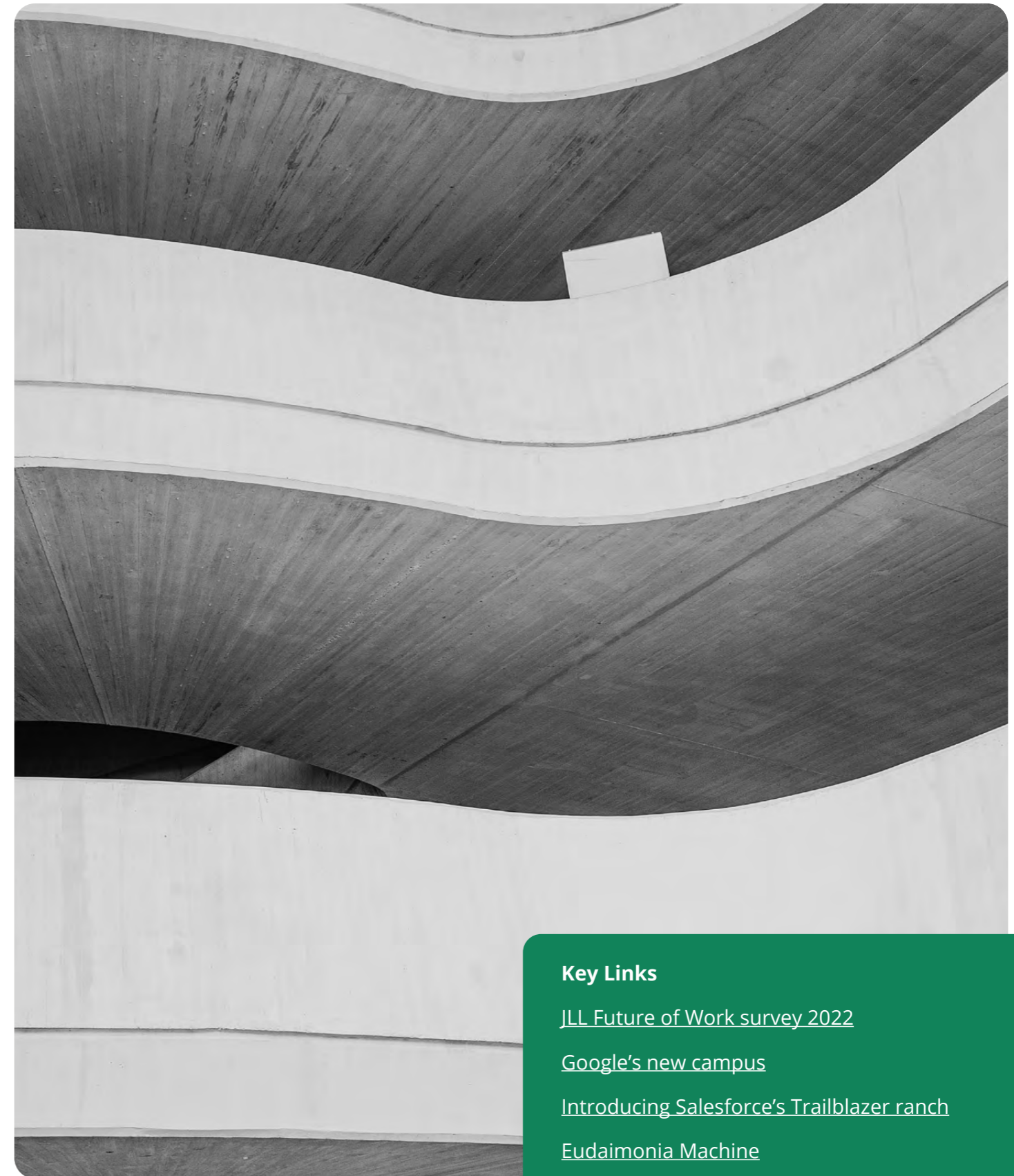
company to guests and welcomes people to the space. Second is the Salon, a loud and bustling hub of collaboration where colleagues meet, drink coffee and discuss the day ahead.

Then comes the Library, the core part of any workplace where ideas are gathered and topics researched and quietly discussed. This is followed by the Office, a classic workspace where low-intensity tasks are completed and distractions can be minimised. And finally, the Chamber is where totally focused, deep, uninterrupted work can be done.

This innovative take on the activity-based working model of designing space suggests that companies should think more about the mental state of their staff while they work and create appropriate settings for the different cognitive tasks required.



No hallway to bypass sections, members go deeper into modes of work as they progress with rooms like the Salon and Library facilitating conversation and collaboration.



Key Links

[JLL Future of Work survey 2022](#)

[Google's new campus](#)

[Introducing Salesforce's Trailblazer ranch](#)

[Eudaimonia Machine](#)

'Stratification was a common thread in hierarchy... Today, this organisational rule book is being ripped up. Companies are learning about more fluid management structures...'

Unworking: The Reinvention of the Modern Office

Leaders pivot to a new look

As traditional hierarchies in the office are dismantled by the rise of hybrid working, business leaders need to break the link between space and status

At the close of 2022, many workplace leaders look confused and at a loss as to what to do next. They accept that leadership styles need shaking up, but so much has changed in the aftermath of the pandemic that what management practices they need to unlearn is not always entirely clear.

Leaders are also having to unlearn spatial typologies in the office that they've grown attached to over the years, and familiarise themselves with new ones that level the playing field between management and employees.

The traditional workplace was a study in structure and solidity. Typically, if you projected an organisational structure diagram (known as the 'org chart') onto the side of a building, it would show how the space was organised: an executive floor at the top, followed by layers of the organisation based by department and, at the base, the meeting rooms that bring everyone together.

Stratification was a common thread in the hierarchy, and with each additional rung came status and privilege. Tiers of management created a 'them and us' mentality. These were often represented by the workplace, where space and status became intertwined.

Command and control was the mantra of management. Today, however, this organisational rule book is being ripped up. Companies are learning about more fluid management structures.

This leaves many leaders in a tricky position as they try to adjust to new 'ways of getting things done around here' that are not of their making and may not even align with how they feel their group needs to organise its efforts. Many tasks that would previously have been delegated must now be handled directly. Labour market volatility such as the Great Resignation adds to a sense of unease over the power dynamic between employers and their workers. Middle managers feel especially squeezed.

Yet, as this section suggests, there are also opportunities for leaders. In this new hybrid work environment, they can focus on their core skills, recruit from a broader geographical base, and pivot away from preconceived notions for management towards a greater interest in staff wellbeing, diversity and inclusion. Some companies are experimenting with radical structures to achieve success. Interesting times ahead.

Companies transforming their management by design

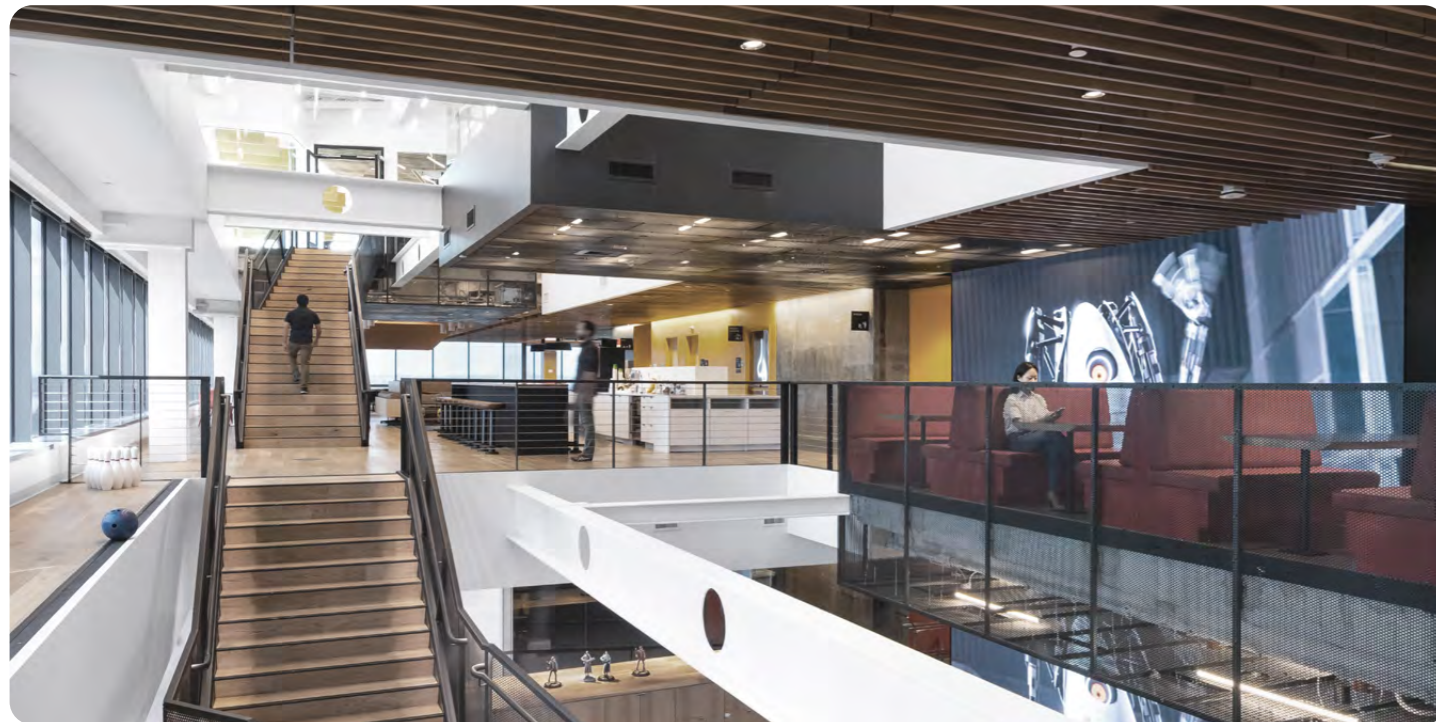
Adopting a reduced set of hierarchies by design is not a new concept. Some companies have been innovating in this field for many years. Here are some examples of doing different things with company structures:

Valve: Video games development company Valve has a radical approach to hierarchy, referring to itself as 'boss-free since 1996'. The company has no hierarchical structures; instead, anyone is able to pursue an idea, ask other staff members to join their team, and act as project leader, but their voice is not inherently prioritised over anyone else's and anyone is free to move teams and strike out on their own if they wish.

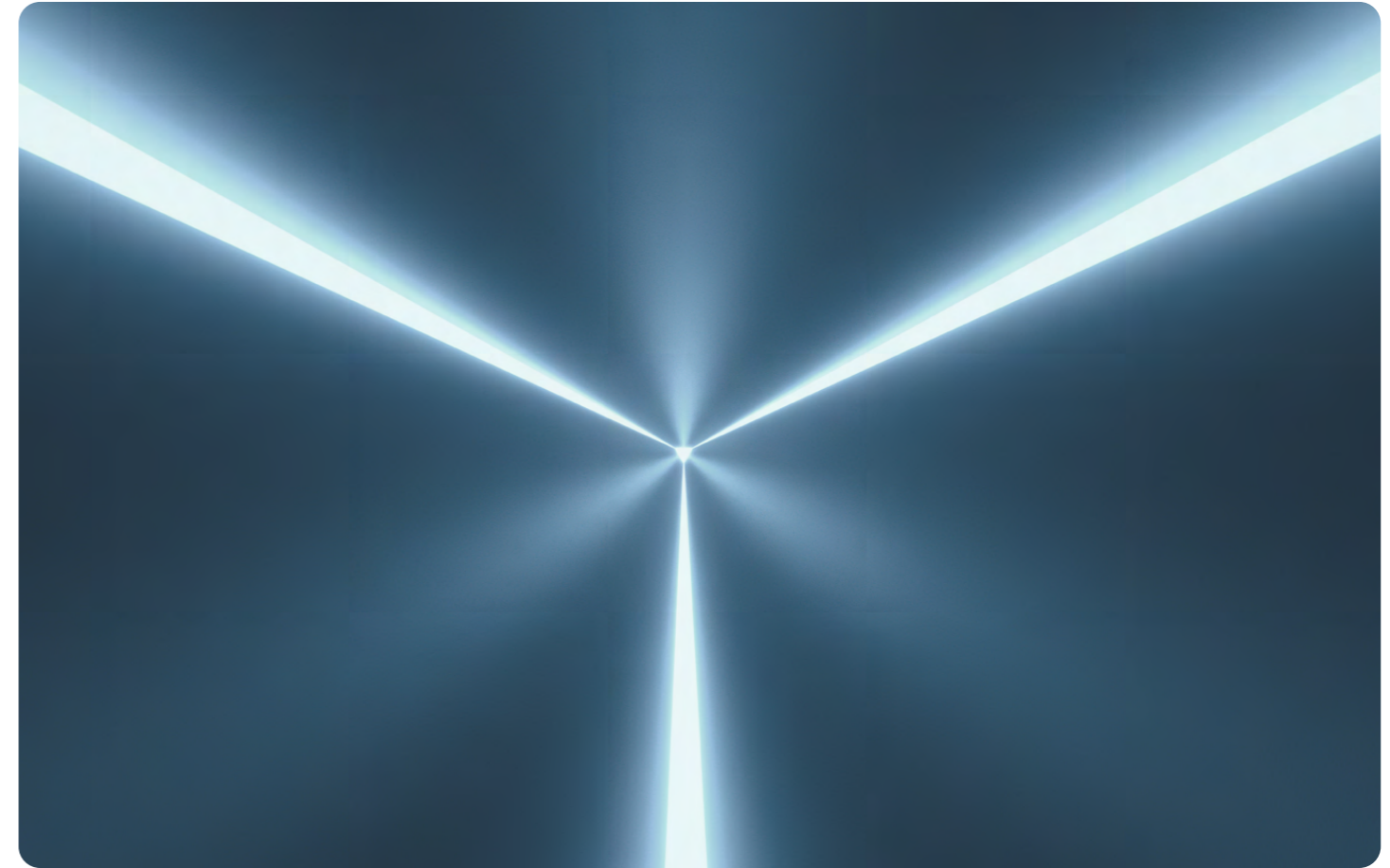
Zappos: Online retail company Zappos has a dislike for hierarchical structures. Its holocratic approach to management means less top-down leadership and more staff autonomy. Here, teams are called 'circles' and anyone can take up any role in whichever circles interest them, encouraging people to function more like entrepreneurs than manager-led employees.

Barbican Group: This organisation has done away completely with siloed offices for leadership, with managers sitting behind closed doors in their office. Instead, the whole company share one long desk which acts like a ribbon, flowing across the office space and connecting every employee. This levelling-up design ensures that nobody is unseen and that every voice is prioritised equally in the space.

Haier: This Chinese manufacturing giant recognised that size is no protection against failure and wanted to instil in its employees an ability to achieve self-realisation. So it created an organisational structure as boundaryless and flat as possible. Haier formed project teams that were focused on the market – people answered to the customer and not their superior. 'That is not an easy orientation to bring about,' Zhang Ruimin, the founding CEO of Haier, reflected.



Valve Corporation's new headquarters in Bellevue, Washington (2022)



Seeing the light: opportunities abound for leaders

Our exclusive WORKTECH Academy interview with Dr. Alexander Alonso, Chief Knowledge Officer at the US-based Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), highlighted opportunities for business leaders in the current talent market.

Alonso explained how leaders can recruit employees in areas beyond their local market and hire gig workers of various sorts at this time. Workers can be re-skilled. To some extent leaders can make their own workers.

He also detailed the changing power dynamic between employer and employee. Generally, the dialogue has shifted to topics employees are interested in, beyond promotions and pay to issues such as wellness and professional opportunities. As long as wage inflation is greater than general inflation, Alonso predicts

that employees will retain their current power; he also acknowledges that wage inflation will not outpace general inflation forever.

Despite the growing influence of data technology, leaders will not be replaced by algorithms any time soon – leadership will remain a human issue requiring swift adjustment to keep up with evolving conditions.

And although there is regular discussion in the workplace world of breaking down the management silos of HR and IT and FM departments, progress in this area is very slow. However, there is evidence of a successful blending of HR and marketing departments to focus on employee recruitment, maintaining engagement, building culture and crafting great experiences.



Crisis for middle managers: where do they go now?

As we consider restructuring our organisations and adopting flatter hierarchies, the question must be asked – what will happen to middle management?

During the Great Resignation, a significant number of the people shipping out of the workplace were middle managers. And when you look at the research, it's not a surprise.

According to Gallup, manager burnout (a significant factor in the Great Resignation) increased by 25 per cent during the pandemic. A report entitled *'The State of the Manager'* by management coaching platform Humu stated that being a middle manager right now is less rewarding and more challenging than ever before. Many managers simply feel exhausted all the time and can pay little attention to their own career priorities.

Perhaps a new shape for organisational hierarchies will benefit middle managers, whose needs are not currently being prioritised. Flatter structures could give them a voice and a platform where they can utilise their skills without being overloaded with work and finally be able to relax into their roles.



Key Links

[Self-management: developing a new approach to leadership](#)

[Can younger workers speak up without managers bristling?](#)

[Supporting employees who remain after layoffs](#)

[How to manage a hybrid team](#)

'It is safe to assume that the move from an analogue world to a digital one challenges the assumptions of the city plan and the lives that people lead within it...'

Unworking: The Reinvention of the Modern Office

Reimagining the city plan

Strict zoning, planning and development rules once dictated an inflexible city plan. But as new technology disrupts urban form, a different working future awaits

As work patterns, workforces and workspaces all change with the digital systems enabling hybrid work, so the city itself has got to adapt and transform. One of the great relearnings of 2022 has been at the scale of the urban plan: we are fast unworking assumptions around the idea that city zoning and commuting patterns are set in stone, or that the Central Business District, a commercial hub for the 20th century city, will be around forever.

This year has seen a growing debate about how the post-pandemic city should host and enable work in a new way. Many city leaders and urban planners now talk of a need to 're-boot' the outdated analogue systems of the city and generate a 'City 2.0' to harness emerging digital opportunities. Our report in this section on London's digital strategy is evidence of this approach.

This analogy to software in computing is not random. Software can be upgraded and rebooted as developments are made. Not so the city – but could we conceive of real estate that has an operating system? One that can be upgraded as needs change? The idea has long been a quest for city planners, as uses change and cities grow.

The pieces are now in place to create a more human-centred city that will move away from an inflexible, rigid approach to planning, zoning and development. There will be a greater mix of different uses, where permeability and interoperability will lead to more fluid and amorphous incarnations of the city plan as boundaries and barriers erode.

Property development has long been in silos – commercial, residential, retail and so on. This belongs to an archaic past – a future collision is on its way so that our cities become more integrated spaces. Planning concepts such as affinity districts, which are discussed in this section, innovation districts and compact '15-minute cities' will speed this process of urban reordering and reimagining. So will smarter, more seamless and more sustainable commuting.

City infrastructure has traditionally been about bringing people and goods into the city centre, and the radial pattern that most cities demonstrate creates a CBD of stacked office towers at its heart. New technology now disrupts this planning norm while the climate emergency challenges the domination of the skyscraper. It is safe to assume that long-held assumptions about the city plan are set to be unworked.



Floridian example of affinity district

Affinity districts: creating a city of proximity

As we begin to unravel our assumptions about urban planning, we must ask what comes next for the Central Business District and how can we reimagine the city more positively. One idea comes in the form of affinity districts.

According to architectural firm [Gensler](#), this concept centres city districts around a specific theme. For example, in a healthcare affinity district, healthcare professionals could live and work in proximity to each other in a way that would benefit both individuals and society.

This would in turn promote innovation through the creation of 'weak ties' where healthcare workers could run into each other in their profession with different ideas and backgrounds from their own and bring their knowledge together to form new ideas.

This is a concept used by MIT in its urban research and stems from Professor Mark Granovetter who

discovered that loose connections to people outside our network of close family and friends were often the ones that produced the most innovation. MIT's research suggests that during Covid-19 we lost these 'weak' ties as they are far harder to create virtually.

Unlike innovation districts, which are commonly based around a big tech or biotech anchor, affinity districts focus on what Canadian developer Dan Van Leeuwen describes as 'bringing people together in unexpected ways through their day-to-day behaviours'. They are more closely aligned with the 15-minute city ideal that your workplace, home and amenities should all be accessible by walking or cycling within a 15-minute radius.

This model is believed to increase wellness by making people feel more connected with their community and environment.



Connected Kerb electric vehicle charging

London: a smart city in the making

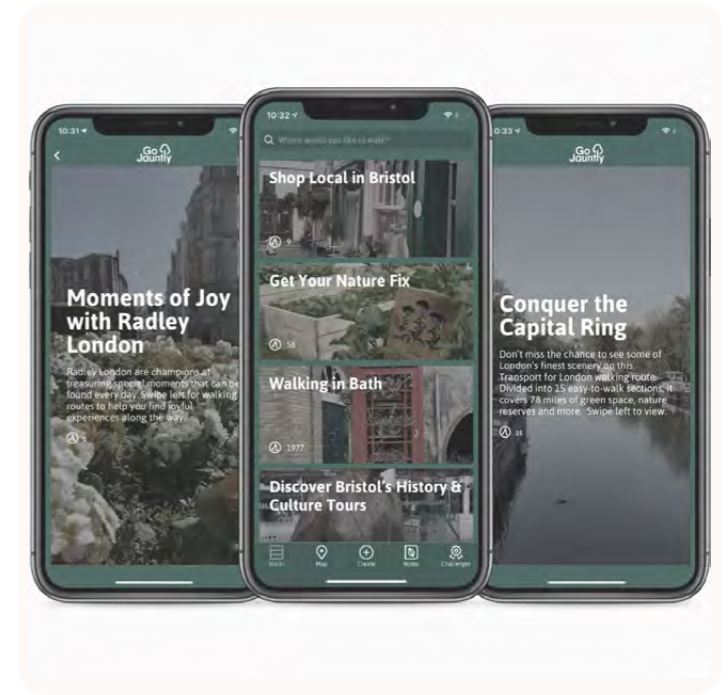
World cities take time to transform, but despite the operational difficulties huge strides have been made towards making London a smarter, more sustainable city.

But what new changes are on the horizon that will affect how we commute, work and live?

In the last 20 years, London's congestion charge, ultra-low emission zones and contactless payments for public transport have become enmeshed with everyday life of London. They are examples of how smart city infrastructure can change our behaviour, shifting us towards a more seamless and greener commute.

However, according to Theo Blackwell, Chief Digital Officer for the Mayor of London, a speaker at WORKTECH London 2022, all these changes required enormous investment in technology and the construction of huge networks for data collection.

Post-pandemic, the commute is a core issue for employees, with companies now having to justify



why employees should brave the busy, stressful and costly city commute each day when they can work from home or locally. More innovations in the smart city field will be needed to transform this part of working life.

Other projects the London's Mayoral office has been involved with include an app for walking routes around the city and trials for curb-side electric vehicle charging; it is also wiring up London in order to provide 4G service on the Tube network, allowing you to be connected while you commute.

So what's next? It's anticipated that sensors, cameras, drones, robotics, mobility services, augmented and virtual reality, and automated and algorithmic decision-making will all play a part in the next stages of London's digital transformation. So will projects to allow for large-scale town hall-type forums and increased data sharing between services. The journey to smart city has begun, with some way to go.

Source: [London's future as a smart city - Centre for London](#)



Are skyscrapers now a symbol of the past?

Skyscrapers are more than tall buildings: they have become key signifiers in the debate about the future of our cities. For a long time they were considered a totemic way to signify the dynamism of the city, clustered in Central Business Districts and housing thousands of employees in state-of-the-art office space.

But new thinking suggests that these monoliths should be consigned to the past, with a more sustainable approach needed for the office of the future to address the climate emergency and the loss of biodiversity.

Architects Declare – an influential group of UK architects concerned about the climate crisis – has called upon the Council for Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat as well as other architects to change their perspective. Instead of chasing goals to build the tallest towers, developers and architects should instead dedicate themselves to creating sustainable buildings.

Architects Declare cites a paper by University College London that states that buildings that are 20 storeys or higher use two and a half times more electricity than smaller buildings. Increases in height also lead to a potential increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

Instead of thinking of height as an advantage, it should be seen as a disadvantage: it disconnects us from nature and actively damages efforts to increase biodiversity and tackle the climate crisis. Architects Declare states: 'The unavoidable fact is that, in terms of resource efficiency, the embodied carbon in their construction and energy consumption in use, skyscrapers are an absurdity.'

Could the office tower, one of the most potent symbols of the vibrant city, be out of time? Judged by green criteria, its days could be numbered. But judged by the amount of new tall construction projects around the world, not any time soon.

Source: Salus Global



Key Links

[How New York Smart City Projects are Leading the Way](#)

[Designing the Cities of Tomorrow](#)

[Architects' network slams skyscrapers as harbinger of societal collapse](#)

[Building Smart Cities Together](#)

‘Technology tools are disappearing from the physical office; as the cloud takes over, we are left with the notion that work can take place from everywhere and people are now free to choose...’

Unworking: The Reinvention of the Modern Office

Work heads to the cloud

As IT infrastructures leave the office building and cloud-based services become more common, companies are having to rethink their workplace approach

This year saw more and more organisations participate in a mass exodus to the ‘cloud’ – the fluffy name given to the serious business of storing data and processing it in remote centres.

Unwieldy, expensive on-site IT infrastructure is becoming a thing of the past. Technology tools are disappearing from the physical office as the cloud takes over, leaving us with the notion that people are now free to choose how and where they work using their own ‘end user’ technology tools – laptops, tablets and mobile phones.

Although cloud-based technology has been around for years, it took the lockdowns of the global pandemic, when everyone was forced to work remotely, to fast-forward its adoption. [Microsoft](#) reports that 90 per cent of its customers have accelerated their plans to integrate the cloud into their systems as a consequence of Covid-19.

Companies have tuned into the benefits of cloud technology and this state of affairs is likely to continue. A survey by software company [Altaro](#) reveals that two out of three IT professionals think of cloud adoption as a permanent destination for IT infrastructure in the future. Where once the company housed all documents in the office and then housed the servers that housed the

documents, now the tech players power the web by providing storage that is location-agnostic.

The reliance on SaaS (software-as-a-service) and IaaS (infrastructure-as-a-service) models grew in the pandemic with workers needing to store and share content with other remote employees in a safe and secure online environment, and companies paying companies such as Microsoft to provide them with a cloud-based platform with which to do this. Once up in the cloud, it seems that now there is no going back, as organisations unlearn the IT principles of the past. But what are the consequences?

There are opportunities but also threats. As this section explains, the future of cloud computing is bright with new technical developments; alternative solutions are addressing some of the limitations of digital working; and cloud-based access control can provide a gateway to an ecosystem of digital services in the hybrid workplace.

However, companies climbing on board the cloud service train need to pay close attention to how their data is being processed to avoid the possibility of labour exploitation.

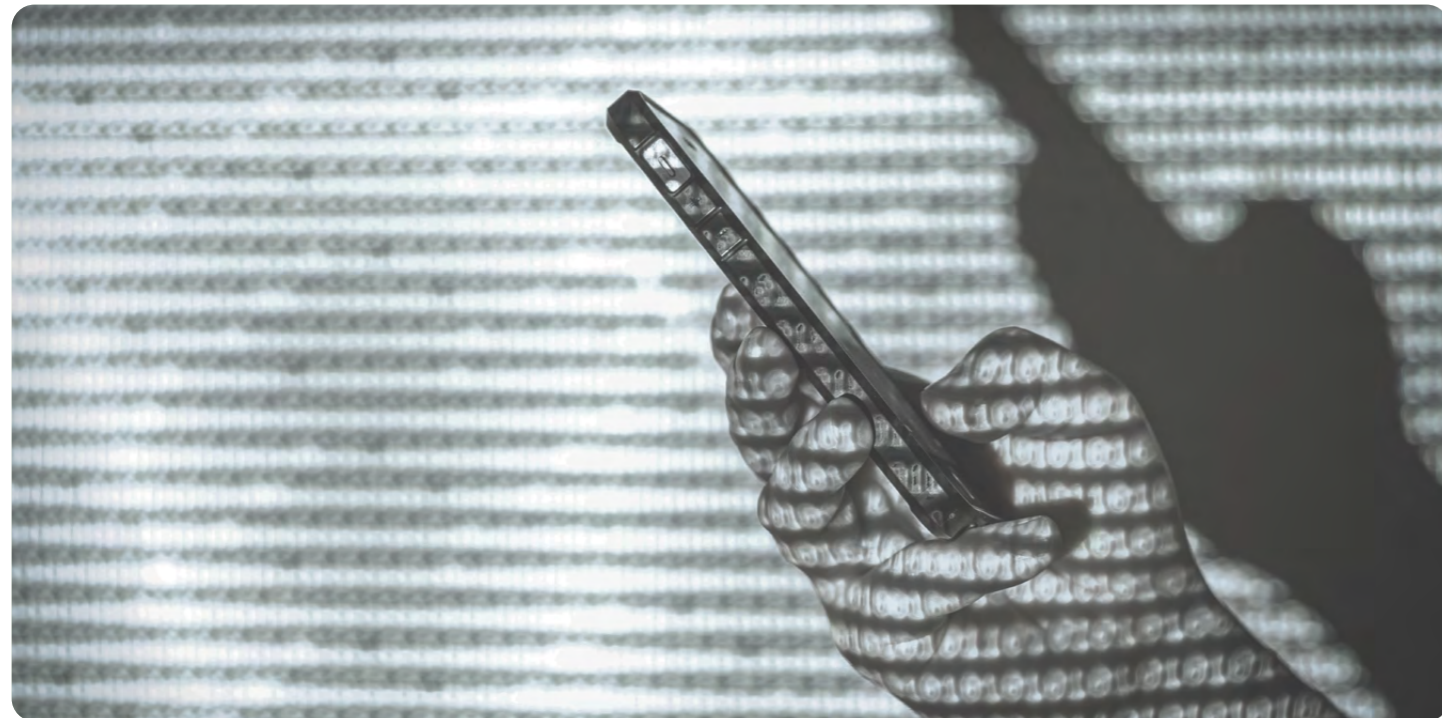
More transparency needed over data

More companies are today adopting cloud software and taking steps to integrate other new technologies such as artificial intelligence into their day-to-day working. However, organisations must be careful with outsourcing their data capture and analysis as this can put them in a difficult position if they do not know how this work is being procured.

With software becoming more remote from the office hub of a company, the tendency can be to assume that automation and AI equal an easier life for everyone. Many companies want to use high-tech cloud platforms but they don't have the time or in-house knowledge to build the software themselves. So, they buy pre-built solutions or utilise platforms created by companies like Amazon and Google for their processing power.

Lots of these platforms and AI models require almost constant monitoring and input from humans to function effectively. People work around the clock to label images, audio and text in large datasets. But this work is often hidden from sight, leading to a worrying trend in labour exploitation, a report by [MIT](#) Sloane School of Management suggests.

This has the potential to land organisations who wish to present themselves as an ethical employer in hot water, simply because they have got carried away with investing in new technology and not analysed their data supply chains. The message is clear: it is in a company's interests to build data technology policies which are transparent and meet ESG targets around ethics.



Taking your security to the cloud

As more employers adopt hybrid working models, there is a growing realisation that their old security systems are no longer fit for purpose. No longer is security an office-based issue – corporate security systems need to account for a multiplicity of locations as people work remotely, from third spaces and from different offices.

In a research survey by proptech company Brivo on Top Security Trends in 2022, around two-thirds of the 600 companies consulted stated that access control and its integration with other systems was important or very important to enabling hybrid work.

Brivo's report also highlighted the potential security challenges posed by hybrid, including increased risk of a cyber-attack, more instances of credential sharing and inappropriate access, and staff keeping more unpredictable schedules and requiring access at unusual times.

Hybrid clearly poses difficulties for employers, but what's the solution? Cloud-based access control allows security systems to be centralised and easily integrated with other software in order to collect data and manage risk remotely.

Taking your security to the cloud is generating a significant amount of interest within organisations. Cloud-based access control is positioning itself as a key tool for modernising the workplace, providing a gateway to an entire ecosystem of integrated digital services, and ensuring that hybrid working doesn't expose any gaps in an organisation's security perimeter.



Key Links

[Future of cloud computing: 5 insights from new global research](#)

[What Is The Future Of Cloud Computing 2025?](#)

[Innovation in the era of the transformation cloud](#)

[The Future Of Cloud Is Vertical](#)

On Our Radar

Here is a selection of external links and books from contributors to WORKTECH Academy's global network on subjects that are on our radar this quarter:



Automation and the future of work

In this book, Benav discusses the structural trends that will affect our ways of working in the future. Analysing how automation will and will not affect our lives and proposing how we should construct our working lives in the future.

[Read more](#)



The Nowhere Office

The pandemic forced a reshuffle of our working expectations, with working from home becoming the norm. The Nowhere Office provides a lens through which to examine work and tackle the challenges we face as we transition from one way of working to another.

[Read more](#)



The Experience Book

This alternative approach to design looks at design theory and the making of experiences, explaining why we are so drawn in by exciting experiences and teaching us how to leverage this factor in our workplaces, retail experiences and many more environments.

[Read more](#)



The Culture Advantage: Empowering your People to Drive Innovation

Dan Strode looks at how developing the right mindset within your organisation can be a catalyst to becoming an innovative and creative company, and highlighting how you can foster this approach to work in your own company.

[Read more](#)



Managing the Future of Work Podcast

Here Professors Bill Kerr and Joe Fuller gain insight into how the future of work is being reshaped. Covering topics such as increasing diversity and increasing focus, this podcast is a go-to for information on the future of work.

[Read more](#)



Inevitable: The Future of Work

This is an exciting HR podcast that interrogates the role of HR in evolving the workplace and its impact on people, processes and profits. Listen to get insights from industry professionals on the most pressing topic affecting HR today.

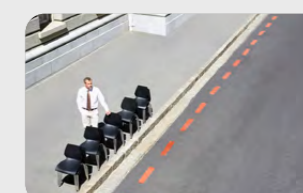
[Read more](#)



Chatham House Future of Work 2023 Conference

The cost-of-living crisis, changing economic landscapes and labour shortages are set to affect the ways in which we work. At this conference, experts, business leaders and policy makers in the field will highlight key issues and offer up solutions.

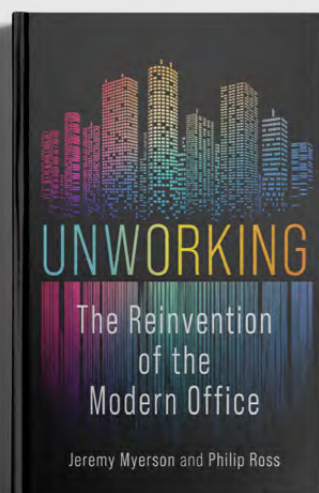
[Read more](#)



What Companies Still Get Wrong About Layoffs

In a time of economic upheaval and with layoffs in the tech industry exacerbating fears that job insecurity is on the rise, this article analyses why companies lay staff off and why it's the wrong approach to managing economic difficulties.

[Read more](#)



Find out more and buy the book [here](#) or scan the QR code below.





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