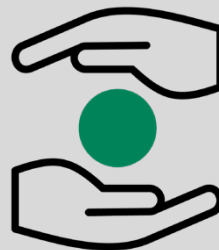
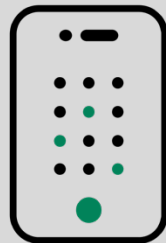


What happens now to office space?



Four models for the future

Executive Summary for Area



In exploring new directions for office space and presenting four conceptual models for the future hybrid workplace, our Trend Report for Q1 2023 reveals some key positioning and business opportunities for AREA as it continues to develop its authority as a design leader in the Fourfront stable.

Although each of the Magnet, Matrix, Mutual and Mentor models has a different and distinct flavour in terms of approach, they all share a single characteristic: the behaviour and performance of people returning to the office will be informed by a complex design mix of workplace experience, spatial strategy, data-led decision-making and amenity choice.

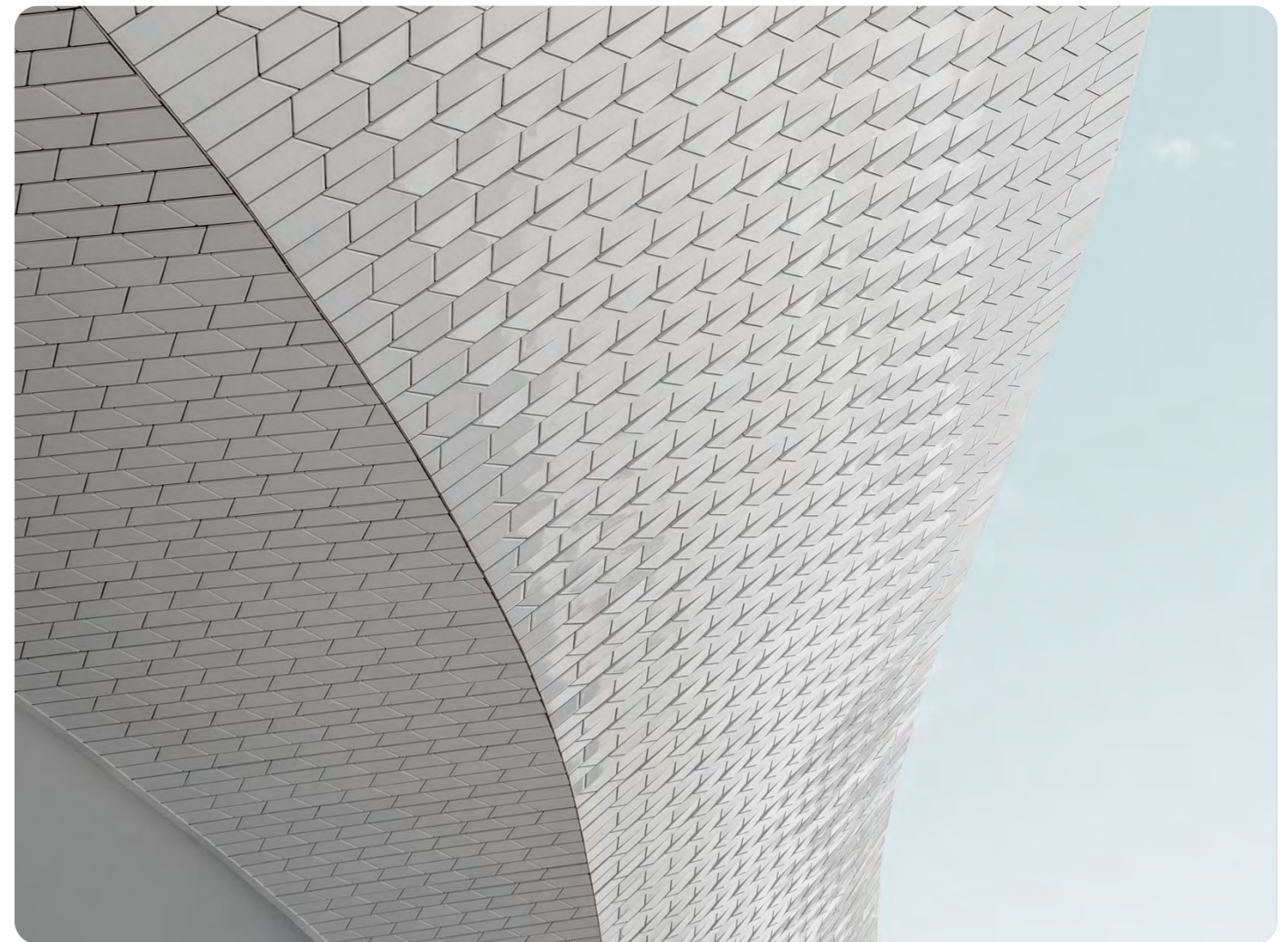
The next phase of office building will be no easy task to get right, which explains why there is currently so much experimenting and head-scratching inside companies. However, these conditions play to AREA's design strengths and enable development of your Design Framework and Building Blocks of Workplace Experience, both developed with WORKTECH Academy.

The Magnet's buzzy social hub depends on creating a great environment for face-to-face

interaction. Food, drink and scheduled events are part of this picture – all of which will be dependent on a more dynamic spatial strategy. The Matrix concept, which places the office building as a node in a wider network or ecosystem of work, will rely on creating hybrid spaces for in-person and remote workers to enjoy digital and meeting equality.

The focus on health and sustainability inherent to the Mutual model demands design decisions that improve indoor environmental conditions, reduce energy usage and embodied carbon on the drive to net zero, and have a harmonious relationship with external landscape and communities.

The Mentor model, which supports higher-value interpersonal work such as learning and innovation, will rely on designing for serendipity and creating learning zones – again, an area of opportunity for AREA which has piloted aspects of each of the four models in some form in recent projects.



What happens now to office space?

Welcome to your Q1 2023 Trend Report from WORKTECH Academy, which looks at four conceptual models for development of the office building in the hybrid era

The first quarter of 2023 has seen many organisations ramp up the return to office and invest more consistently in rethinking and redesigning their workplace assets. Questions remain, however, as to the direction and purpose of office space in the hybrid era. What should it be trying to achieve? And what should be its role in a widening ecosystem of work?

Several high-profile office projects have either broken ground or opened their doors since the



pandemic. In their planning and design, what are they telling us? Some of their signals are contradictory, others appear to roll back time. One thing is certain: the global shift in real estate markets after the pandemic cannot be ignored.

A Cushman & Wakefield report released this quarter predicts there will be an excess of 330 million square feet of vacant U.S. office space by the end of this decade brought on by the impact of hybrid working. The report, entitled 'Obsolescence Equals Opportunity', calls for a new drive to reposition and repurpose office stock.

To make our own contribution to the debate about the future of the office building, WORKTECH Academy has devoted this Trend Report to sharing our own perspective on the issue – a viewpoint which has been shaped by academic research, market insights and media reports as well as stories and case studies from around the global Academy network.

We have identified four conceptual models or archetypes for the new office and brought them to life with practical examples and research. The models are:



Magnet – The Social Hub: Strongly oriented to face-to-face social interaction and collaboration, this model offers a customer service mentality and an alluring range of amenities.

Matrix – Node in the Network: This model blends bricks with bytes to position the office as a gateway to a parallel world of digital services and systems.

Mutual – The Shared Experience: Sustainable, inclusive and socially responsible, this model is based on building and maintaining reciprocal relationships with the outside world.

Mentor – Developmental Space: This model melds together a focus on learning, mentoring and creativity with a commitment to improving the mental wellbeing of all employees.

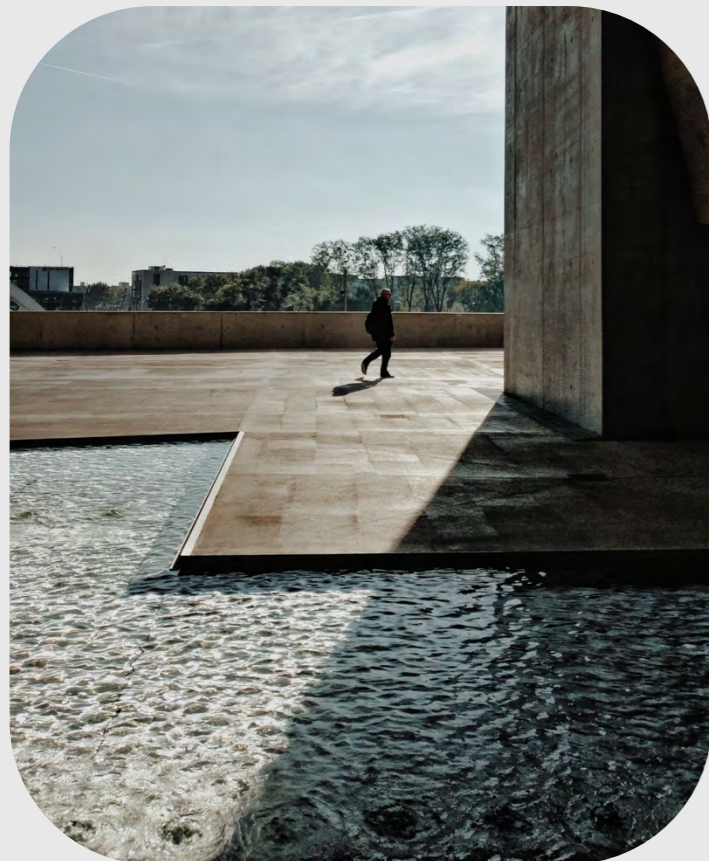
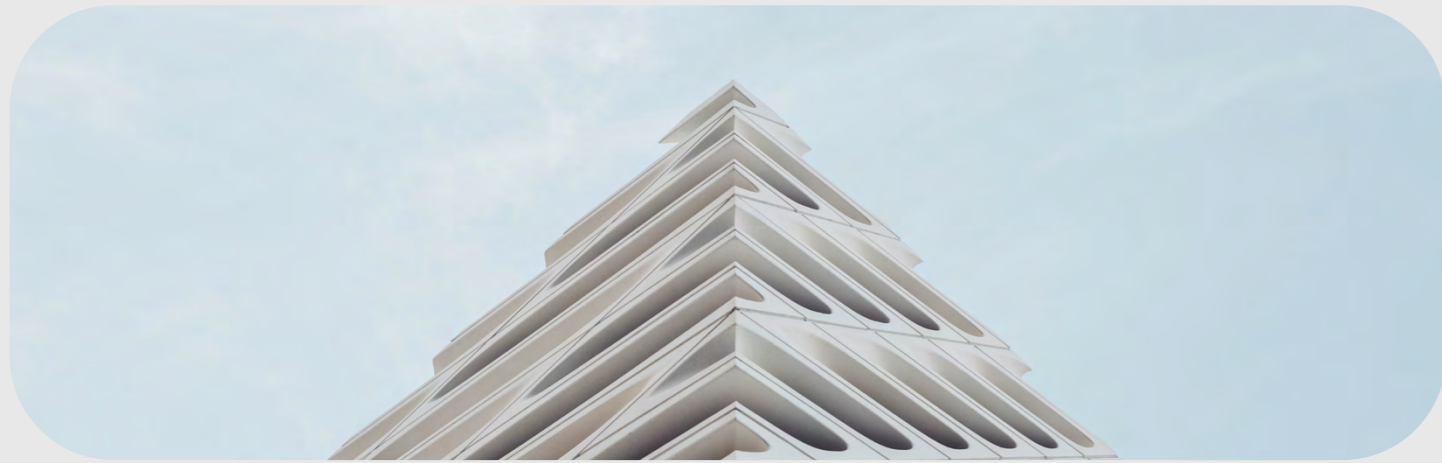
These are by no means mutually exclusive options for occupiers, developers and designers to

consider. In practice, most workplace schemes will seek to incorporate at least two or more of them in a single building or campus plan. However, discussing each model in isolation reveals the essence of its particular purpose, and shows the power and versatility of office space to influence the future of work in the right creative hands.

As we move deeper into 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



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‘Lego’s new Danish HQ reflects the power of play and social interaction’

MAGNET



The Social Hub

This model is strongly oriented to face-to-face social interaction and collaboration with a customer service mentality and an alluring range of amenities

The Magnet model for the office building is based on creating a compelling ‘destination of choice’ for employees who today have more freedom over where to work. Many employers who have struggled to orchestrate an effective return to the office are now coming round to the idea that it is better to *magnetise* people back to the workplace rather than *mandate* them.

In the Magnet, there is a strong orientation towards spaces and services for face-to-face social interaction and team collaboration. People come into the office primarily to be with others, whether they are colleagues, clients or contractors. This isn’t necessarily the place to get quiet work done – the Magnet is lively, convivial, buzzy – but it’s certainly the place to be seen.

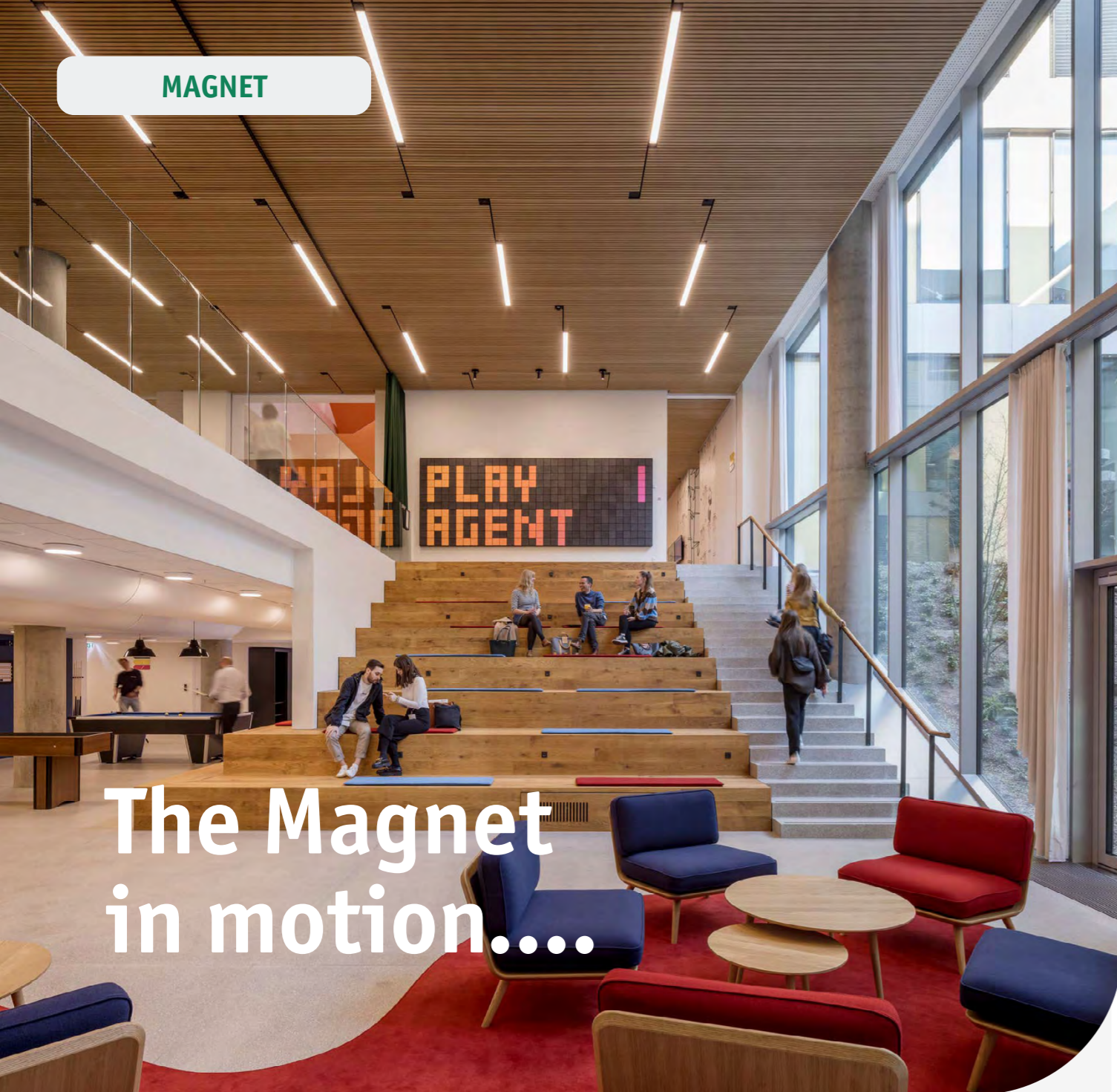
Employees spending at least some of their week working remotely expect a ‘super-experience’ in terms of design, ambiance and human connection when they turn up to the workplace.

Food and drink are therefore integral to an office remodelled with client project rooms, collaborative workspaces, play zones, bars, restaurants and the provision of other amenities to enhance social activity.

Part of the Magnet’s appeal lies in its ability to ‘live’ the company values and be a flagship for the brand. The office as a hub to build culture and social capital depends on a new type of event curation and a reimagining of the FM role as brand ambassador, host, producer or convenor. There is a customer service mentality as people are treated as consumers of workplace services rather than employees.

The model also depends on digital technology to ensure the right people arrive on site at the right time, but as our look at Lego’s new Danish HQ reveals, the essential characteristics of the Magnet are embedded in the physical environment where spectacular amenities make an offer that returnees can’t refuse.

KEYWORDS: invitation, destination, experience, allure, branded



The Magnet in motion....

Lego, Denmark: Designed by CF Møller Architects and opened in 2022, Lego's new headquarters in Billund has been built around the idea of magnetising its 2,000 employees back to the office with an attractive offer centred on the company's core values of 'Imagination, Fun, Creativity, Caring, Learning, and Quality'.

Lego shifted strategy midway through this large 55,000 sq metre development, radically rethinking its allocation of space to up the ante on social and collaboration amenities. Only one third of the office is now dedicated to desk-based workstations for quiet work. One third is geared towards social activities, with a fitness studio, creative workshop space, hotel for visiting

employees, cinema, outdoor park, activity zone, communal kitchen and a health clinic. The final third of the office is dedicated to collaborative space.

This new HQ is a place to share time with others, build culture and social capital, and connect to the brand. It reflects Lego's belief in the power of play and social interaction as the draw to get people back in the office in the hybrid era. Lego has not finished perfecting its Magnet-style project – the company recognises that patterns of work and employee needs will change over time, so it is continually monitoring its campus to make sure it can react to new data swiftly to enhance the employee experience.



Campari, New York: Relocating its North American HQ from San Francisco to New York City was never going to be easy for drinks giant Campari. The design by Gensler helped the company to create a destination office that is difficult to resist. With the goal of attracting new talent, this office is a convivial space for social interaction – social spaces outnumber the amount of desk spaces, phone booths and meeting rooms that are dotted around the office.

The atrium replicates the feel of being inside a bottle of Campari, with details like the Campari-bottle shaped door handles and brand colours

woven throughout the space adding to the strong sense of brand identity. Within the building, there are four bar or cafe spaces offering everything from an espresso to a cocktail. The space even hosts the Campari Academy where mixologists can get creative with new cocktails.

The open plan desking offers a stunning view across New York City. The company even made the choice to offer no separate offices for c-suite execs. Here everyone sits side-by-side, increasing the sense of social equity that the building aims to create.



Art Recherche Industrie, Paris: While most Magnet offices are commissioned by large brands or corporations, the strategy can be just as effective for micro-businesses at the smallest scale. The new office for Parisian creative agency Art Recherche Industrie converts a 19th century Gothic-style ballroom in the city's 10th arrondissement into one grand creative space for 25 staff to work in. This stunning restoration is colourful and charming with contemporary flashes of style, making every effort to make

this office a desirable destination that is well worth the commute.

Designed by the agency's creative leader Ramdane Touhami, the space boasts a stunning staircase that leads up from the open-plan ballroom to more private spaces on a mezzanine as well as two recording studios and a tennis court in the basement. The agency even has its own Japanese chef to complement the creative environment.

Visitor experience matters too

Whilst significant emphasis has been placed on the importance of creating a magnetising employee experience within the office, research has shown that the office is also becoming more about visitor experience, as companies see an uptick in people from other firms entering the office. This population includes customers and collaborators, friends and family and potential recruits.

Data from technology company Envoy suggests that while employee attendance in the office



has been fluctuating and unstable, visitor traffic into the workplace grew by 43 per cent last year. Offices are clearly welcoming more and more visitors, making them the hub of connection between a company and its clients.

This is an important consideration: a study by HubSpot found that the likelihood of making a sale in-person is higher than when conducting business online; research from PwC strongly indicated that a bad visitor experience chases away business, with one in three people stating that they would walk away from a brand they love after just one bad experience.

Envoy suggests that currently not enough companies are aware of the importance of their office as a hub for visitor experience. Their data shows that around one in five companies are still using pen and paper to register visitors manually. In a world where most people make their judgements about a new place or person in the first 27 seconds of meeting them, this seems like a significant area for improvement. So what steps should companies make to improve visitor experience?

Making the visitor sign-in process as streamlined as possible through a digitalisation of the system is one way to overcome barriers. Personalising the visitor journey and providing enhanced visitor amenities are other proposals – amenities can be as simple as a great cup of coffee and wi-fi code. In visitor management, a little can go a long way.

Source: [The Future of the Visitor Experience](#), Envoy with WORKTECH Academy (2022)



Sensory maps hold key to magnetic experience

Research by Design Denmark suggests that certain elements of the office previously overlooked by designers could be the key to creating a magnetic workplace that really speaks to the individual needs of the people who work there.

Recent design approaches have tended to focus only on what we see and hear instead of our complete sensory experience. In addition, more people are becoming susceptible to sensory overload, which is partly related to our detachment from nature. The Design Denmark report, compiled with the help of a group of philosophers, anthropologists, designers and psychologists, provides advice for reconnecting the workplace to the natural environment and incorporating all five senses into the space.

Suggestions range from using lavender or peppermint scents on desks and warm colours

within the office to providing spaces where employees are encouraged to take a digital detox and connect with nature in a more meaningful way. Design Denmark also highlight the importance of the office adapting to needs as we grow older and have different life experiences. It's no good creating an office that is a magnet for 20-somethings if they feel out of place and want to move on by the time they are in their thirties.

Whether related to psychological or physical factors, our experience of the world around us will change over time and the best workplaces will speak to this need by offering different experiences over time. Designers have started to look at space in terms of psychological frameworks, making sure that there is workspace that can support the fluctuating moods and needs of employees as well as changes in physicality and health.

This includes creating settings for introverted people to work quietly and feel comfortable as well as space for more extroverted people to socialise and be seen in the office. Sensory maps play a role in this design process, providing a view into what an employee might think or feel within different spaces and allowing designers to create a range of environments that attract employees at different moments in their life.

Source: [Design Denmark](#), Future Workplace Whitepaper

Key Links

[The magnetic workplace — Future of Work Hub](#)

[How Do We Draw Employees Back To The Office?](#)

[This time it's personal: Shaping the 'new possible' through employee experience](#)

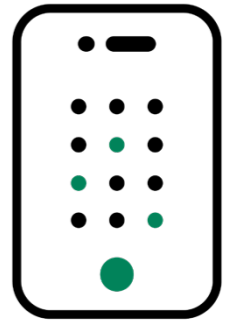
[The Employee Experience Podcast on Apple Podcasts](#)



‘Accenture New York has a wide variety of workspaces for digital working’

MATRIX

Node in the Network



This model for the future hybrid workplace blends bricks with bytes to position the office as a gateway to a parallel world of digital services and systems

The Matrix model for the office building derives its characteristics from the emerging realities of hybrid working. It is an environment that blends the physical and the digital, facilitating collaboration across time and distance, between people present in the workplace and those who are remote.

The Matrix treats the office as a node in a wider network – a fixed anchor-point in an increasingly fluid ecosystem of work driven by cloud-based services. It offers a range of specialised and technical spaces such as broadcast studios or presentation suites that can provide seamless connectivity to the ecosystem for people spending time in the office. It is simultaneously offline and online. This duality reflects the idea that all companies have now become digital companies, no matter how traditional a law firm or bank might once have been.

In the Matrix, there is a constant process of experiment and piloting to achieve digital

equality for all participants in hybrid meetings, an objective which remains a work in progress. Asynchronous as well as synchronous work is undertaken. There is also a glimpse of the next-generation smart building with a proliferation of sensors and cameras capturing a wealth of workplace data, and digital dashboards displaying it in real-time to people inside the building. This data is used to shape the user experience as well as make facilities more efficient.

Workplace apps guide and inform the type of services and settings that people receive, as part of a more scientific approach. The case studies and research findings in this section reflect the way the virtual world is now bringing a new layer of experience to the office building. Incorporating this technical filagree into the traditional fabric of office space is not an easy or inexpensive task but one to which more companies are committing resources.

KEYWORDS: networked, blended, programmed, ecosystem



The Matrix in motion....

Accenture, New York: Accenture's office for around 3,000 employees on the top nine floors of One Manhattan West in New York has many characteristics of the Matrix model. Designed by HOK Architects, it utilises the best technology possible to encourage staff back into the office by providing both an experience and a hybrid-centric workplace. A wide variety of workspaces, from larger collaboration spaces to bookable meeting rooms, are tech-enabled to allow for hybrid meeting equality.

Digital screens are placed throughout the office to keep people up to date on important topics

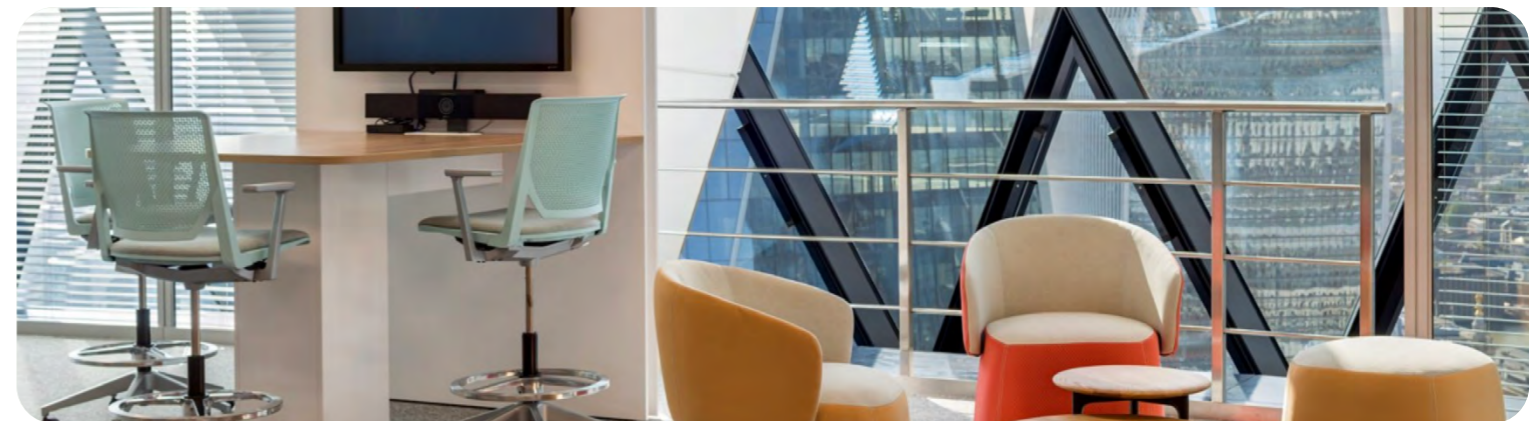
such as sustainability and smart computing. An in-house app helps employees to book rooms, see if colleagues are in the building, keep track of scheduled events and find their way around. The app even recognises the preferences of the user over time and offers recommendations tailored to their needs when looking for a room to book.

Accenture also offers specialist VR spaces and equipment for employees to meet up in its virtual office. This sits alongside other specialist rooms such as a broadcast studio, training rooms and specialist presentation suites, all designed with hybrid working in mind.



EY, Stockholm: This Matrix-style office provides a platform for the company to pilot digital ways of working. Through piloting this space, EY aims to pave the way for digital transformation and sustainability. The company worked with local Swedish architects Tengbom to design a workspace that can be adapted according to new data insights and respond to employee needs. The building's workplace experience is defined by its model of 'Bricks, Bytes, and Behaviour' – an approach that aims to promote more collaboration between the company's HR, IT, real estate, facilities management, branding, sustainability and workplace teams.

Technology has been skilfully integrated into the office with more than 1,500 sensors monitoring the environment and utilisation of spaces. EY has utilised a wide range of relevant technologies on offer, including the development of its own workplace experience app called 'My Day' which can nudge employees towards desirable behaviours and help create efficiencies in their workflow. As a consequence of this cleverly designed office space, there has been a 13 per cent increase in employee satisfaction, a 26 per cent rise in efficiency, a significant reduction in food waste and plastic usage, and a 5 per cent reduction in facilities management costs.



Poly, London and New York: Multinational technology company Poly, now part of HP, redesigned its flagship experience centres in London and New York to respond to the challenge of providing digital equality in hybrid meetings. Poly's concept of an experience centre is a combination of a showroom and a hands-on lab. Customers are invited to meet with senior leaders and solution experts at Poly and trial new solutions which are tailored to their business.

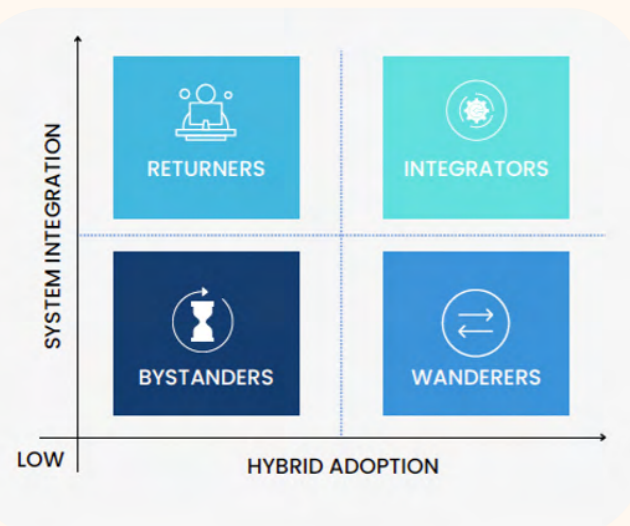
Each experience centre is a Matrix space providing a range of different work settings such as open work areas and workstations, focus rooms, huddle spaces, medium and large rooms, and training suites. Poly's AI-powered solutions for hybrid are displayed throughout the space in real-life scenarios. Innovations include an 'Acoustic Fence' to capture voices inside a meeting and a 'NoiseBlock' to cut out unwanted sounds as well as group and speaker framing technologies.

A framework for hybrid integration

Behind the Matrix concept is a growing recognition that the implementation of hybrid working models must go hand in hand with digital transformation to meet employee demand for flexibility. Technology systems must be integrated to unlock a data-led ecosystem of services that can improve business efficiencies and workplace experiences.

But organisations are at different stages on their journey to digital integration and hybrid working. How can they plot where they are and where they need to go? A new report by proptech company Brivo in partnership with WORKTECH Academy presents a 'framework for hybrid integration' which allows organisations to analyse their journey in more detail.

The four typologies described in the framework show how connected a company's approach and commitment to hybrid working is with their level of digital transformation and integration.



Bystanders: These companies are watching and waiting, they have neither jumped into hybrid work nor invested in new technology. Instead, they are waiting it out until they know for sure what the best strategy is. But will this certainty ever come?

Wanderers: These are companies that have enthusiastically embraced hybrid working, but in doing so they have left themselves exposed to security threats as they have not invested in digital infrastructure.

Returners: This group is investing heavily in digital transformation but has not implemented hybrid working as part of a deliberate corporate strategy to bring everyone back to the office.

Integrators: These organisations are the trailblazers – they are determined to develop the digital infrastructure to support the adoption of hybrid working and address changing employee expectations.

The report makes the case that if companies are going to create a successful hybrid working environment, then this move must go hand in hand with bringing the right digital systems and infrastructures into the workplace.

Source: 'Integrated Control: Access and Security in the Age of Hybrid Working', Brivo (2023)



Time to embrace the 40% Office?

Treating the office building as a node in a digital network makes sense when you look at changes in occupancy in the hybrid work era. Research by Professor Prithwiraj Choudhury at Harvard University with *Fast Company* suggests that the ideal amount of time to spend in the office sits somewhere between 23 and 40 per cent of your week, which validates a Matrix approach to workspace.

While the exact percentage will differ depending on the types of organisation, this is broadly enough time in the office to maximise the benefits of seeing colleagues in-person to collaborate and mentor younger employees, without compromising on wellbeing and work-life balance.

But if we only need the office for a maximum of 40 per cent of the week, what happens to workspaces

the rest of the time? There are potential solutions and they all start with thinking differently about leases and how spaces are shared.

If an office is well designed for hybrid working, what's to stop two companies sharing the space on different days or even co-owning a space that meets all the needs of staff members? Coworking spaces are now an accepted part of day-to-day life for many workers, but some companies and real estate organizations are still stuck in the past when it comes to the sharing economy.

Designing spaces for flexibility in the first place is key to enabling companies to leverage, share and adapt unused office space to suit new ways of working. Companies could also adopt a satellite model, where smaller offices, coworking spaces and meeting lounges are utilised locally by staff when they are needed, thereby reducing the cost of running one big corporate office that lies empty because it doesn't always suit staff to commute into the city centre.

The idea of the 40% Office offers a new way to think about how and where we work, giving companies a fresh starting point to rethink their real-estate strategy through the lens of employee need and practicality in a world where the digital ecosystem is set to frame the future of work.

Source: *Fast Company*, February 2023

Key Links

[How New Technology Has Affected The Modern Office](#)

[Immersive meetings: a hybrid solution easier said than done](#)

[10 Amazing Tech Company Headquarters](#)

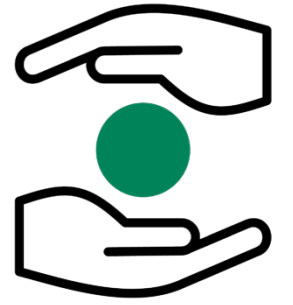
[Interest In NFTs And The Metaverse Is Falling Fast](#)



‘Google’s Humboldt campus has a reciprocal relationship with the landscape’

MUTUAL

The Shared Experience



Sustainable, inclusive and socially responsible, this model is based on building and maintaining positive and reciprocal relationships with the outside world

The Mutual model for the office building is based on the idea of reciprocal relationships with the wider world. This is not a hermetically sealed business facility – this workplace enjoys a more permeable relationship with the local district and with local communities, as well as with the physical characteristics of the urban or rural site that provides its context. Its porous aspect finds expression in its public lobbies, viewing platforms, art galleries, walking trails, food markets and other public amenities which are carefully inserted into the overall site strategy.

This is a socially responsible, green workplace with an accent on sustainability and reducing carbon, and on promoting diversity, equity and inclusion. There is an awareness of the need to respect and incorporate a range of different employee needs and perspectives while respecting the planet. A sense of mutuality and interdependence permeates every aspect of this model.

There is also a clear trend here towards bringing the outside in. The Mutual workplace achieves

this in a variety of ways. It might be by literally bringing the landscape into the office and opening up to the outdoors, as in Google’s new Humboldt Campus and Amazon’s Helix tower, both shown in this section. Or it might be by incorporating coworking spaces in the building plan and bringing external catalysts such as start-ups into shared incubators on-site to support company innovation. Providing a visible welcome for under-represented groups in the workforce is also part of the story.

Office settings that are permeable to external partnerships and responsibilities will necessarily be based on the values of design adaptability and social connection. The Mutual office will not only exploit the biophilic design advantages of green space but also explore the possibilities of blue space by incorporating water features. Analysis of health data will drive office redesign and adoption of a circular economy will inform design and build. The Mutual anticipates many trends that will drive the next phase of office design.

KEYWORDS: connected, reciprocal, interdependent, inclusive, sustainable, universal



The Mutual in motion....

Google, Sunnyvale, California: Google's Humboldt Campus in Sunnyvale has a reciprocal relationship with its surroundings. It has been designed by Situ Studio (with Parabola Architecture as base-build architects) to bring the outdoors to the community that work there with four high-tech offices built around a landscaped courtyard. Each building is simple but effective, maximising natural light and utilising sustainable biophilic materials. The buildings are designed to create a community, with cafes and activity spaces all facing the courtyard in order to generate a health buzz of activity and to draw people together.

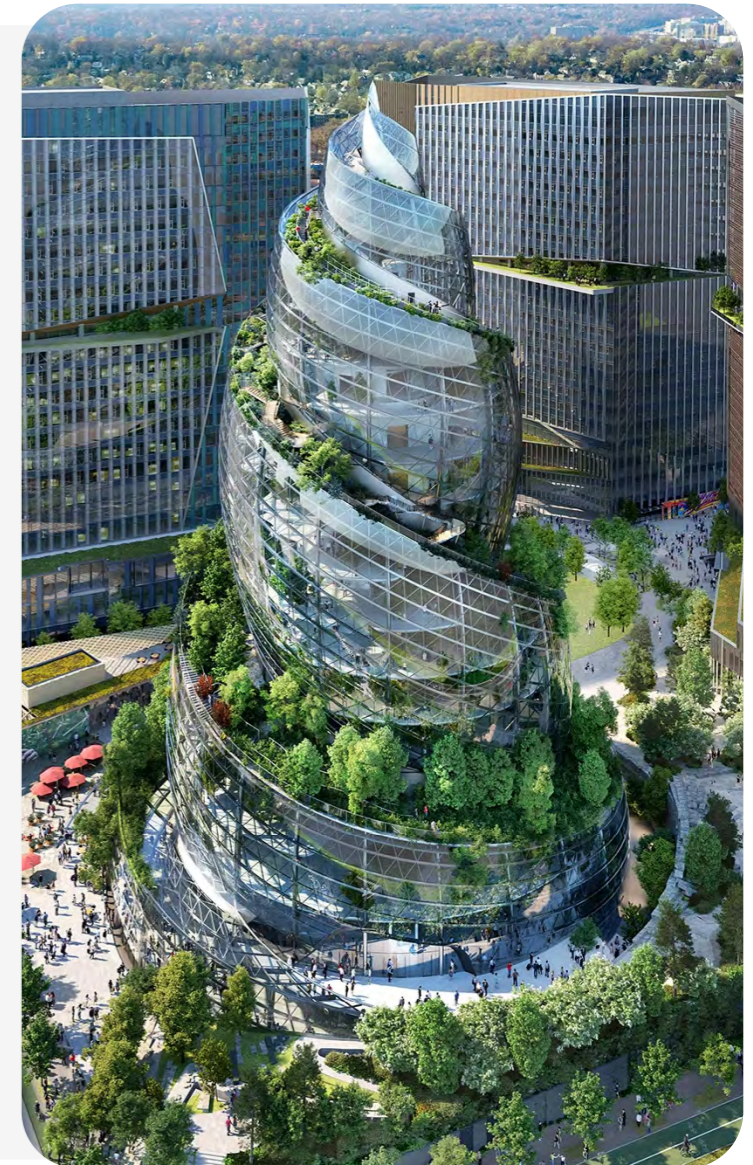
On the second floor, the buildings are connected by walkways which are protected from the sun, encouraging employees out into the open air. These too are surrounded by more informal

social spaces designed around the idea of cross-pollination and the mixing of people and ideas. Further into the building there are more quiet spaces for focused work, but the external spaces are all designed to help people bump into each other.

The project, which was completed in 2022, is LEED platinum certified and 40 per cent of its electricity is generated by roof-mounted solar panels. Efforts were made to utilise local and sustainable materials, and leave the trees that already occupied the space undisturbed. Each building has its own colour scheme and local artists were commissioned to add vibrancy and colour to all spaces. This is a workplace that has invested in placemaking, deliberately creating a community based on mutual values and a strong link to the landscape.

Amazon HQ2, Virginia, USA: After a protracted nationwide search to choose the site for its new headquarters, Amazon finally settled on Arlington, Virginia, and unveiled plans from architects NBJJ that reflect many facets of the Mutual model. The project aims to create a healthy, sustainable office for Amazon employees and the surrounding community. With plans to reduce embodied carbon, cut water usage and use bird-safe glass in all their buildings, this is an office with serious sustainability credentials.

Of the three planned towers, the Helix tower is the one that stands out. A daring shape based on a double helix, it is covered with native plants against the city backdrop. Amazon plans on offering childcare facilities, a pet park and other amenities to support employees. To engage with the local community, the scheme provides acres of public space, including a forest area and a venue for outdoor concerts and films, as well as restaurants and retail. The public will get access to the Helix building and be able to climb up its exterior on select weekends every month. Construction of the Helix is currently on hold as the company reviews costs, but the first phase of the new campus is set to open in June this year.



The Coven, Minnesota, USA: The Coven is a group of coworking spaces in the US that offer memberships to women and non-binary people. One of its spaces, based in St Pauls, Minnesota, was designed to create a sense of community and equality amongst those who work in the space. With lots of natural light, high ceilings and an emphasis on the historic details of the building, this space comes alive with artworks, décor and branding. With unapologetically pink flooring, eye-catching murals and even the Coven logo in a mosaic on the floor, this office creates a sense of surprise and is a safe and welcoming space for a specific community.

WELL framework for diversity, equity and inclusion

The WELL Equity Rating from the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI) provides a useful framework for evaluating the Mutual office in terms of its aim to advance diversity, equity and inclusion. The Equity Rating outlines a set of evidence-based strategies based on six action areas:

- User experience and feedback
- Responsible hiring and labour practices
- Inclusive design
- Health benefits and services
- Supportive programs and spaces
- Community engagement

User feedback should be conducted via interviews, focus groups and pre- and post-occupancy surveys, according to the IWBI. Inclusive design considerations should include thermal and lighting control, bathroom accommodation, ergonomics, acoustics, and promotion of 'nature, place and culture'. Health services should focus on such areas as sick leave, family leave, flexible work, childcare support and support for victims of domestic violence. Supportive programs and spaces should include restorative space and local food access.

Source: [WELL Equity Rating](#)

Diversity asks, "Who's in the room?"

Equity responds: "Who is trying to get in the room but can't? Whose presence in the room is under constant threat of erasure?"

Inclusion asks, "Have everyone's ideas been heard?"

Justice responds, "Whose ideas won't be taken as seriously because they aren't in the majority?"

— Dafina-Lazarus Stewart

Water works: the benefits of blue space

Green space is very much part of the Mutual workspace offer. Biophilic design features are proven to bring a host of benefits to employee experience and wellbeing – and they are widely considered to show respect to the workforce. But what about blue space? While green walls, plants and other biophilic elements can be found in most well-designed office spaces, blue spaces are still missing from modern office environments.

Research shows that environments with a water feature may be even better for you than traditional plant-based biophilic design. A study published in the Environmental Research Journal in 2020 found that being in close proximity to blue spaces can increase our mood. Psychologist Laura Lee even suggests that blue spaces

have added benefits over green ones because 'Water seems to have more of a psychologically restorative impact than green spaces'.

With new research into blue spaces emerging, there has been an increase in water features located outside office spaces but within the line of sight of employees. Across London, examples of this can be seen at Granary Square in London's King's Cross and in the South Plaza of the former Olympic Park. One company that has seen the benefits of blue space is Bloomberg's, which moved its fish tank from its old office in Finsbury Square to the sixth floor of its new Foster-designed HQ.

Blue spaces are not the easiest to implement or maintain, but with wellbeing and sustainability being high up on the agenda for the workplace, maybe it is time for blue spaces to get more attention.

Source: Mathew P. White., Lewis R. Elliott., Mireia Gascon., Bethany Roberts., Lora E. Fleming. (2020). [Blue space, health and well-being: A narrative overview and synthesis of potential benefits](#), Environmental Research, Volume 191.



Key Links

[The big question: how to design health-promoting workplaces](#)

[Why blue space is the new biophilia in office design](#)

[A sustainable office: what are the advantages and how do you achieve it?](#)

[Plants and positivity: a winning formula for the future workplace?](#)



‘Plus X innovation hub combines start-up support with an accent on wellbeing’

MENTOR

Developmental Space



This model melds together a focus on learning, mentoring and creativity with a commitment to improving the mental wellbeing of all employees

The Mentor model for the office building is based on the twin themes of employee learning and support for mental wellbeing. Two powerful directions for the future workplace are entwined in one design concept: a developmental accent on training, mentoring and creativity is coupled with a razor-sharp focus on addressing a wellbeing deficit in the workforce that has grown since the pandemic.

This ‘company as counsellor’ approach manifests itself in settings as diverse as learning suites, rapid prototyping workshops, sleeping pods, prayer rooms, music rooms, editing suites, quiet spaces, social zones and access to outdoor areas to work. However, there is one unifying aim with the Mentor model: to enable both individuals and organisations to flourish.

Higher-value activities such as innovation and learning suffered during Covid-19 because they are harder to replicate online. Creativity was curbed. Wellbeing, after an early honeymoon

period, nose-dived. A return to the office provides an opportunity to reconfigure workspace to meet fundamental needs with an environment tuned to provide the right experiences and the right level of support.

Business incubators for start-ups, such as the Plus X hub shown in this section, demonstrate what can be achieved in nurturing young companies. For corporate employers, strategies like Salesforce’s Trailblazer Ranch, which offers a forest retreat for staff to unwind and get creative, demonstrate the benefits of an alternative approach.

It isn’t enough for companies just to press the pedal marked ‘innovate’ and pile on the pressure now we’re getting back in the office groove. Employees have got to feel less stressed and less burnt out, and be ready for the challenge of discovery. The Mentor workplace model seeks to create that bridge.

KEYWORDS: counselling, advisory, learning, attaining, mental wellbeing



The Mentor in motion....

Plus X, London and Brighton, UK: Plus X Innovation Hubs provide co-working space, communal workshops and incubators for start-ups with great ideas. Each site is a hive of activity with services and settings to enable new companies to grow – designed to foster creativity and ingenuity, and built to high health and sustainability standards. The buildings utilise materials and products made by sustainable British start-ups, and there is access to state-of-the-art equipment such as a wet lab for experiments, a spray booth with a high-tech

filtration system and digital labs for 3D printing and laser cutting.

As places of innovation and learning where start-ups can be supported and encouraged to take new concepts through from start to finish, Plus X puts the accent on collaborative space. But this approach is also combined with an accent on social activity and wellbeing: there are yoga and exercise classes, free-drink Fridays and other opportunities to get together as part of a strategy to build a mentoring community. Design: Studio Egret West.

Salesforce Trailblazer Ranch, California:

Nestling in the redwood forests of Scotts Valley, the Trailblazer Ranch is a clear example of the Mentor workplace model. The software giant has designed this space for Salesforce employees to come and explore the outdoors, learn new things, make new connections and get away from the hustle and bustle of San Francisco. The idea is that staff will visit this cosy, rustic retreat for a few days to decompress and develop stronger bonds with the company.

The Trailblazer Ranch hosts onboarding, training and development classes, including those in yoga,

cooking, art and medication. This is an office designed for wellbeing but also growth, with opportunities to take walking meetings through the forest which are signposted based on the length of meeting you need. This ranch offers Salesforce employees the chance to escape the burnout of the office and get away when they need it, prioritising their mental wellbeing and situating the company as a caring and thoughtful mentor. It also reflects a trend toward the office itself becoming an 'off-site' venue for a company awayday or bonding exercise in the age of hybrid working.



Corporate learning in focus

It's no secret that learning and mentoring suffered during the pandemic as companies moved online and struggled to offer the same level of engagement and support to staff. People felt distant from their companies and were often disappointed when their expectations for growth and development weren't met.

As hybrid working takes hold, what are the new trends in corporate learning and development? Here are five to consider:

Insight 3
All it takes is a nudge

Drive learning pathways and offer smart content suggestions to empower self-directed learners to manage their learning

Insight 1
Lead with culture

Nurturing a healthy learning culture is key to ensuring employee satisfaction and company success

Insight 4
Embrace AR

Bring engaging B2C tech to L&D and transform traditional training with augmented reality eLearning

Insight 2
Leverage the power of AI

Create scalable, personalized learning experiences with learner-centric AI integrations

Insight 5
Harness hybrid learning

Ensure your training fits into the new world of work by developing programs that suit online and in-person audiences

Lead with culture – establishing a healthy learning culture will be a big attraction for jobseekers and will help to retain talent. Just because a company offers training courses doesn't make it a learning organisation.

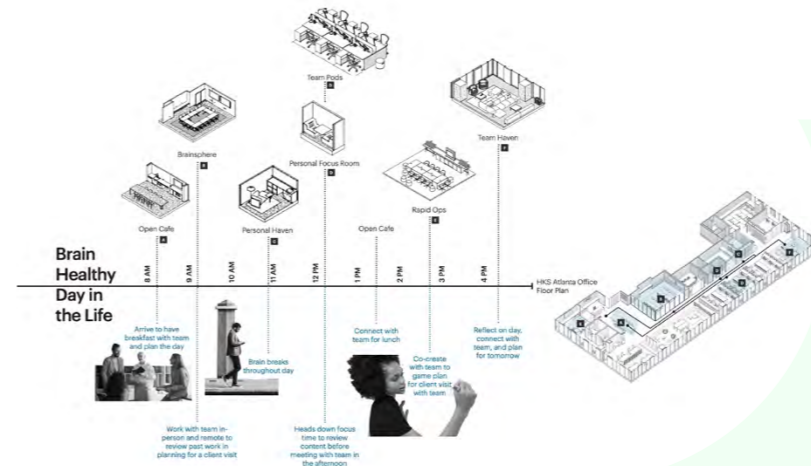
Leverage the power of AI: Artificial intelligence will become more central to the learning experience, with companies using it as a tool to direct support to the people who most need it. Machine learning can also be used to monitor learner progress and identify those at risk of failing.

All it takes is a nudge: Companies will begin to utilise nudge theory in their development programs in order to curb drop-off. Using small and friendly automated messages to encourage employees to complete courses is an effective way of guiding them towards a desired behaviour.

Embrace AR: Borrowing from the retail technology playbook, companies can use Augmented Reality to create engaging onboarding experiences, such as a virtual tour of the company office for remote workers, and to bring essential workplace training to life.

Harness hybrid learning: Companies will need to embrace hybrid when it comes to learning and think more deeply about which elements of their courses will take place in person and which will take place online and why. This will help them create the appropriate environment for each element of their courses and thereby make the programs more engaging and less of a chore.

Source: Quadmark



Are we ready for a brain-healthy workplace?

One way to support mental health in the Mentor workplace is through the prism of brain health.

American architecture firm HKS has partnered with the Center for Brain Health, a non-profit research institute, on a pilot programme to investigate the role of place, policy and technology in creating a brain-healthy workplace. HKS President and CEO Dan Noble explains: 'It's time to change the narrative around how we work and fully leverage our brain capital.'

Seven key findings emerged from the 10-week study, which involved building five HSK 'living labs' in summer 2022 to capture insights:

- 1. The brain can be trained.** Those who completed the core cognitive training had a higher average brain health index than those that did not.
- 2. Managing distractions is a key challenge.** The office isn't only for collaboration—workers need spaces deliberately designed for focus work. Acoustics and a lack of environmental control consistently ranked lowest in satisfaction among design elements.
- 3. Multitasking is related to reduced effectiveness.** 43 per cent of the study's participants said they frequently multitask — a bad habit related to a host of issues, including burnout.

4. Where we work matters, and using a range of spaces helps. Creating a range of spaces based on task type or working modality may unlock innovation. The research found that when participants used a range of spaces, satisfaction with collaborative work effectiveness in the office was higher.

5. Workplace habits need time to develop. Satisfaction with individual and collaborative tasks increases with the time we spend in specific locations—we need time to acclimatise to our environments for optimum efficiency.

6. In-person matters. Being together in-person is related to improved connection to teams and increased opportunities for informal knowledge sharing. Over the course of the study, collaborative behaviours and perceived connections to one's team both increased.

7. Connection to the community is lagging. After months or years of remote work, we must continuously evaluate how hybrid work arrangements impact interpersonal relationships across the organisation.

HSK's research also revealed five key workplace affordances to create a brain-healthy office: focus; exploration and ideation; collaboration and co-creation; rest and reflection; and social connection.

Source: [Getting to a brain-healthy workplace](#), HSK with the Center for Brain Health (2023)

Key Links

[What Great Mentorship Looks Like in a Hybrid Workplace](#)

[How will hybrid working affect the future of learning and development?](#)

[Why Businesses Need Space to Innovate](#)

On Our Radar

Here is a selection of external links to articles, podcasts and books on subjects that are on WORKTECH Academy's radar this quarter:



Work disrupted

Tech layoffs, supply chain disruption, shifting balance between employees and employers and many more topics are set to be discussed at the Forbes Future of Work Summit, this year titled 'Work, Disrupted'.

[Read more](#)



Humanising the future of work

Reimagining work with people at the centre is the topic of this podcast series, discussing HR policies, sustainability and hybrid working with experts in the field.

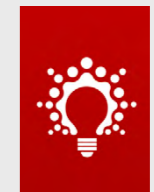
[Read more](#)



Talent – how to identify winners

Economist Tyler Cowen and entrepreneur Daniel Gross discuss the science behind talent and how to spot it in an interview as well as how to nurture it when it's in your hands in this exciting new book.

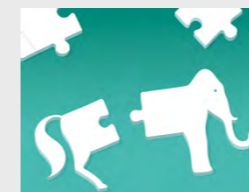
[Read more](#)



Back to work better

Anne-Laure Fayard of NYU's Tandon School of Engineering discusses how we can best redesign offices to suit hybrid working, given that it won't be going away any time soon.

[Read more](#)



The secret of innovation?

In this essay Laura Spinney takes a look at the research behind innovation, what it really means to have a big idea and whether technology can ever have these ideas for us.

[Read more](#)



Working with AI

Will AI take over our jobs? Well, not in the way you think. Take a deeper dive into the future of AI-human collaboration with tech and management experts Thomas Davenport and Steven Miller.

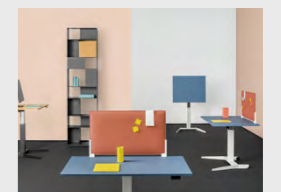
[Read more](#)



Whatever happened to the metaverse?

With excitement for the metaverse withering away, the FT takes a look at why it hasn't been the next big transformative technology.

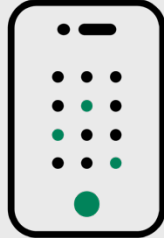
[Read more](#)



Ten furniture designs

Want your office to be practical and look appealing? Dezeen take a look at 10 new furniture designs set to tempt people back into the office.

[Read more](#)



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