



2020 TRENDS IN WORKPLACE DESIGN +

INTRODUCTION +

As a new decade dawns, Insightful Environments are looking forward to the future of office design in a series of interviews with some influential figures from the industry.

But it's also a good time to look back and reflect on how things have changed for office workers in the first years of the 21st century.

TECHNOLOGY FUELS THE AGE OF AGILE +

In the last ten years technology has continued to transform our working lives. As workers became more mobile, it grew evident they didn't need to be glued to their desks in order to be productive. Individuals and teams could always be connected and working wherever they were. The pace of innovation and the constant reshaping of teams; saw a shift to more hot desking, with open plan and collaborative workspaces that supported high intensity, agile working. All this meant that business needs could be met more efficiently and effectively.

But, as we enter 2020, what is becoming clear is that the holistic needs of workers themselves have often been neglected.

The age of hyperconnectivity and hypercompetition has been a curse as well as a boon. Burnout has become an everyday reality and a real cost for business. Skill shortages and churn have meant companies having to work harder than ever to attract and retain great people.

But if changes in the workplace have been responsible for some of the new pressures and tensions faced by workers in the last ten years, then it now seems the workplace can offer at least part of the solution.

In this ebook we look ahead to what those solutions might look like - and how the workplace design of the future promises to foreground our sense of wellbeing, purpose and productivity as individuals and as teams.



THE EXPERT VIEW OF 2020 AND BEYOND +

For this ebook we spoke to some of the architects and interior designers at the forefront of innovation in workplace design, about the trends they predict will become more important over the coming year and beyond.

The theme that underpins almost all of their thoughts is a focus on improving the workplace experience for employees to drive greater creativity and productivity in more sustainable ways.

In everything from furnishing, to workspace layout and the integration of technology, all our experts reflected that we are moving towards an era of ever more human-centred design. An era where our workplaces can flex around us to support us in the shifting range of contemplative, collaborative and focused tasks that make up our working lives. And a working environment that is more sensitive to our need for respite from cognitive and sensory overload.

A NEW CHALLENGE TO FACE +

As our experts noted, one of the biggest challenges emerging for businesses today is the huge demographic shift taking place within society. For the first time ever we are seeing four and even five demographics working together, as the aging population means people are working longer, and, and a new generation of young professionals are entering the market. There is a greater mix of experience and expectations in the workplace than ever before, promising more innovation and inspiration, but potentially more conflict.

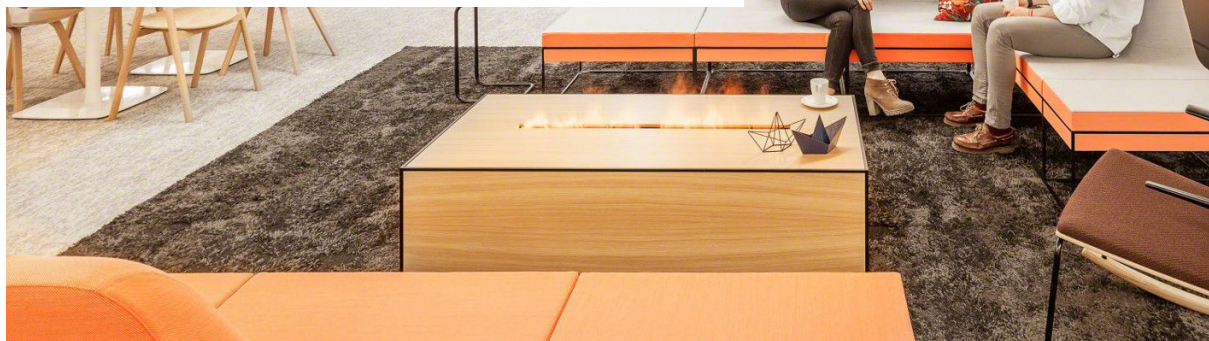
All this is underpinning an urgent shift to environments where everyone can thrive and be valued, regardless of their personality, learning styles, and neurological diversity.

This, many of our experts argue, is the key to developing a more creative, more fulfilled and more productive workforce over all.

This new era has significant implications for the world of workplace design. As we plan for 2020 and beyond, these are the trends that stand to make the most immediate impact on the ability of modern businesses to innovate and prosper.



In everything from furnishing, to workspace layout and the integration of technology, all our experts reflected that we are moving towards an era of ever more human-centred design.



“PEOPLE FINALLY MATTER” +

DEEPAK PARMAR
DESIGN DIRECTOR, MCM ARCHITECTURE

Deepak Parmar is an experienced Design Director and Creative Lead at MCM Architecture, an integrated design consultancy based in London. Drawing on insights and expertise from architecture, workplace strategy, behavioural change and interior design, MCM delivers spaces that contribute to business growth. People are at the core of their approach, with every project designed to provide a holistic experience that puts the user at the forefront.



With a background in interior design, Deepak has been working in corporate workplace design for over ten years. His passion for innovation means he's constantly challenging and pushing the boundaries of what a workplace should be.

Q LOOKING BACK ON 2019, WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT THE WAY CLIENTS WERE THINKING ABOUT THEIR WORKSPACES?

“Clients are starting to understand the importance of thinking holistically about a project. It's no longer just a space thing; it encompasses the brand, technology, and most importantly, people. In the last five years, organisations have started to realise they need a space that will attract the best talent, and this has been the reason behind many of our clients' need to revamp their office. This has been really refreshing for us.”

Q WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN WORKPLACE DESIGN THAT YOU THINK WILL DOMINATE INDUSTRY THINKING IN 2020?

ENHANCED SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

“Words like climate change and sustainability have been around for years, but it's only now that there seems to be a real push towards doing something. The word 'crisis' is being used and people like Greta Thunberg are pushing the global movement. We're setting big targets and unless big businesses get on board, we're not going to achieve that.”



▲ The reception area at the new Havas KX building, designed by MCM Architecture, features reclaimed timber sourced from the old Moorfield Eye Hospital. Havas have used it to create a strong narrative around their sustainability commitments.

“More and more organisations are putting their stake in the ground and committing to doing something meaningful. Big organisations like JLL have committed to a net zero carbon in their workplaces by 2030. HSBC has committed to sourcing 100 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2030.”

“There’s a commercial aspect to it, but this doesn’t seem to be the key driver. More and more clients are looking to become more responsible. It’s also something they are being driven to do because of changing mindsets in the type of talent they’re trying to attract. Younger generations coming into the workplace want to live in a sustainable way and want to work for an organisation that truly believes in that.”



▲ *People like working in spaces that make them feel good with lighter, brighter, more natural materials, and lots of plants coming into place.*

INCLUSIVITY AS THE NORM

“Inclusivity is another topic that’s gathering more momentum. There are still parts of architecture and design that are designed around the average man, of which no such thing exists. Simple things like what the temperature is set at is the biggest bugbear most people have with their office; it’s too hot or it’s too cold. This has created a lot of dialogue around control within the workplace and being able to adapt the space you’re working with.”

“Disability is another hot topic. Thinking inclusively around a building goes from simple things like signage and wayfinding, all the way up to what a typical meeting room setup is. When I walk through the door and I’m a wheelchair user and there’s chairs in the way and I need to get to the front because I’m presenting, how does that affect my experience of that room? It’s actually quite a large subject and it splits into three things: physical disability, sensory disability, and cognitive disability.”

“You can’t design the perfect workspace for absolutely everyone. It’s impossible. But if you have that inclusivity hat on you can make a conscious effort to consider all the different elements of it during the design stage.”

PEOPLE FINALLY MATTER

“Organisations are understanding that their employees’ health is the primary objective when designing the workspace. Keeping their people healthy is beneficial to them commercially and people like working in spaces that make them feel good. I’ve noticed design trends leaning much more towards lighter, brighter, more natural materials, and lots of plants coming into place.”



▲ *The new Havas KX building brought together 24 brands and 1,700 staff across 15 London sites to create an innovative and dynamic 'London village'.*

"Going into 2020, I think what's becoming even more apparent is the mental health aspect of wellbeing. We're going through a mental health crisis and more organisations are starting to understand that their environment plays a large part in that. We can help people feel much more comfortable and less stressed at work through the physical environment."

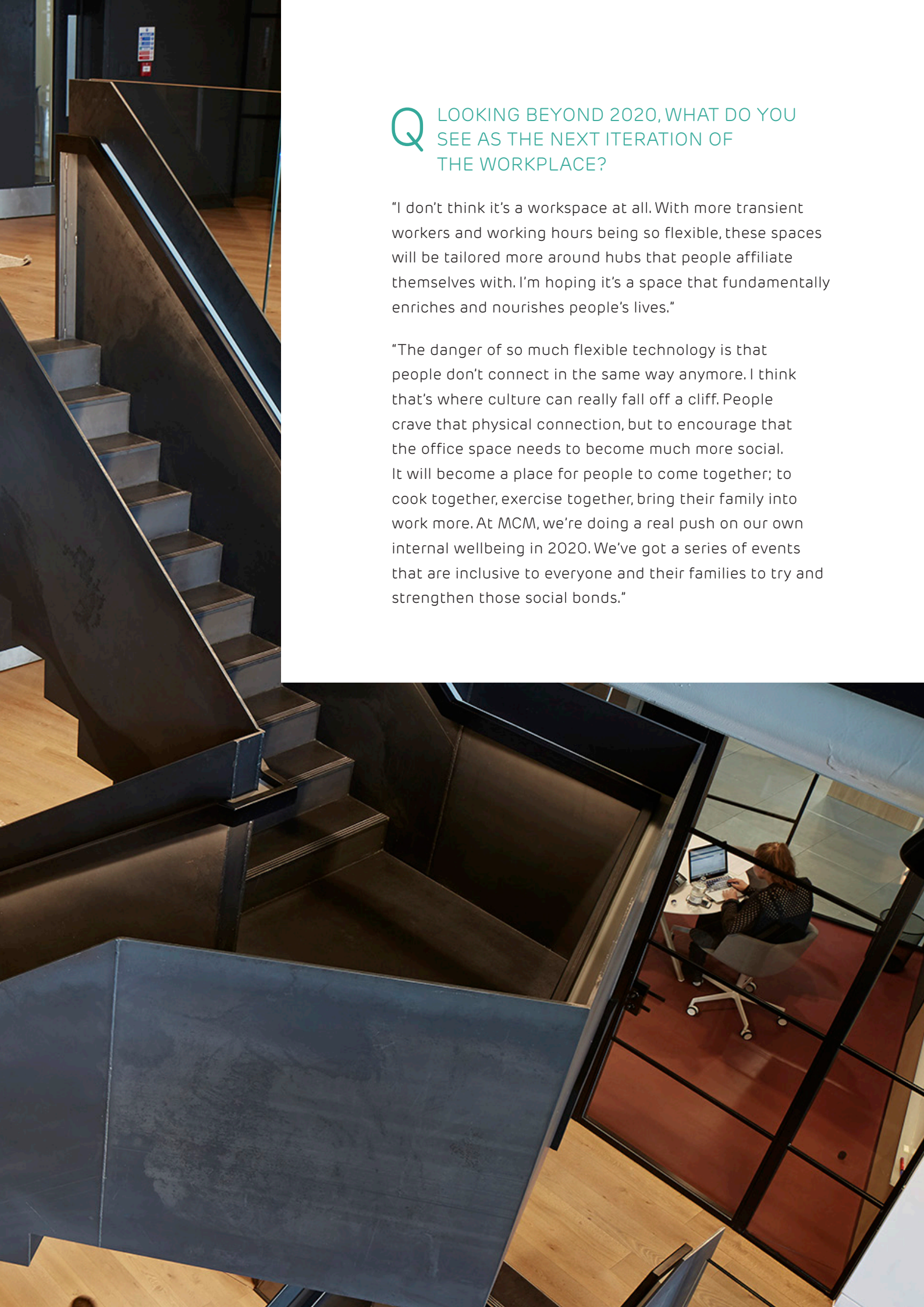
"More and more clients are also realising that a proportion of their workforce are struggling with the aspects of open-plan working or too much visual stimulation within the workplace. We've designed in a number of what we call library spaces within offices. It's a much calmer space, where you may still have four or five people working, but there's less technology involved."

THE FRICTIONLESS WORKPLACE

"There has been a real shift in design to put more focus on user experience over functionality, and I expect this to be a big theme for 2020. It's about designing experiences, not environments. The emphasis is on making sure that from the moment a person walks through the door to the moment they leave, that every touchpoint is a positive experience."

"It's creating a new narrative around workspaces. What's the emotional aspect of how people perceive space? How do you create meaningful experiences? This differs from client to client, and can only really happen through extensive client engagement."

"The biggest challenge in this is creating a space that works for everyone. What works for one user doesn't always work for the next. People want to feel in control of their own space, so when I look at good workplace design, fundamentally, it offers choice and an element of adaptability for users. It's the same idea activity-based working was born from; having the ability to change the space to enable you to get your work done."



Q LOOKING BEYOND 2020, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE NEXT ITERATION OF THE WORKPLACE?

"I don't think it's a workspace at all. With more transient workers and working hours being so flexible, these spaces will be tailored more around hubs that people affiliate themselves with. I'm hoping it's a space that fundamentally enriches and nourishes people's lives."

"The danger of so much flexible technology is that people don't connect in the same way anymore. I think that's where culture can really fall off a cliff. People crave that physical connection, but to encourage that the office space needs to become much more social. It will become a place for people to come together; to cook together, exercise together, bring their family into work more. At MCM, we're doing a real push on our own internal wellbeing in 2020. We've got a series of events that are inclusive to everyone and their families to try and strengthen those social bonds."

“A NEW EMPHASIS ON LOCALITY AND PERSONALITY” +



TIM HOOKHAM
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR & INTERIOR DESIGNER,
AXIS ARCHITECTURE

Tim Hookham is Associate Director and Interior Designer at AXIS, an employee-owned architecture and design practice based in Sheffield. With a team of creative architects and designers, AXIS offer a diverse set of skills to deliver projects in all sectors nationwide, covering commercial, residential, and hospitality.

Tim has had a prominent role in the success of the interiors and retail design team. His knowledge and enthusiasm for design has helped create practical and contemporary schemes for the likes of HSBC, Sheffield Hallam University, and H&M.

Q LOOKING BACK ON 2019, WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT THE WAY CLIENTS WERE THINKING ABOUT THEIR WORKSPACES?

“I’ve seen a big trend over the last 12 months of clients wanting to spend more on what the staff see in the workspace. There’s been more emphasis on engaging the staff and taking them on a journey, and trying to push the boundaries with regards to the way things look.”

“There seems to be a much more relaxed culture and atmosphere about the way offices are today. I think that’s down to the way people dress too. You don’t see half as many people in suits and ties as you did ten or twenty years ago. We’ve become more flexible in the way we work, even down to people working from their bedroom in their pyjamas. We’re going that one step further to bring that relaxed element into the workplace as well.”

Q WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN WORKPLACE DESIGN THAT YOU THINK WILL DOMINATE INDUSTRY THINKING IN 2020?

MAKING THE MOST OF THE LOCALITY

“There was a stage where you could go into any office anywhere in the world, and the meeting rooms would be named Hong Kong, Dubai and Chicago. They weren’t necessarily named Barnsley, Wakefield and Shipley. The space wasn’t about the people

and where they work. But there's been a real shift in recent years towards creating your own culture. People are proud of where they're from, and I think we'll start to see that much more in office environments."

"Supporting your local community is also high on many people's agenda, and there is a place for this in the workplace as well. If an office can endorse that they're working with local suppliers, there's a strong connection there. Artwork can be sourced using local charities, artists and photographers, with photographs of local areas. It ties into giving people a sense of pride over where they work and live, and this is important for attracting and retaining staff."

AXIS Architecture led the interior design for HSBC's new Global IT Hub in Sheffield, the first occupation in the Heart of the City 2 regeneration of the city centre. The building design is enriched by the city's heritage and pride, with design cues from local landscapes, artists and communities.

The central atrium is the heart of the building. The feature staircase unites all floors physically, while the collaboration spaces woven into its flights and the auditorium space bring people together socially.

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CREATING OUTDOOR SPACES FOR ALL YEAR ROUND

"I expect to see more organisations using a modern expression of outdoor spaces. We're already seeing more use of biophilic design to bring the outside in, but there is much we can use of the outdoor space to inspire people or give them an opportunity to escape from the phones and slow down."

"A lot of people have garden sheds they use as a home office, and there's an element of this we can bring into the workplace. You can create similar environments in the outdoor spaces within an office complex, providing a breath of fresh air and giving the impression that you're way from work."

"There was a stage when we treated people with cotton wool. We couldn't let people onto the roof terrace because of the risks associated with that. This is the next step in this more relaxed working environment that we're seeing."

CONTEMPLATIVE SPACES

"With wellbeing high on the agenda for many organisations, and a recognition of how the workspace can support the physical and emotional health of employees', spaces for people to go and destress away from technology are becoming more popular."

"The trouble is, we're experiencing requests after people move into these spaces to put plug sockets and desks in. It's a cultural thing, in that people are so used to having a screen in front of them all the time that when they leave that environment they feel lost. It's challenging people's mindsets that they have to be typing away to be productive."

"I think this year we'll start to see this shift in mindset and these spaces will find their place in the office culture. Going back ten years, putting a prayer room in an office was a new thing, and now it's standard. We're putting in parenting rooms where mums can go back to work and express, and five years ago that would have been seen as extreme. So I think these contemplative spaces will find a place, though not necessarily straight away."

The no-tech zone at HSBC Grosvenor House, flagged by a large tree, is a space for people to relax and refuel. Furniture that supports lounging helps workers recharge while also aiding creative thinking.



▲ Quirky, bold colours add an element of fun -
HSBC Sheffield

FINISHES FROM THE 60S & 70S

“There is certainly a nod to the 60s and 70s in a lot of the furniture trends we’re seeing right now. There’s more appreciation of old and vintage styles and a lot of the classics are finding their way back onto the market. We’re seeing a 60s and 70s style in some of the chairs, the textures and surfaces, as well as the look and feel of the space.”

“It’s an aesthetic thing; bold colours, bold prints, things that clash but in an intelligent way. It’s about being quirky and not black and white; including a splash of old school finishes against something that’s very contemporary so that it’s not so bland. It brings an element of fun too.”

“I think it links to this contemplation time away from screens. These influences from the 60s and 70s are almost taking people back to a simpler time, when nobody had computers or phones.”

Q LOOKING BEYOND 2020, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE NEXT ITERATION OF THE WORKPLACE?

“What’s interesting is, depending on where you work, I think the workplace will change really quickly, or it won’t change much at all. Organisations in a highly condensed city where space is at a premium will be forced to push the desk ratios, to encourage people to think outside the box, and to be more flexible and creative. Agile working spaces will really come to life here.”

“THE ‘ME’ WITHIN ‘WE’” +

GALE MOUTREY
GLOBAL VICE PRESIDENT,
BRAND EXPERIENCE + WORKPLACE
INNOVATION, STEELCASE

Based in Toronto, Gale Moutrey is a Global VP at Steelcase and leads the global teams responsible for all brand, shareholder and employee communications and experiences. Gale also leads the team responsible for workplace innovation.

Through their comprehensive portfolio of innovative products, and together with their extensive partner network, Steelcase creates spaces where ideas flourish and people thrive.



Q WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN WORKPLACE DESIGN THAT YOU THINK WILL DOMINATE INDUSTRY THINKING IN 2020?

TEAMING

“Teaming is going to become increasingly important, and so is supporting the way people can work in those teams. Ideally, we want to give people the tools so they can come together quickly. Not just a big shared table; but whiteboards, places to tack things and use sticky notes, and where you can bring in digital technology.”

“But what we really want is to give people all of this and let them keep a nest. Not necessarily a desk, but somewhere that’s their own. People don’t miss boring, grey cubicles that make them look like a number. But I think they do miss having something that is theirs. People need somewhere that gives them a degree of psychological comfort, either because their things are around them or because they’re away from everyone else.”

“So in a world where everyone is talking about teaming and working together, we can't forget about the needs of the individual - the 'me' within 'we'. The best team spaces in the future will be designed for what the team needs to do when they're together, and how they can quickly give themselves the things they need to be creative and fast. But also a space that gives them what they need when they want to be alone and free from distraction.”

CONTROL OVER YOUR ENVIRONMENT

“Giving teams the ability to control their own environment is also becoming a big deal. We've had some interesting discussions about wheels, or casters, as the furniture world might call them. If you put a caster on something, you can move it around. A wheel indicates that if a piece of furniture or technology doesn't work for you in that space, then you can move it.”

“These wheels symbolise your control and your ability to do anything you like. We are entering a time where the workers' needs are becoming more recognised, and these wheels symbolise their control and their ability to make the space work for them. The mobility of being able to move your digital technology into the space where the team is, and put it right in front of the whiteboard, is so clever and so simple. You wonder why we haven't always been doing this.”

▼ *Furniture and accessories with wheels give teams control to adapt spaces on demand*





▲ *Glass-walled meeting rooms offer both privacy and transparency.*

INCLUSIVE DESIGN

"Inclusive design is a term that not everybody uses, but more and more are starting to. A lot of people understand designing for accessibility and creating spaces that people who are sight-impaired can navigate easily, for example. As we head into 2020 and beyond, we're going to be talking increasingly about designing for inclusivity."

"From neurodiversity to gender diversity and age diversity, designing space that enables everybody to feel comfortable and to thrive is becoming a hot topic. As an employer, it makes you more appealing to the kind of talent you need. People can go and work somewhere that pays a lot of money, but do they have the psychological comfort that fuels the passion and curiosity about what they do? It's bringing these human needs to the forefront again, and it's only going to become more important in the future."

Q WHERE IS YOUR FAVOURITE SPACE TO WORK?

"I like to go into the office because I like to be near the people there. I think my responsibility as a leader is to be around them, even if I don't have meetings with them. For much of the day, I work in a very small space. It's not an office, it's an enclave with glass on the front. When I'm not there, anybody can work there."

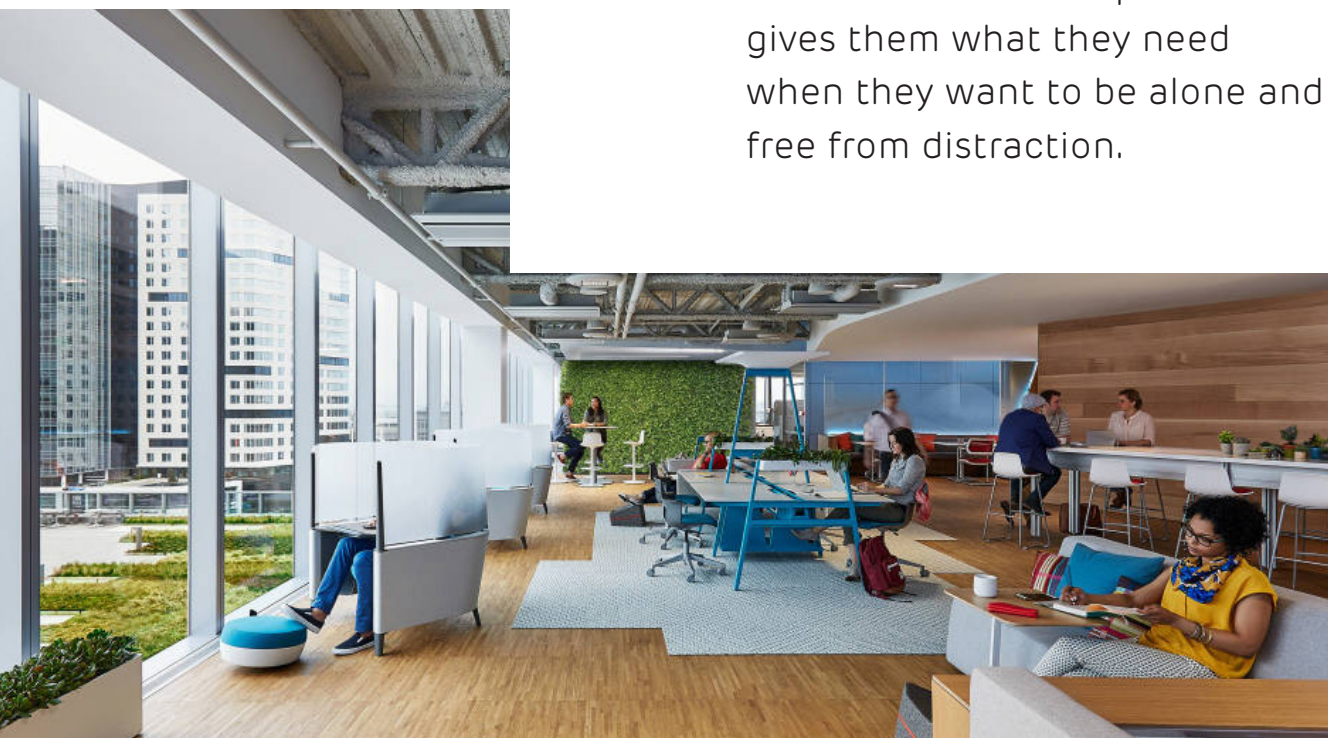
"The reason I work in there is that it's a small space with video conferencing in front of me and a whiteboard behind me. My teams are all over the world and it means we can talk to each other through the screen, and I can get up and start drawing on the whiteboard."

Q LOOKING BEYOND 2020, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE NEXT ITERATION OF THE WORKPLACE?

“I think the future of work is your employer giving you permission to be able to have more control over your hours or where you work. But I do think that the future of work is about a workplace. I don't think it's going away. I think we're actually going to find it more and more important.”

“Hopefully, the workplace is going to be a place where, when you go in, you have that sense of, this company cares about us as a company, me as a person, and we as a team. And it's somewhere that combines all the things you need; a team space and a nest. I hope that the workplace of the future is designed for teams but doesn't forget that people need things that are theirs - and more than just a locker.”

“ The best team spaces in the future will be designed for what the team needs to do when they're together, and how they can quickly give themselves the things they need to be creative and fast. But also a space that gives them what they need when they want to be alone and free from distraction.



“EXPERIENTIAL DESIGN: INSPIRATION FROM THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR” +

BEATRIZ GONZALEZ
DIRECTOR, SCOTT BROWNRIGG
INTERIOR DESIGN

Beatriz Gonzalez is a Director at Scott Brownrigg, a London-based architecture and interior design practice. Highly experienced within the commercial interiors sector, Beatriz heads the Workplace Interior Design team, who are driven by a relentless drive to solve client challenges and improve experiences.

Beatriz has delivered high quality interior design solutions as the lead on projects including the new headquarters for Expedia in the Angel Building, Thomson Reuters and Refinitiv in Canary Wharf.



Q LOOKING BACK ON 2019, WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT THE WAY CLIENTS WERE THINKING ABOUT THEIR WORKSPACES?

“The biggest thing for me last year was the number of consultants involved in projects. It’s not just an MEP consultant, an architect, and a PM anymore. There has been a huge trend towards space psychologists, ergonomists and change managers being appointed on projects, and this is resulting in better solutions for clients.”

Q WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN WORKPLACE DESIGN THAT YOU THINK WILL DOMINATE INDUSTRY THINKING IN 2020?

EXPERIENTIAL SPACES

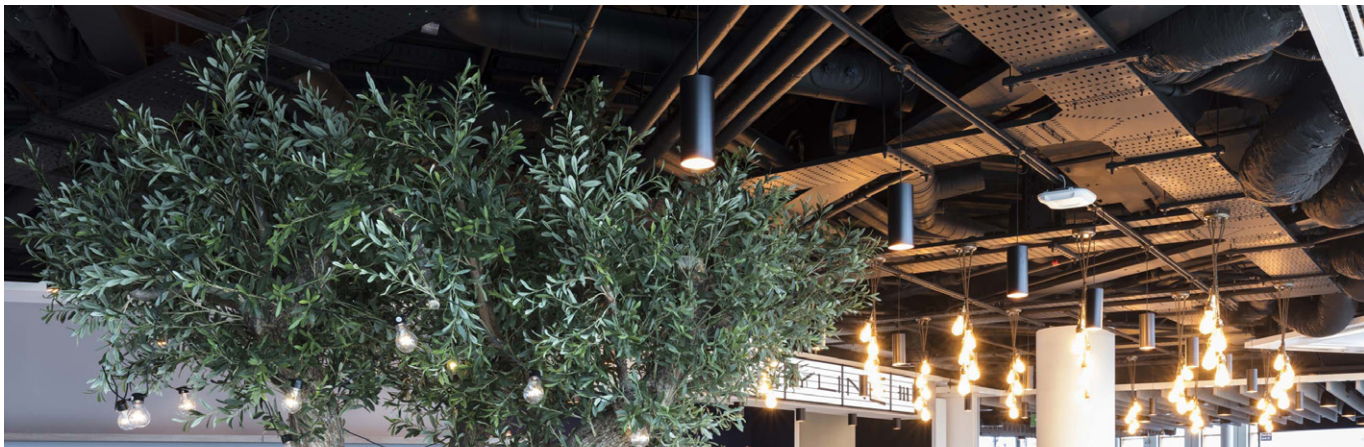
“At Scott Brownrigg we cover hospitality, residential, commercial, education and aviation interiors, and we’re seeing a merging of these for example we’ve started to see a trend where the majority of our projects in the commercial environment have been supported by our team from the hospitality sector. The main reason for this is the increased focus on the employee experience in the workplace.”

“We’ve seen more companies wanting to create experiential spaces for their employees. In hospitality, people go to hotels or travel to get an experience, and organisations want to offer a similar experience for their employees. By experiential spaces I mean lots of immersive environments; spaces for stimulation, for concentration, tranquility, and re-energising environments.”

“Technology is playing a big part in this. We are currently working on a project for a client in Europe where they have replaced the traditional reception desk with self-check-in facilities that allow the host to be notified by email when a guest arrives. These check-in facilities are manned by a skilled concierge from the hospitality sector who is there to help and answer questions, and even get employees set up within the agile workspace.”

COLLABORATIVE SPACES FOR PROJECT WORK

“When agile working was first implemented, it meant the addition of collaboration areas. What we are seeing now is a trend towards different ways of working. The organisational pattern has changed from a traditional neighbourhood layout where each neighbourhood was made up of people from one department, and towards project-based working environments.”



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“In this new environment, different departments can collaborate alongside each other on a project and be co-located within the same space. The neighbourhoods are becoming more project-based, where several collaboration areas can be shared between different project teams.”

“You still have standard desks as people need space to migrate and focus. But adjacent to those desks you have a team environment; flexible working spaces that can be easily adapted for the duration of a project. Designers looking for this flexibility need to be looking at furniture that is easily movable, that can be configured in different settings depending on the task.”

DESIGN FOR A MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

“There is a big generation piece happening too. People are retiring later and later. By 2039 the age of retirement is expected to be 68, so you could have a 68 year-old working alongside a 24 year-old straight out of university. We’re being asked more and more to design spaces not just for inclusivity, but specifically for spaces that address the spectrum of generations. For example, the importance of light is huge for the older generation. The amount of time you can be in a meeting room with little natural light, focusing on a piece of paper, is going to be different as you get older and the workspace needs to cater for everyone.”

Q LOOKING BEYOND 2020, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE NEXT ITERATION OF THE WORKPLACE?

“Whether we call it an office or we adopt a new terminology, I think the workplace will absolutely still exist in twenty, thirty years time. As humans we like to stick together, we don’t want to be isolated. We do our best work when we collaborate and when we feel like part of a bigger picture. Whether the workplace is a platform or something else, it will still be there.”



“SUPPORTING A FUTURE OF CLOUD-BASED COLLABORATION” +

ANDREW MCLEAN
DIRECTOR, tp bennett

Andrew McLean is a Director within the interiors division at tp bennett, a London-based architecture and design firm. tp bennett has been at the forefront of architecture and design for almost 100 years, driven by an ethos that sees them challenge orthodoxy to achieve the best outcomes for their clients.

Andrew's technical expertise and wide-ranging experience within commercial interiors means he has an in-depth understanding of workplace trends and solutions. He has delivered award-winning work for the likes of Facebook, Expedia and EY.



Q LOOKING BACK ON 2019, WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT THE WAY CLIENTS WERE THINKING ABOUT THEIR WORKSPACES?

“The biggest influence I've seen on workplace design trends is that organisations are realising that agile working is a lot more beneficial than workers just being able to go and lounge in a chair to do their work. Agile working is driving a trend towards an ecosystem of different spaces where people can choose how they want to work, whether independently or collaboratively. And technology is making this all possible.”

Q WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN WORKPLACE DESIGN THAT YOU THINK WILL DOMINATE INDUSTRY THINKING IN 2020?

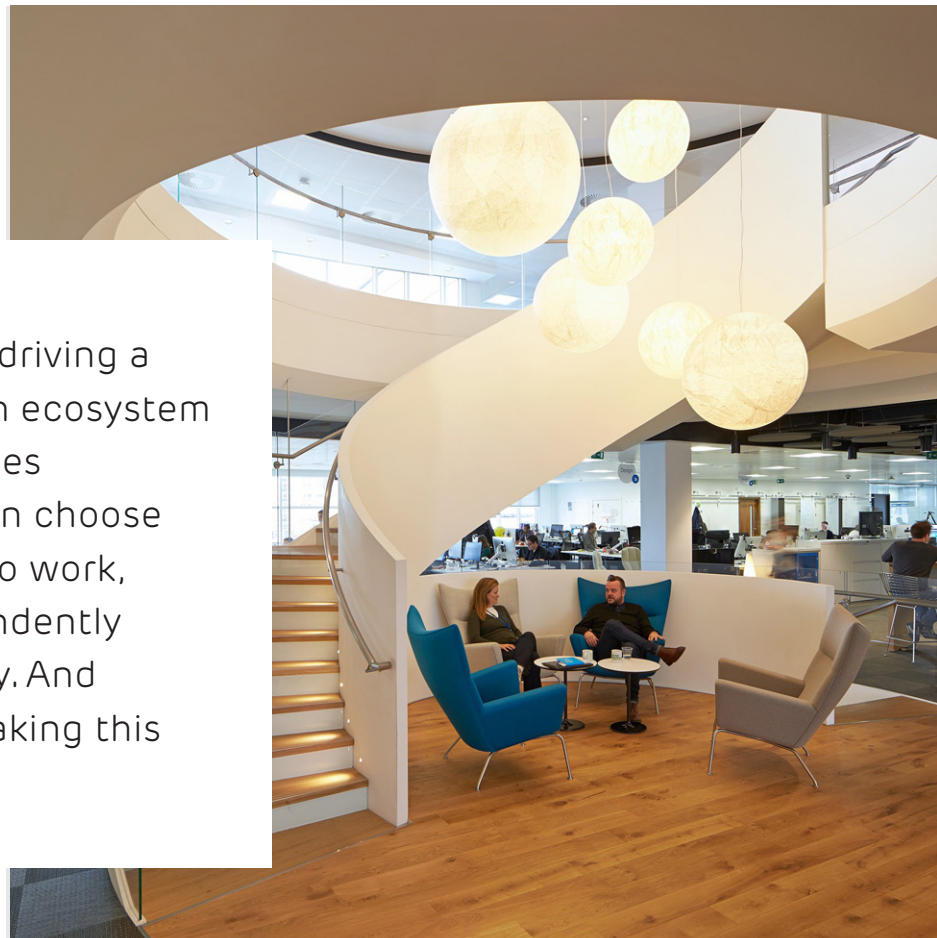
COLLABORATIVE SPACES

“People are wanting more agile working areas where they can be collaborative and productive, but at the same time enjoy the environment that they’re in. Previously, these spaces may have been a room with fully fitted audiovisual technology. But now, people want to be in more open spaces where they can work together in teams, grab a coffee and still have people around that may be doing their own independent work.”

“These collaborative spaces need to have a combination of both open and closed seating, for focused work and comfort, as well as furniture and accessories that can be moved around to support how they want to work.”

“Places like WeWork have lots of different companies together, and there is a trend towards having more spaces like this within one company. It’s the same ethos, where different people can come together into a space and collaborate.”

“ Agile working is driving a trend towards an ecosystem of different spaces where people can choose how they want to work, whether independently or collaboratively. And technology is making this all possible.





THE IMPACT OF CLOUD-BASED WORKING

"Cloud-based offices are becoming more and more popular, and it has an impact on how people work in the space. For instance, people are moving away from desktop to laptop computers. The wifi is better so people are able to work from wherever they want within the building."

"The impact that we are finding is that flexible working spaces are getting bigger. The shift towards cloud-based working means organisations can allow more people to use that type of working space and use less meeting rooms and offices."

"We are also experiencing a shift towards short and sharp meetings of half-hour slots. If people are collaborating with people in other countries, they need to be confident they can get the video conferencing technology fired up very quickly. Cloud-based technology should speed up this whole process."

BIOPHILIC DESIGN

"What we have certainly experienced at tp bennett, and this is a trend that will certainly continue, is that if you put living planting into areas it helps people to feel a lot more relaxed and changes their whole perception of the office space they are in. The feedback we get is that if the environment is better, people feel like they can work better. It's a combination of the plantlife absorbing toxins and dust particles from the air and releasing oxygen, and not to mention the visual effect that lifts people's moods."

Q WHERE IS YOUR FAVOURITE SPACE TO WORK?

"I work from a laptop and we have a number of docking stations in the office so I like to move around. We've got some sit/stand workstations and people like the flexibility of these, but usually I'm in the sit-down areas as I'm out of the office quite often."

"I like to stay close to my team so that we can ask each other questions when we need to. If I need to do focused work I may sit a few rows away from where my core team is. This is where agile working really stands out for me. I can sit in a semi-private space and do more concentrated work than I would have been able to otherwise, but I'm still right next door to my team."

“LET ME FOCUS” +

NICHOLA PLUMMER
DESIGN DIRECTOR - WORKPLACE
& INCLUSIVE DESIGN CONSULTANT,
INSIGHTFUL ENVIRONMENTS

Nichola Plummer, Design Director at Insightful Environments, specialises in workplace and inclusive design. An award-winning interior designer with over 16 years of experience in the workplace sector, Nichola helps clients create workspaces that bring out the best in people.

Nichola shares her views on what's surprised her in the last 12 months, and the trends she expects to become more prevalent in 2020.



Q LOOKING BACK ON 2019, WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT THE WAY CLIENTS WERE THINKING ABOUT THEIR WORKSPACES?

“The biggest thing for me is clients are now embracing a more holistic approach on projects, and people are now their biggest asset. A wider team engagement is happening and we're more frequently creating prototype spaces for clients, where staff try a variety of work settings and give feedback. We're also seeing the involvement of a Change Management Consultant and a Wellbeing advisor to ensure the best all round environment is created.”

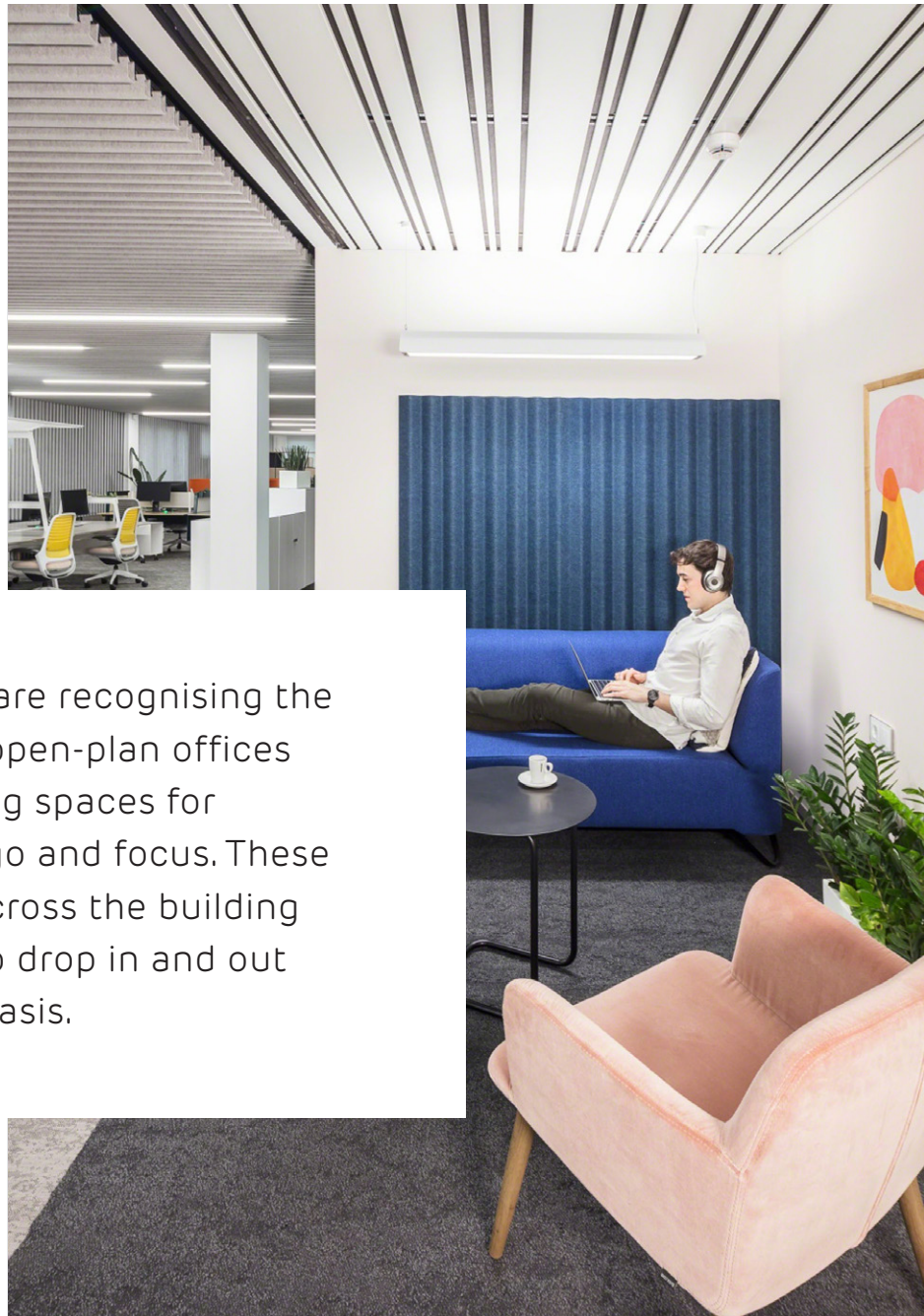
Q WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN WORKPLACE DESIGN THAT YOU THINK WILL DOMINATE INDUSTRY THINKING IN 2020?

WELLBEING AND INCLUSIVITY

“Greater awareness around wellbeing and inclusivity will continue to impact workplace design. Inclusive design isn't just thinking about a person in a wheelchair. It covers everything; physical impairments, neurodiversity and broadening age demographics. If you design spaces that fully embrace inclusivity and give people choice, then you'll get the best out of everyone and more diversity in the workplace. It's a win-win.”

CONTEMPLATIVE SPACES

“This increased focus on wellbeing is pushing a trend towards the inclusion of contemplative spaces in office environments. Five years ago we would get charities saying they need a space for staff who are under lots of pressure and stress to get away and recharge. Now, we’re seeing it in more corporate environments, companies who are requesting contemplative spaces with no technology. We’ve gone from everything being wired and wifi everywhere to spaces where there is no technology at all.”



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Organisations are recognising the challenges of open-plan offices and are wanting spaces for individuals to go and focus. These focus points across the building allow people to drop in and out on an ad hoc basis.

MATERIALITY AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

“As consumers, there’s a growing awareness and focus on the life cycle and the environmental impact of the products we buy. This has filtered into the commercial space, into corporate offices, and is impacting decisions on what furniture to buy and the materials that are used within the workspace. Clients are asking more questions like, “Can that product be recycled?”, “Where is it made?” and “What is its recycled content?” Year on year we’re delivering projects that achieve an environment standard, SKA, WELL etc. The growing environmental awareness is driving decision making when it comes to workplace design and office furniture, which is a really positive shift.

A SPACE FOR FOCUS & CREATIVE THINKING

“Organisations are recognising the challenges of open-plan offices and are wanting spaces for individuals to go and focus. These focus points across the building allow people to drop in and out on an ad hoc basis. These spaces don’t necessarily have to be closed booths. Sometimes it’s more about the material and the aesthetics and proximity to refreshments. Somewhere you can grab a coffee and the space encourages you to stop, pause, and take some time to contemplate, giving you a chance to have a lightbulb moment.”

HACKABLE SPACES

“What we are also seeing more and more is that companies are looking to give their employees a way of personalising their space. It’s in tune with the younger demographic coming into the workplace, plus work teams forming for projects not just by departments. The true agile working methodology is increasing, and it’s growing beyond the software engineering origin. Across all kinds of businesses, we’re seeing people hacking their space to suit how they want to work. Creating flexible scrum spaces offer greater choice for teams, so they can collaborate quickly and get the best results.”



CONCLUSION +

What remains consistent across all of these trends is that the wellbeing of a diverse population of employees is now at the forefront of workplace design. From hackable spaces and contemplative no-tech zones, to design influences that reflect the local area and experiential spaces inspired by the hospitality sector; 2020 looks set to be a big year for improving the employee experience in the workplace.

What has emerged is a need for three types of space within the workplace: space to do focused work, space for collaboration, and space for contemplation. The good news is you don't need a huge office to create this ecosystem of spaces. The same areas can be used for independent work and collaboration, with movable furniture and accessories that allow users to adapt the space on demand and personalise it to their needs. And contemplative spaces can be created without needing to give your office a complete refit, by adding furniture such as pods, booths, and chairs with high backs and upholstery that give workers the conditions they need to relax and rejuvenate.

Beyond designing for a diverse workforce, the global push towards sustainability is also filtering through into workplace design. There is a growing awareness of the environmental impact of the workplace and the materials and furniture that exist within it, and this is likely to continue to drive decision making over the coming 12 months.

And what about the future of the workplace beyond 2020? Perhaps it will become even more important over the next few decades, somewhere workers can come to feel connected and affiliated with the business, regardless of how they choose to work when they get there.

Ultimately, your office environment should be a space that people feel excited and proud to work in. Not only is this vital for your employees' wellbeing and personal fulfilment at work, but it is also critical to your organisation's ability to thrive.

If you're interested in engaging
and inspiring your existing and
future employees you may also
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