

Future Workplace

*Organisations and property owners
are providing flexible service models
and meaningful propositions in spaces,
amenity and culture to deliver
balanced workplaces with the capacity
to evolve with their clientele.*

Introduction

Future Workplace

Workplaces are at an exciting time where organisations and innovative property owners are finding their stride. Organisations have become accustomed to an era where disruption is commonplace and are harnessing learnings from the past decade of rapid innovation. Flexible service models and more meaningful ways of working – that enhance our quality of life rather than diminish it – are now being delivered.

In this report, we explore how property owners are developing new service offerings to take advantage of the needs of both maturing SMEs and fledging freelancers in a context where co-working is not the solution. Organisations are also making efforts to deliver diverse spatial typologies, hospitable amenity, a sensitivity to unique lifestyle preferences, and an authentic stance on environmental and social responsibility. Combined, these factors form a competitive proposition that meets standards set by the first big wave of entrepreneurial culture, as well as Millennial and Gen-Z preferences that often value portfolio-based careers over loyalty. Finally, workplaces are also reviewed in terms of their role as a conveyor in a network facilitating education, skills, partnerships and collectives of talent to solve global challenges.

Regardless of the offering, the most successful workplaces will be those which take an in-beta approach i.e. allowing the space to evolve with their needs and playing an active role in its change. According to Executive Workplace and Change Consultant Neil Usher, author of *The Elemental Workplace*, this requires property leaders to view themselves as leaders of change, to 'lead by a mission to keep the workplace open to evolution and reach the best possible solution for the organisation.

Introduction

Future Workplace

Our key takeaways:

- Property owners are leveraging their existing portfolios and campus workspaces – integrating flexible lease and fit-out models to serve SMEs that have outgrown co-working.
- B2B collaborations are emerging between workspace operators and new service providers for mutual benefit. In this instance, a workspace operator can diversify its offering – sharpening its competitive edge – while the service provider gains access to an established customer base.
- Smart technology, sensors and data collection are communicating the actual usage of workplace amenities, lending the opportunity to reallocate investment and implement systems to improve employees' access to facilities.
- Human-centred hospitality' is guiding the delivery of employee experience in a bid to remain competitive, by appealing to specific lifestyle preferences in family life, gender and daily comforts.
- Workplaces are offering a balance of diverse spatial typologies, bestowing employees with the power to choose the type of workspace most attuned to their emotional sensibilities as well as the task at hand.

Introduction

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Our key takeaways: (continued)

- Social inclusivity and environmental sustainability are expected to be intrinsic and unremarkable parts of company culture that employees can experience spatially, habitually, and through programming.
- Virtual reality and data visualisation platforms are creating meaningful forms of remote collaboration – enabling efficient communications with the saving of time and money – marking a cultural shift in how we value our peers' time.

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How we work

Quick reference

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p.6 Balance and in-beta

p.7 Technology

p.9 Lifestyle

An 'in-beta' approach, developments in virtual reality and a focus on hospitality are influencing how we work and collaborate.

Recent years have shown us that the way we work will be in constant evolution, with an acceptance that changes in technology, lifestyles, staff resourcing and project work will be the norm. As such, there is a plethora of workspace typologies, amenities and modes of collaboration to trial at our disposal.

This chapter documents organisations that are taking an in-beta approach to office design, allowing the space to evolve with their needs, bestowing autonomy to the staff to play a role in this evolution. For technology, new tools in collaborative platforms are enabling immersive remote engagement that allow teams to have more meaningful interactions. Finally, in response to blurred boundaries between work and life, together with high expectations on employee experience, workplaces are delivering highly attuned propositions that speak to specific lifestyle preferences.



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Hayball
Sydney

Balance and in-beta

With consistent disruption in technology and wider industries, coupled with fluctuations in staff resourcing via the gig-economy and evolving project formats, the approach to workplace design and management needs to be fluid. The most progressive organisations and property owners are those that recognise the workplace as an arena that is constantly in-beta and can adapt with its staff and external contextual factors.

Additionally, the concept of ‘balance’ is coming to the fore in workplace design, as a backlash against open plan and a greater empathy towards different emotional sensibilities of workers. This is enabling a variety of spatial typologies and environments in which employees can work comfortably and productively.

A particular company operating in this way is Hayball, an Australian-based architecture firm specialising in the workplace and education sectors. Central to the design of the new Sydney office were principles of collaboration both for the team internally and with the wider industry. Emblematic of Hayball’s culture of inquiry and investigation, the office was designed in consultation with its staff, ascertaining key needs and values. The space was deliberately completed to only 90 per cent upon staff moving in, thus allowing for further changes to take place. Directors Fiona Young and David Tordoff consider the new office to be an ‘enabling space’ that ‘facilitates different possibilities for staff to grow in their role’, as well as having the autonomy to offer solutions that impact the team’s



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Yanzi
Sweden

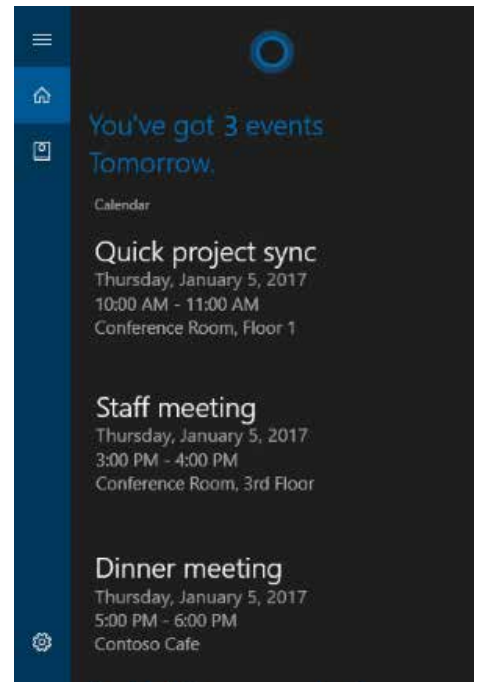
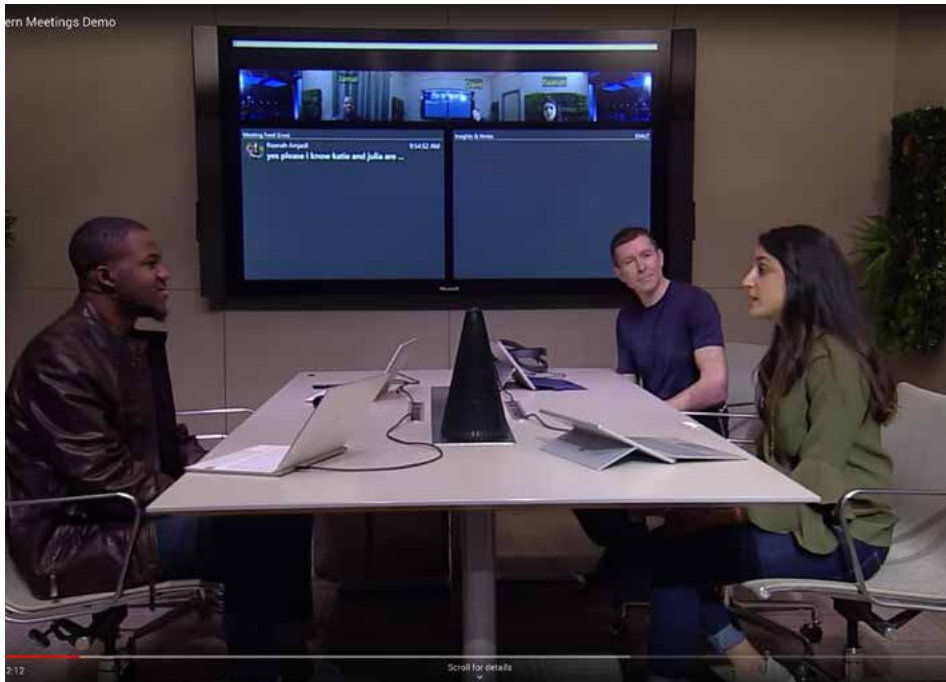
collective wellbeing. For instance, a team member designed and 3D-printed an adjustable and portable laptop stand for every staff member to make daily hot-desking more ergonomic and seamless.

On the whole, the office carries a homely ambience which has lent itself to host industry events in new, more intimate formats. The design of the kitchen bench and collocation to workstations has facilitated round-table discussions, which would have otherwise assumed a more formal lecture format. Embedding this culture of forums has also seen staff take initiative in co-creating new events, thus furthering their own professional development and engagement in the wider industry.

It could be said that the spatial design of the office, diverse typology of workspaces and culture of inquiry have given permission for employees to operate with flexibility and in a way most conducive to their own wellbeing, productivity and workday joie de vivre.

Technology

Innovations in technology will continue to evolve how we engage with our peers, as well as the workplace as a physical entity, seeing both the Internet of Things and the Internet of People. At the scale of the building, new platforms are emerging which create efficiencies in building management and spatial use, optimising access to amenities. And at the individual level, collaborative platforms are coming to the fore to provide more meaningful experiences in remote collaboration.



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Microsoft
Worldwide

Building

In considering the building as a whole, data-collecting sensors are being utilised to optimise space and create day-to-day efficiencies for property owners and their tenants. A particular platform serving this need is Yanzi, which remotely monitors data in humidity, energy usage, room occupancy, and facility usage, including in-room tech and even headcounts in cafeterias.

These measures also translate to the level of employee experience. For instance, a common employee frustration is lack of available meeting rooms. According to Yanzi, 50 per cent of seats in meeting rooms go unused and up to 40 per cent of scheduled meetings are no-shows. In the case of a no-show, a Yanzi sensor will automatically cancel the meeting room booking, making it visibly available for others to use. On the whole, tenants utilising the platform will have a better grasp of the real usage of their workplace, thus lending the opportunity to reallocate investment and implement systems to improve facility access for employees.

On a service level, Yanzi, in partnership with IBM Watson, also offers custom apps for day-to-day employee needs. In partnering with communications company ISS, a concierge app was developed to allow employees to seamlessly order stationery supplies and refreshments for workshops and book taxis.



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Zoku
Amsterdam

Remote collaboration

Looking at remote collaboration, Microsoft is exploring how real-time AI services, Microsoft 365 and virtual assistant Cortana can create opportunities for immersive meetings. For built environment professionals engaging in a design process, 3D models can be represented on-screen or with VR headsets, allowing remote attendees to problem-solve together. Data visualisation tools are also embedded into the 3D-modelling software, enabling users to communicate and toggle between a building's different attributes. While in the past international or interstate travel times may have posed as a barrier to collaboration, such platforms are enabling efficient communications with the saving of time and money. The use of 'virtual attendance' is also allowing experts to be dialled in for a five-minute contribution, also marking a cultural shift in how we value our peers' time.

Lifestyle

Workplaces are continuing to respond to the blurring of work-life boundaries. The most notable shift is one which puts employee experience and lifestyle at the centre – moving from an approach of 'facilities management' to one of human-centred hospitality. This is manifesting in the design and aesthetic of communal amenities, as well as specific propositions for certain audience groups, such as onsite childcare facilities for parents or female-only co-working spaces.



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Patagonia
Ventura

This shift can be pinned down to a number of factors. One is the trickle-down effect of the experience economy and preferences in wellbeing, with the integration end-of-trip facilities, meditation rooms and vegan food options becoming par for course. In line with this is a flip in the power dynamic between employers and employees, where the expectation for a certain level of lifestyle amenity and experience is becoming a means to attract talent and remain competitive.

Hospitality spaces

Workplaces are putting a stronger focus on hospitable amenity to appeal to employee expectations for more comfortable spaces that suit their lifestyle preferences. According to Dialogue, vol. 28, by Gensler, business headquarters would traditionally allocate 3–5 per cent of total space to amenities; now 8–15 per cent is more common.

A place that marries exceptional hospitality and work amenities is [Zoku](#) in Amsterdam, a hybrid accommodation and co-working space for the travelling professional. The diverse amenity and social spaces help new arrivals plug into their business tribe, whilst inviting locals to grow their industry connections. The Social Spaces are more akin to a friend's home, with guests being welcomed at a kitchen bench resplendent with cakes, tea and coffee – a far cry from an austere concierge desk. Similarly, the cafe functions as an open kitchen with domestic design cues and chefs preparing meals in full view. Visitors can work at communal tables or lounges by one of the many fireplaces. Private meeting rooms and event spaces also integrate smoothly with the wider space.



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Ryozan Park
Tokyo

Traditional workspaces can learn from this careful curation of interior architecture, experience and amenities, which work together to create a space that is highly welcoming, comfortable and conducive to both working solo or making new connections.

Childcare spaces

It is no secret that balancing a family, child care and a career can be fraught with challenges. Workplaces are gradually changing to integrate onsite childcare facilities and embed family life as part of their culture.

Outdoor brand Patagonia is leading the trend and has been doing so since 1983 at its Ventura headquarters in California. According to Fast Company, in tracking the success of the program over the past five years, 100 per cent of employees have returned to work after maternity leave, compared to the US average of 20–35 per cent who never return to their previous job. Further to this, the turnover rate for parents who use the childcare facilities is 25 per cent lower than the overall workforce. This clearly shows the positive benefits on employee retention, which could otherwise cost a company time and money in lost productivity, recruitment and training.

Employees have also noted the intangible benefits of having children present. The sound of laughter and playful lunch breaks change the tenor and humanise the space, bringing perspective and a reminder that we are part of a larger ‘village’ and society.



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The Wing
New York

Another similar model with ‘village’ values is the Ryozan Park office space in Tokyo. Members can rent a space on the ‘Family’ level and utilise typical business amenities that are collocated with a play area, kitchen and nursing facilities. Though the space is staffed with childcare professionals, it is not a childcare facility, with parents being responsible for their children at all times. The intent is for parents to share the childminding responsibility, thus building a supportive community. According to co-owner Rachel Ferguson, the space is an evolving concept that is dependent on how the community interacts with one another.

Niche co-working

Niche co-working operators that appeal to specific entrepreneurial tribes are also emerging. One of the most prevalent in the UK and US is the movement for female-only co-working spaces, providing an alternative from typically male-dominated spaces.

One of the most visually lush is The Wing in New York. In addition to flexible workspaces, The Wing has curated a culture of female empowerment and support with its ‘No Man’s Land’ podcast, extensive program of events, a library of all-female authors and amenities such as lactation rooms and ‘The Little Wing’ onsite childcare facilities. The spatial design is markedly feminine with soft furnishings, curved forms, warm ambient lighting and edgy pops of colour.



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The Riveter
New York

The success of The Wing can be pinned down to its clarity and follow-through of its brand values, in which members can see themselves reflected and enjoy a comfortable forum to share their whole selves.

Taking a similar stance is Seattle-based The Riveter, the female-forward co-working space which, by contrast, welcomes men. Speaking to US ABC News, founder Amy Nelson says that a big part of their efforts to change the dynamic for women entrepreneurs and business owners is involving all genders in that experience or ‘nothing will change’. In this sense we can see co-working propositions playing a role in shifting wider societal paradigms through the vehicle of work-lifestyle preferences.

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Networks

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p.15 B2B collaborations

p.16 Niche Incubators

p.17 International networks

Networks in B2B collaborations, niche incubators and urban innovation centres are becoming powerhouses of knowledge-sharing, furthering both individual and global business development.

The maturity of co-working spaces, social media and start-up culture has placed a bigger value on networks and knowledge-sharing, for individuals and global businesses. As a result, we are seeing workplaces become campuses for learning and collaboration.

On a micro level where entrepreneurs require new business connections and mentoring, co-working spaces are partnering with training providers to sharpen their own proposition and leverage each other's networks. Similarly, niche incubators that support entrepreneurs in a specific sector are emerging, thereby pooling complementary human capital and facilities.

Within a more global context, there is a growing urgency to respond to the challenges of major cities through workshopping past learnings and devising scalable solutions. Increasingly, urban innovation centres are playing the role of the connector – facilitating cross-disciplinary connections, as well as serving as nodes for intercity and international collaborations. Such spaces also enable business travellers to identify and connect with their peers efficiently when in a new city.



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Zambesi
Sydney

B2B Collaborations

With co-working reaching maturity, B2B collaborations are emerging between operators and new service providers for mutual benefit. In this instance, a co-working operator can diversify its offering, sharpening its competitive edge, while the service provider has access to an established customer base. Where economies of scale are present, such collaborations can leverage global networks.

A recent partnership between WeWork and training organisation Zambesi represents such a collaboration. Zambesi's target market are ambitious individuals and business teams looking to advance their entrepreneurial acumen through workshops led by renowned tech-industry professionals.

WeWork's clientele naturally presents a goldmine of professionals hungry for such skills. The partnership is part of a global expansion plan, providing up to 280 locations where Zambesi workshops could be held. Talking to Smart Company, co-founder Rebekah Campbell likens Zambesi more to a 'marketplace' than an educational institution, with WeWork functioning as a global campus. International programs would leverage the local networks of industry leaders to run the courses in their given location.

Here we see the potential co-working spaces can hold as conveyors of like-minded communities that enable a complementary business to expand globally.



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New Inc.
New York

Niche incubators

Co-working, incubator and accelerator spaces are becoming more and more niche, with specific sectors taking lessons learned from the tech industry in the creation of their own offering. Institutions are also stepping in to run not-for-profit spaces, leveraging a network of expertise to grow the creative capital in their locale, where in the past this happened more organically through grassroots organisations.

One such example is NEW INC., a cultural incubator run by the New Museum in New York. The compelling proposition for members is the network and resources afforded by the museum, in an otherwise cliquey, difficult-to-access sector. The annual intake of 100 members is supported by a set of mentors with expertise in the fields of arts, culture, design and technology. Mentorship is facilitated across group critiques, inclusionary practice workshops, critical discourse and presentations which allow peer-to-peer connections.

Members also work in close proximity to museum programming, anchor tenant the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (GSAPP) Incubator and industry affiliates IdeasCity and Rhizome. This collocation of creative arts organisations gives members exposure and access to a community of complementary businesses to expand their network. Membership is competitive, with it being judged on application, ultimately ensuring a cohort that is hungry and represents the edit of the industry's future.



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BLOXHUB
Copenhagen

International networks

Co-working spaces and urban innovation centres are increasingly playing a networking role for international partnerships and cross-disciplinary collaborations. A key driver for this is the need for cities to collaborate and respond to ever complex urban challenges, such as density, climate change and mobility.

Concurrent to this is the emergence of niche co-working chains with propositions that support intercity and international collaborations. Such spaces allow business travellers to integrate into their new location and immediately connect with their unique network. According to the Gensler Design Forecast: Shaping the Future of Cities, urban areas contribute more than 80 per cent of global GDP and are where innovation economies locate – thus, the best urban workplaces are those which ‘develop a synergistic relationship with their cities – leveraging existing assets for their employees’.

A particular example operating in this way is BLOXHUB, an urban innovation centre in Copenhagen, founded by the Ministry of Business, the City of Copenhagen and Real Dania.

One of BLOXHUB’s core values is its commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number 11, which is to ‘make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’. With this intention, BLOXHUB Director Torben Klitgaard views the organisation’s role as being a conveyor of cross-disciplinary consortiums that develop scalable solutions to global urban challenges. For this to work,



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BLOXHUB
Copenhagen

Klitgaard has deliberately curated BLOXHUB's workspace with businesses which share a mindset of generosity and willingness to be part of a network that is greater than oneself. To maximise impact, external individuals and businesses in the community can become members of BLOXHUB and contribute to its forums and events.

This is a model utilised by other major cities, such as London with the Future Cities Catapult, and New York's UrbanXLab, among others. The emergence of these spaces with robust propositions of co-working, consortium facilitation and direct access to subject matter experts serves to create global nodes all engaged in similar topics. This concentrated hub of human capital and facilities is beneficial for intercity collaborations and travelling professionals.

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New Service Models

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p.21 Leasing

p.22 Third spaces

Owners of hospitality venues and workspaces are capturing new audiences and creating revenue streams with innovative service offerings.

Demands for higher levels of flexibility from entrepreneurs and big businesses alike are being met with new service models, in traditional office buildings and also spaces not conventionally utilised for work.

For traditional office towers, spatial allocation and lease structures are undergoing a shake-up as business growth and contraction are increasingly in flux. This greater need for flexibility is a consequence of a number of economic changes. Former heavyweight companies are shrinking – according to Innosight, the average lifespan of companies in the S&P 500 is expected to drop to 14 years by 2026. . Larger corporations are also faced with uncertain employee headcounts, marked by millennial preferences for portfolio-based careers.

According to CBRE director of workplace strategy Nicole Fitzgerald, 30 per cent of Deloitte's workforce was made up of contractors, called the 'open talent network' to support the surge in project-based work (cited in an article by Alison Cheung, reporting on the Global Co-working Unconference Conference Australia 2018). In the face of these changes, flexible spatial typologies and lease terms are being offered.

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New Service Models

Outside of traditional workplaces, third spaces in the form of cafes and work clubs are being utilised for intermittent bursts of work or client meetings. The cafe culture of solopreneurs continues, with new platforms emerging which offer a more structured relationship between hospitality venues and solo workers that require a place to work for the day. Such models drive revenue for venues in off-peak periods whilst offering an affordable format for this cohort of workers. At the more premium end of the market, work clubs present an impressive space for client meetings or merely a comfortable touchdown spot between errands.



Storey, British Land
London

Leasing

Successful start-ups and SMEs are also outgrowing co-working spaces but do not want to be locked into long-term leases that might not suit their changing needs. Agile property owners are leveraging their established portfolios and integrating flexible service and workspace models to fill this gap in the market. A particular organisation doing this is British Land's Storey, which offers office spaces with flexible leases within its four competitive Central London campuses. Storey's key customers are tech companies of 20–70 employees, as well as larger organisations seeking short-term project space, which still want the benefits of a managed space but a level of privacy and an ability to express their personal brand.

According to Chris Grigg, Chief Executive of British Land, being the property owner means one can deliver more control over the service customers receive. Also advantageous is the integration of such a model into existing workplace campuses, offering tenants access to lifestyle amenities and proximity to businesses typically reserved for larger organisations.

Another similar example in Sydney is Dexus's pilot initiative SuiteX, occupying a floor of one of their A-grade CBD buildings. The pilot is for new tenants but also serves as a complement to tenants at the primary asset, Dexus Place, who may require overflow space.

Spatially, an entire floor is converted into ten modular suites, where occupants can quickly flex from six desks up to a whole floor, made



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Dexus Suite X
Sydney

possible by demountable walls. From a customer perspective, Dexus has eschewed the ‘concierge’ model utilised by WeWork and other managed spaces to allow their tenants to have a greater sense of ownership of their own space. The modular space also keeps fit-out costs low.

According to Colliers Office Leasing Executive Chelsea Anstee, the positioning of a ‘suite’ delivers on being both more private and spacious by offering an individual 10 square metres of net lettable area (or NLA), compared to the 6 square metres per person usually offered in co-working spaces. The price point also reflects this, costing more than co-working but competitive with more premium providers such as Sydney’s Work Club.

Laura Peterson at Dexus says tenants sign a licence agreement, akin to ‘Terms and Conditions’, rather than a traditional leasing agreement. This allows the lease process to be streamlined for smaller tenants who only require the space on a short-term basis. Such a model allows the property owner to engage with smaller tenants and thereby extend its client base and futureproof the asset.

Third spaces

Outside of traditional workplaces, hospitality venues are opening their doors in off-peak periods to support fledging solopreneurs and digital nomads. A key example of this is TwoSpace, an Australian-based platform connecting freelancers to inner-city cafes and restaurants. The platform operates on an affordable monthly



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TwoSpace
Global

membership model, ranging from AUD\$129–\$199 per month, depending on use. This gives customers access to TwoSpace’s network of spaces, onsite amenities and various partner discounts in business services.

For freelance workers, such a model fills the gap where office environments may be too rigid, in terms of financial commitment, lease terms and lifestyle preferences. For the venue owner, Twospace enables a new income stream and access to a demographic of customers not previously reached. On a wider city level, this utilisation of space builds community, vibrancy and activation in otherwise closed venues.

Co-working spaces are also realising the value of TwoSpace as a value-add to their tenant offering. This is the case for co-working space Tank Stream Labs, which now offers their tenants access to all of TwoSpace’s venues, meeting their flexible work-life needs. Conversely, TwoSpace members can also access Tank Stream Labs and connect with Sydney’s start-up community. Such mutually beneficial partnerships are emerging between complementary providers, as covered in Chapter 2: Networks.

Similar to Two Space are ‘work clubs’ which serve as a third business space for top-tier professionals. Work clubs fill the gap between private members clubs and co-working. It is also a move for private leisure clubs to stay relevant and present an additional level of lifestyle appeal to their audiences.



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Clubhouse
London

One particular example is Clubhouse, a workspace which holds four premium locations in Central London. Most members have primary offices elsewhere and use the club lounge and flexible meeting areas to meet clients or catch up on work between commitments. The calibre of service, amenity and plush interior design allow members to set a strong impression for a business meeting in a way that a cafe simply cannot. Members can opt in for a minimum of 1=2 days per month, serving the casual ‘drop-in’ user.

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Sustainability

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p.27 Environmental
p.29 Social

Companies are taking a more holistic approach to environmental and social responsibility, integrating these with employee experience.

In recent years, big brands have had to respond to the rise in ethically minded consumers who demand an authentic and tangible stance on environmental and social responsibility – both in organisational practice and product delivery.

The same now rings true for workplaces. Where a new build or retrofit is possible, organisations are aspiring to reach new standards in environmental performance, and are reaping the financial benefits too. According to studies by Ernst & Young and the US Green Building Council, sustainable buildings record a 19 per cent increase in ROI and a 24 per cent faster lease-up rate.

Organisations can also meaningfully deliver at the level of employee experience. According to The Gensler 2016 Workplace Survey, employees in purpose-driven work are four times more likely to attribute job satisfaction with organisational mission rather than compensation. Gen Z in particular want to work for companies that share their values, are committed to a higher purpose and where gender and social inclusivity are an intrinsic and unremarkable part of workplace culture.

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Sustainability

The most progressive companies are breaking existing building codes to deliver on inclusive design for employees with physical challenges. In other arenas, it means having targets for creating opportunities for people in under-supported locales or providing programming where employees can be active contributors to the surrounding area.



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Etsy HQ
New York

Environmental

Building

There are a number of industry certifications that office towers and workplaces can aspire to uphold, such as fulfilling standards in renewable energy, waste management, use of healthy materials and net zero energy, among other measures. Some organisations are taking a more holistic approach, using environmental sustainability initiatives to actively express their core values and collaborate with their marketplace or employees to realise industry certifications.

One particular example is the award-winning Etsy headquarters in Brooklyn, New York by Gensler. According to a statement, at 20,900 square metres, the building is the largest Living Building Challenge Petal-certified commercial building in the world and aspires to be a fully independent regenerative ecosystem. What sets Etsy's process apart is its collaboration with its community of makers. For instance, more than half of the furniture was crafted by designers who sell on Etsy, and done so in collaboration with the Forest Stewardship Council and the International Living Future Institute to ensure the furniture was Declare labelled. Such a process expresses the Etsy brand of being truly handmade and community centric.



Facebook HQ
California

Employee experience

While workplaces can adhere to green building certifications, utilising renewable energy and reducing waste, sustainability can also be implemented at the level of employee experience, allowing daily participation in environmental practices.

An excellent case in point is the Facebook headquarters at Menlo Park, California. The organisation has implemented a transport program to reduce single-car trips. Over half of its employees are said to take advantage of shuttle buses, public transport incentives, cycling facilities, resources for ride-sharing and carpooling. The services also go the extra mile with an onsite laundry, bike repair shop and the flexibility to take bikes on shuttles. The diverse options aim to make sustainability the 'easy choice'.

Facebook is also an active contributor to its surrounding community, with a number of programs for employees to volunteer in. One in particular was a collaboration with the Menlo Park Rotary Club to build the Belle Haven Community Garden. The garden is now a thriving resource for the community containing more than 20 free-to-use planting beds. The company also hosts a weekly mobile farmers' market which provides fresh produce to nearby residents. Such initiatives position the organisation as an integrated part of the area rather than an insular gated site that doesn't engage with its community.



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Westpac
Sydney

Social

In the workplace

The field of sustainable communities and social impact is wide reaching, often meaning different things in different contexts. For Nesta Impact Investments in the UK, sustainable communities are those which enable inclusion, ‘wellbeing and quality of life of all their residents, through providing access to resources and services that meet their diverse set of needs’. Part of this is the development of local economies, the empowerment of people and their reliance on each other to prosper. Work and workplaces have a huge role to play in this arena, both within the workplace itself, as well as at the scale of a neighbourhood or borough.

One organisation leading the game for social inclusion is Australian bank and financial services provider Westpac. Embedded in the operations of the company is ABLE (‘Assisting Better Lives for Everyone’), an Employee Action Group, which ensures accessibility is integrated into initiatives, products and services for employees, customers and the community. One area of delivery is the design of Westpac’s workplaces, with a particular exemplar being the corporate office in Barangaroo, Sydney. According to the Accessibility Action Plan, the design of the space required going ‘above and beyond’ the Building Code of Australia, to equitably cater for the maximum number of people in an inclusive and intuitive way. Of the adjustable workstations, 95 per cent support wheelchair users and people of varying heights, and also the preference to stand.



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Peckham Levels
London

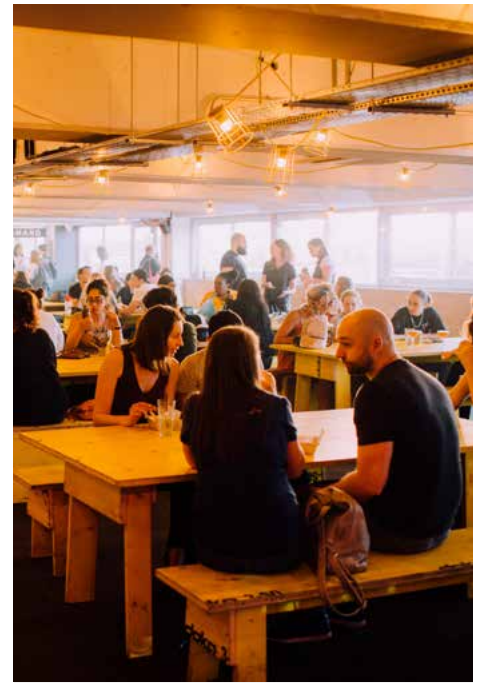
Meeting rooms have non-reflective surfaces for people with visibility challenges, while acoustic panelling and hearing augmentation are provided for those with hearing impairments. Kitchen amenities are also designed for the safe and independent use by people in wheelchairs, with sink cut-backs and low-height appliances.

Where the Westpac model has high credibility is in its reviewing of the design every three years to evolve and adapt to the needs of its employees, as opposed to a 'set and forget' approach.

In the neighbourhood

Sustainable communities can operate on the level of supporting hyper-local entrepreneurs and businesses with subsidised spaces and incentives, specifically to build the social and economic capital in an immediate locale.

One particular initiative is Peckham Levels, a repurposed multi-storey car park which is being used for creative and co-working spaces as well as cultural events – fulfilling Southwark Council's objectives to support local employment and the arts. The grassroots initiative ensures that 75 per cent of members are from Peckham, and 85 per cent from the local borough of Southwark. A 'Creators in Residence' program also offers studios at a 65 per cent discount, to remove the barrier to entry for fledgling local talent.



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Peckham Levels
London

To build social connections and education, all members are required to invest one hour per week of their time across initiatives in skills sharing, training or by simply lending a hand on live collaborations. The site has only been in operation for one year, with success and impact yet to be measured; however, the level of incentivised support and concentration of local businesses is certainly setting the best possible conditions for local communities to build their businesses.

Conclusion

Putting It into Practice

Following are key takeaways for property professionals who wish to apply the insights offered in this trend.

Get clear on usage

Workplace amenities are not often fully utilised in the way anticipated, as can be the case for meeting rooms, cafes, programming and energy resources. Consider investing in sensor and data-collection methods to gain a clear picture of how your asset is being utilised. This will provide insight into opportunities for reallocating investment, optimising building performance, saving energy costs, and delivering tenant experiences that are more targeted.

Plan for flexibility

The fluctuating size of project teams, subject matter of work and changes in technology mean that workspaces often require customisation and flexible lease terms. Where appropriate, offer short-term leases of six to 18 months for certain types of tenants. Such a model could be supported by workspaces that are versatile, modular or demountable, allowing the ability to flex and change with ease. Invest low initially, taking an approach of testing and iterating with spaces and services to see what proves successful.

Conclusion

Putting It into Practice

Partner up to add value

Workplaces and their employees come with a diverse set of cultural, career and lifestyle needs. Consider the complementary organisations which have attractive value propositions that can be embedded or connected to your asset and enjoyed by your tenants. Think health and wellness, career education providers or memberships to offsite spaces.

Take a leadership role on social and environmental sustainability

Prospective employees and tenants are filtering organisations and assets based on their commitment to social and environmental sustainability. Review your asset for areas where social and environmental practices can be embedded, get clear on the level of investment required, take a holistic approach, ensuring the solution can be delivered for simple and intuitive use, and engage tenants or employees in a process of change. Programming within the building or in collaboration with surrounding communities is another way to actively contribute on this front.

About

Brickfields Consulting

Brickfields Consulting delivers customer and market insights that enable dynamic and innovative property investment solutions.

Over the past seven years, we have developed a reputation in the property sector for unlocking project possibilities through a progressive and adaptable mindset. Our commissions involve a complex challenge which requires our clients to embrace change and seize future opportunities.

By partnering with the owners and operators of physical assets, we provide the insight through research which ensures that places develop a competitive advantage, allowing them to command a price premium and achieve financial returns above the market.

Brickfields Consulting offers a range of services covering four broad capabilities: user research, market strategy, customer experience and design activation. We provide custom strategy solutions as well as standard research and strategic tools.

Appendix

Credits

Our Team (Alphabetical order)

Researchers

Stephanie Bhim
Julie Flestado
David Grant
Heidi Krohn
Jeanette Lambert
Belinda Lord
Stefanie Matosevic

Writers

Stephanie Bhim

Editor

Ginny Grant

Design and web development

Adam Lawdor-Annesley

Photography and video

Stephanie Bhim
Julie Flestado

Appendix

Image credits

Image credits (In order of appearance)

Hayball, Lochland Brookman

Yanzi

Microsoft

Zoku

Patagonia

Ryozan Park

The Wing

The Riveter, Amy Galbraith,

Zambesi

NewINC.

BLOXHUB

Storey

SuiteX

TwoSpace

Clubhouse

Etsy

Facebook

Westpac

Peckham Levels

Thank you.

*We hope you enjoyed Trend #56 of
The Place Report. Keep your eyes
peeled in the coming months for
Trend #57: Future Neighbourhoods*