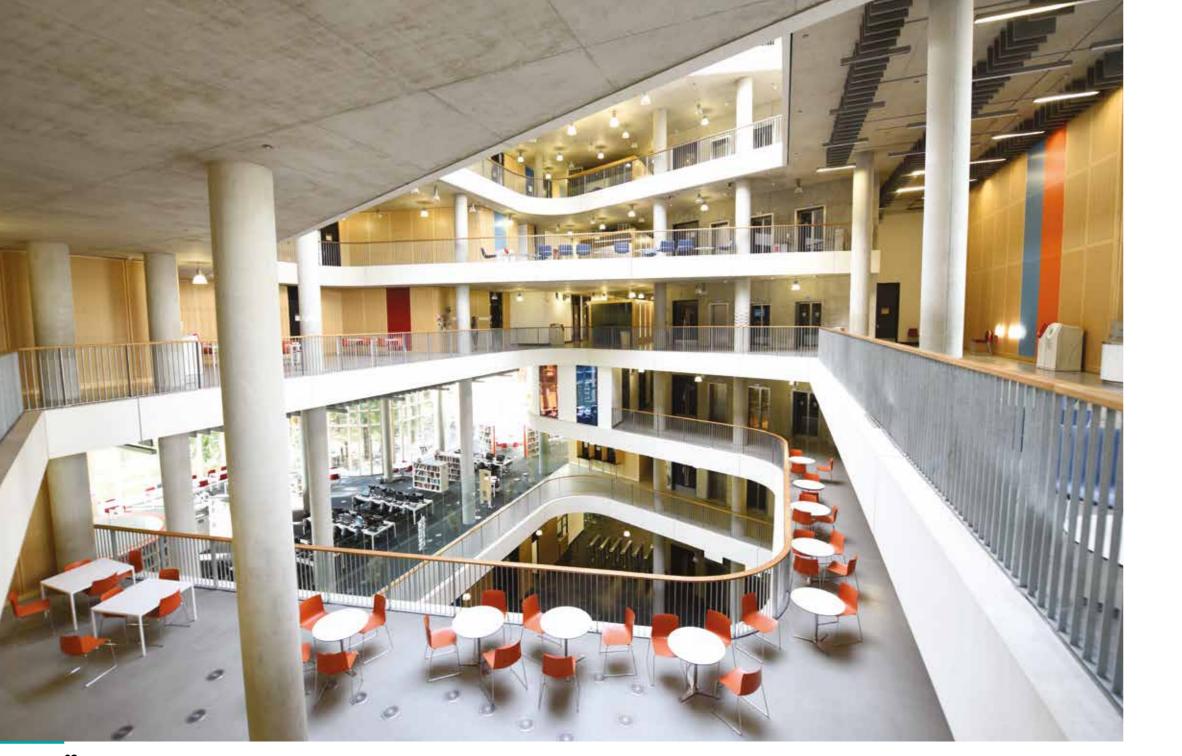


THE AGILE OFFICE Special Report



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Agile office - Overview

Agile workspaces symbolise the start of a new era in the way we work, a story which started more than a century ago and has been unfolding rapidly since the turn of the millennium.

The Agile workspace concept has gained traction but it's hard to ignore the influence from the Agile working methodology. In this report, we draw the link between Agile working and the most tangible office design concept since those dreadful, homogeneous cubicles of the Eighties.

Welcome to the Agile office.

'Traditional open-plan offices and cubicle farms are dead - long live the Agile office'.

That's the war cry from today's workspace designers. In the battle for talent in a fast-moving, volatile landscape, the world's leading companies are weaponising their offices. The results are productivity. creativity and innovation

Taylorism, Bürlondschaft and cubicle farms

Office designs have been changing since US mechanical engineer Frederick Taylor created the first recognised layout more than 100 years. But only gradually. Known as Taylorism, this first recognised, attributed office design was rigid, linear and hierarchical; it tightly packed in endless, identical rows of desks for white-collar workers, with executive offices around the outside to mimic the factory floor.

More collaborative designs within a more organically geometric, open-plan lavout, known as the Bürlondschaft movement, came with the European socio-democratic values of the mid-20th-Century, and soon proliferated around the world.

Then came the dreaded cubicle farms of the profit-hungry Seventies and Eighties. The less said about those the better.

By the 2000s flexible, colourful, game filled offices started emerging, placing a greater emphasis on the work-life balance. And within the current decade. the employee-centred approach has been applauded and practised. as businesses use their offices and working policies to compete for the best talent.

But, since the cubicle farms of the Eighties, there have been few distinguishable, notable, defined design concepts — until now.

Agility misunderstood

In today's knowledge economy communication. collaboration and engagement are top priorities. And many of the principles which enhance these business-critical performance drivers come from Agile working, a manifesto set up to improve the success of fast-moving software projects at the turn of the century.

Agile is one of those Emperor's New Clothes terms. It's widely misunderstood, often misquoted and liberally hijacked. But it fits snugly into any debate about the future of work in a rapidly evolving, disruptive digital landscape.

In short. Agile methodology has radically altered the way we lay out our offices (or. at least, had a major influence) — for the better.

We need a new term to symbolise the advances in leadership in the digital age. A new label to capture our enhanced awareness of the benefits of community, communication and collaboration: the raw power of autonomy, ownership and engagement; the paybacks for introducing policies in flexible working and well being. We need a new tag for the environments which harness the unbounded potential of digital technology.

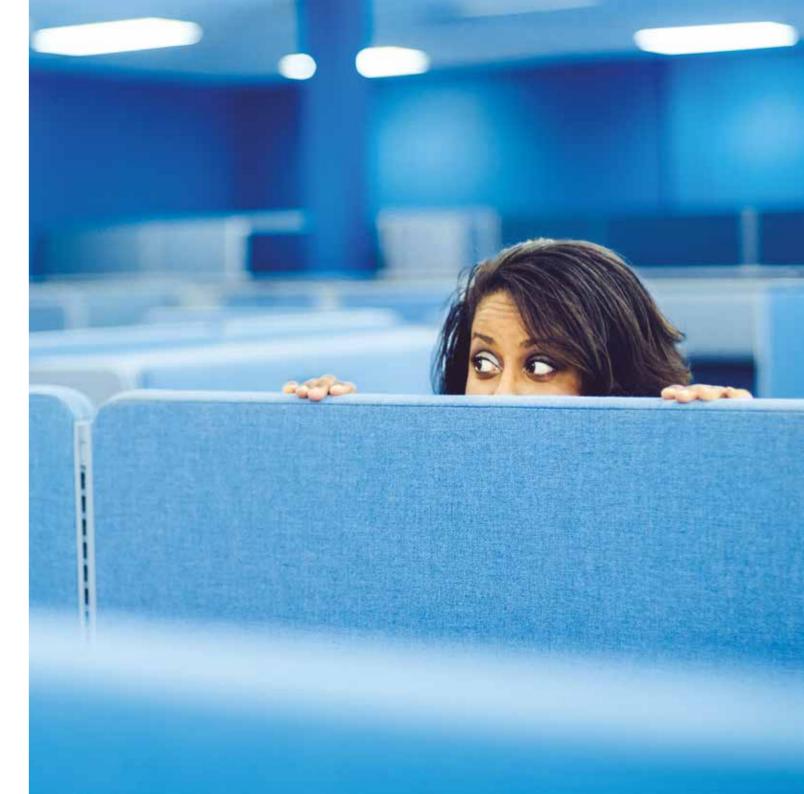
Agile workspace it is.



- [1] Define Agile working and show how it influenced the Agile office
- [2] Explain the Agile workspace design concept and show some examples
- [3] Show you how to get the most out of Agile for your office

We'll hear from an Agile coach and workspace experts. We'll see how some of the planet's most-watched companies. like Google and Spotify, have interpreted Agile in their environment for their teams. We'll drop in case studies on a leading UK recruitment agency, and a leading insurance broker to see how they adopted Agile principles in their workspace Consultancy, Design and Fit-out.

Feeling nimble? Let's move.



"It's not about the space, but the people in the space. For perhaps the first time in human history, we have the chance to align our economic development with our human development."

Source: Jeremy Neuner // US Work Design Magazine



Agile Working: From Software Development to Workspace Design



What we mean by Agile working and Agile workspace design are two very different things, but the former has definitely influenced the latter, as we'll see.

"Once-in-a-lifetime cusp of a shift"

According to US Work Design Magazine, Google's Jeremy Neuner believes our society and economy are on a "once-ina-lifetime cusp of a shift" in how, where, and why we work. According to the magazine, he told delegates at the sixth annual Agile Workplace Conference: "It's not about the space, but the people in the space. For perhaps the first time in human history, we have the chance to align our economic development with our human development."

Jeremy, who is the product area lead for real estate and workplace services at Google, added:

"If you want to unlock human potential, you have to give people freedom."

Powerful stuff.

Biggest change since the Industrial Revolution

Facilities group, Mitie feels the shift is almost as seismic: "The last time there was this much change in the workplace was at the start of the Industrial Revolution, which took a whole century," says its Executive Research Programme. "The Information Revolution has happened in less than a decade, which highlights the dramatic pace of change."

True, the pace of digital change has been phenomenal, and it's only going to get faster. Which makes Mitie's 2015/16 research programme all the more dated already — it was collated from interviews with 200 senior property and facilities directors and started in 2013. Yet it reveals some "startling" findings, including the much-reported prediction that by 2020 more than 70% of UK offices will be Agile workplaces.

Its research programme adds that by 2020 the need for commercial office space in the

UK will be half that of 2010; that just 40% of office workers will have their 'own' desk; and 60% of staff will spend more time working out of the office than in it.

A lot has changed since 2016. We're only two years off those figures, and there is still a bewilderingly high amount of offices stuck in the open plan or cubicle hell of the last century. Nevertheless, the perceptions of senior property and facilities directors are interesting to note.

"The Information Revolution has happened in less than a decade, which highlights the dramatic pace of change."



Defining Agile

Mitie's definition of Agile, via Agile Organisation founder, Paul Allsopp, goes like this: "Agile working is about bringing people, processes, connectivity and technology, time and place together to find the most appropriate and effective way of working to carry out a particular task. It is working within guidelines (of the task) but without boundaries (of how you achieve it)."

We can do better than that.

In this context of software engineering, Agile is a set of four values and 12 principles, not a set of prescriptive practices, as Mark Shead says in this video. Agile was formalised in a manifesto for software developers in 2001, but it started a decade or so earlier, according to TechBeacon. According to Agile coach and author, Belinda Waldock, from Being Agile, it's a global methodology developed by the tech sector that not only provides a business and project management tool kit but also, more importantly, a "culture and mindset." A culture of agility is "vital," she says, when launching and growing businesses and developing new products in an environment of "extreme uncertainty and constant change with disruptive and fast-moving markets."

She adds: "Agile works by integrating change on a regular basis, whether driven by external or internal forces. It's a learning-based method that builds continuous improvement into your daily workflow. Agile builds time to reflect, think and experiment into the process, providing a structure to make small, regular, iterative improvements."



Breaking silos

Despite its IT origins, today Agile is applied to other knowledge sectors, as Belinda explains: "The tech sector uses Agile to create enterprises that are led by its people. They leverage their talents and create teams that perform at their best which enables their businesses to thrive. But that approach is so transferable. Tech companies have the same problems as lots of other businesses in different sectors.

"Agile is about harnessing the power of people and processes by reorganising people away from silos and into crossfunctional teams. It's a way to gain visibility and improve performance and, by its very nature, it encourages collaborative, collective relationships through ownership of roles and autonomous teams." For example, in a software company, instead of having teams of project managers, developers and designers all working in different departments, an Agile approach would mix up the skill sets, picking one or two from each department. This new grouping becomes a:

"Small, cross-functional, autonomous team of 6-8 people who work together and in a collective, interactive, owned space."

And this is where we find our link with Agile workspace design.



Agile working reorganises the office

This change in the way people work has led to an organic reorganisation of offices where Agile working is fully adopted.

"Once you have that Agile mindset your environment has to change," says Belinda. "I have seen time and time again teams reorganise their offices about six months into their Agile journey. When I come into their workspace the whole place has been reorganised. Everything and everyone has moved away from their corners and silos. That's great to see."

It's not that Agile coaches like Belinda instruct teams to reorganise their offices as part of the methodology. Far from it. Like most things in Agile, it unfolds naturally. "I've not advised them to change their workspace they just do it because it makes more sense. It's very organic." Central to Agile is visual project management which uses collaborative spaces for planning, mapping and creative thinking. Spaces like walls, boards, glass; Post-It notes, canvases, dashboards and roadmaps. Along with meetings and games, the boards within Agile help connect teams and build regular channels of communication around shared spaces, enabling people to interact, engage, share and work together.

Often workspaces make space for boards and then realign their layouts and movements around their new boards and collaborative activities.

"That's where the magic happens"

In a true Agile (or smarter) working environment, teams are given autonomy and ownership over the work, roles and their environment. They may turn their desks so they can see each others' screens for learning and sharing ideas. They may put a sofa in the corner for break out, social or meetings. They might have a private huddle room for focus; they may have stand-up desks or high-backed sofas for quick meetings and collaboration. In a true Agile working environment, it's up to the team. [We'll see in the next section how these four elements — learning, focus, social and collaboration — relate to Agile workspace design.]

Belinda says: "And that's where the magic happens. If you make people feel like they own it, if you put them in the right workspace (or allow them to change it) they will do their best work and productivity and innovation are the results."

One of the 12 Agile manifesto principles fit it perfectly here: "Build projects around motivated individuals; give them the environment and support they need and trust them to get the job done."





Agile engineering = offices optimised for collaboration

Spotify's journey best illustrates Agile's influence on workspace design. The music podcast, and video streaming service has been using the Agile development approach since it launched in 2008. Importantly (to understand the link between Agile working and what has become known as Agile workspace design it used autonomy as its key driving force. Spotify says in this video that autonomy is important because it's motivating, and "motivated people build better stuff". It also speeds things up by allowing decisions to be made locally and allows the business to scale. Spotify focuses on high alignment and high autonomy simultaneously, acting like a jazz band: "although each musician is autonomous and plays its own instrument they listen to each other and focus on the whole song together."

The business created "small, crossfunctional, self-organising teams," or "autonomous squads," usually less than eight people. They sit together and have end-to-end responsibility for the stuff they develop, deciding what to build, how to build it and how to work together to that aim. The squads are aligned with the company's bigger vision and they have their own long and short-term goals.

But here's the important bit.

Their offices are "optimised for collaboration". The squad members work closely together with adjustable desks with easy access to each other's screens. Right next to their desks there's a lounge where they gather for planning sessions and retrospectives and a 'huddle room' for smaller meetings or quiet time. Almost all walls are whiteboards. Spotify's use of Agile is manifested in the physical environment of its teams. The results are clear to see. As Belinda says:

"Agile is about harnessing the potential of the people, optimising that and giving them the best space. It triggers the office reorganisation into a collective, owned, interactive environment. Agile by its nature improves communication and encourages innovation."

It would be rude to leave Google out of this....

Everything is on wheels

An extreme example of Agile offices is the notorious Google. As Google program manager, Mamie Rheingold, says in this video, Google Garage is its hacker-maker-design space where Googlers come together to learn, create and build. Power cords drop down from the roof, everything is within reach and no-one is confined to one place.

Google's design evangelist, Nadya Direkova says: "The garage is kind of like my playground. When you come in you can write on the tables, you can write on the walls and you can reconfigure the tables to be in any position you want. Everything is on wheels and that allows people to be more flexible and to be more playful in a way that the typical space and the typical conference room just wouldn't. The space doesn't need to be fancy in order to be functional but what it really needs to be is flexible."

Interestingly, the video is called Worksmart, which is another term for Agile offices, as we'll see in the next article.



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Source: Nadya Direkova // Google's design evangelist



Making the Agile workspace transformation

Now we know how Agile working has transformed the office, we need to explain what it means in the design world. Here's our take on what Agile workspace design means, including the benefits, and how to apply it.

In case you missed it, Agile working is a set of values and principles originating from an approach to software development, which has been adopted by business in other sectors. When we speak of Agile offices in workspace design we mean a different thing, sort of. Let's spell it out.

A new term for a new era

Agile workspace design has many names. It's known as Smart Working, Activity-Based Working/design, collaborationbased design and flexible offices. None of these do it justice.

The Agile label has been adopted by the workspace design industry more and more in recent years, as Rhino Interior Group's head of business development, Hannah Floyd, explains: "People misinterpreted this Agile term a couple of years ago but it is getting to become a pretty common denominator now in the office refurb discussion. Mentioning Agile working to a customer six years ago they generally would not have heard the term. But now you mention Agile working and people pretty much have an idea about it. It's become a muchreported term in the workplace. "In its most simplest form, the Agile concept is about providing options for employees so they can choose how, where and when they want to work. It means mixed-use spaces with a variety of levels, workspaces and settings, including breakout areas and areas for community and hospitality. It's a design which creates casual collisions and breaks down barriers between departments by increasing mobility within the office; it's about replacing some meeting rooms with impromptu meeting areas."

This fits in with Agile working methodology in that it allows employees the flexibility to switch working locations within the office (and outside of it), try them out and change if need be. Some can do this with more autonomy than others. In a similar way, Agile working allows teams to experiment freely and autonomously, then change what they're doing at short notice, making incremental improvements as they go, all the while feeding back internally and externally. Agile working focuses on high visibility within and between teams. An Agile office allows better communication and more movement between teams, around the office, breaking silos and building a sense of community.

Agile workspaces by their definition are flexible. Like Agile working, they allow for quicker meetings, more collaboration and stronger social ties. They facilitate the notion of autonomy (which is still a big ask for many businesses), affording brilliant people more freedom to do amazing things.

In short, what Agile offices take from Agile working is the ability to allow people to innovate faster and better.

Kill costs, boost agility

Why do it?

Workplace strategist, interior designer and managing director of WK.Space, Hannah Nardini, says adopting an Agile approach to workspace design can reduce real estate portfolios, running costs, absenteeism and attrition, while improving business productivity and overall agility.

"For employees, it brings improved wellbeing, a sense of personal achievement as well as a better worklife balance, an increase in friendship groups and improved morale across the organisation," she says. "By taking into account people, place, process and tech, we can bring empowerment, freedom and productivity."

Agile workspace design can "dramatically" reduce real estate costs, says Rhino's Hannah Floyd. "According to our research, it can reduce footprint typically by as much as 15-35% or allow corporates to increase head count within the existing space."

Hannah Nardini is quick to dispel a myth of Agile working: "It's not just a way for you to cram more people into a much smaller space. We use the theory of proxemics, which is about understanding peoples' personal space. The design of an Agile office

needs to respect a person's personal boundaries and reinstate them, giving more back to the occupant."

The zone theory

WK.Space breaks the office into four zones: **focus, collaboration, social** and **learning/meeting.** [These are the four elements highlighted in the first section of this report, around autonomous teams.] **1. The focus zone** is for concentrated activity and includes pods, booths, libraries, cables and offices. This area overflows into,

2. The collaboration zone, which is set up for casual collisions, idea sharing and group working. You'll see lots of big tables and shared working areas here. Connected to this zone is,

3. The social zone which simulates the homely feel, so lots of resimercial (residential-commercial) and community elements go in here, like sofas, comfy chairs, large tables and benches and games.

4. The learning and meeting zone is easily accessible from the social zone and should include a variety of spaces and settings such as open-plan stand-up meeting areas, high-backed sofas as well as booths, pods and cabins for private meet-ups.

Wk.Space's approach is supported by research from the Agile Alliance, a global, nonprofit organisation dedicated to promoting the concepts of Agile software development as outlined in the Agile Manifesto. In the Agile Power Of Place presentation — designed to help organisations create physical environments to support Agile teams -Rochelle Ritzenthaler, design strategist at Gensler, and Jorgen Hesselberg, director of Agile transformation at MacAfee, say that top-performing companies design their workplaces to support all four of these modes: socialise, focus, collaborate, learn.



Meeting rooms and breakout spaces

One example of where Agile workspace design can help is by making a more efficient usage of existing space, such as meeting rooms and breakout spaces, which have "shockingly low occupancy rates," says Hannah Floyd.

"What Agile does is makes you look at your meeting room utilisation. On average, 80% of short meetings - less than two hours - have 2-4 people. Also, not every meeting necessarily needs to be private. So substituting some meeting rooms with areas where people can go (such as higher table area, high-backed sofas or a booth) to have those quick meetings not only increases productivity but also optimises occupancy." Also, break-out areas and eating areas are rarely used outside of the hours 12-2pm.

"So if you turn it into a work cafe you can increase the occupancy in those kinds of areas as well as increase collisions, boosts community feel and enable collaborations in a neutral place."



Industry: Recruitment Size: 18,000 Sq Ft Headcount: 320 Location: London

Case study 1 - Surveying people and space

In a recent consultancy for the London office of one of the UK's leading employment agencies, Rhino conducted a study on the way the 320 people work in the 18,000-square-foot office.

A consultant was placed in the office from 7.30am to 6pm for two weeks to work out the average and peak occupation. We monitored the hours the staff worked, especially the meeting rooms and breakout areas using highend software, heat mapping and employee surveys around current usage and desires for the space. Through employee surveys, we also calculated the number of introverts. extroverts and ambiverts. "This helps us work out how many people will thrive in a shared environment and how many will need their own private space," says Hannah Floyd. "We worked out we could increase head count by 16%, from 320 to 371 people, by using Agile workspace

design," she says. The study highlighted numerous 'dead spots' — areas that were barely being used.

It also showed that workstations were occupied less than half the time (44%); meeting room utilisation was also relatively low (49%), with 85% of meetings having no more than four people. Breakout areas showed the least usage, being utilised just 17% of the time. As part of a complete redesign fit-out and change of furniture, Rhino added zones and reduced desks to 0.8 per person.





Case study 2 - Dramatic, futuristic, adaptable

This London-based online broker of business insurance of over 450,000 customers.

For the refit of its Northampton premises, the firm incorporated Agile working principles into the design strategy to make the workspaces adaptable and fluid — staff can move from one space to another and work in the environment they need in order to thrive. With no barriers between the 'social' and 'work' areas, employees don't feel part of a divided workforce. The offices include a custom-designed, fully flexible auditorium with interactive screen, a steampunk cafe zone and games room. The "lively palette" reflects the insurer's multicoloured branding, with an "eclection and unexpected" selection of furniture and fittings which add to the "dramatic, futuristic surroundings," says William Bayley, head of change management at the insurer

Industry: Commercial Insurance Size: 22,000 Sq Ft Headcount: 300 Location: Northampton

"The most interesting or unexpected insight uncovered from the consultancy process was how we used the space previously and how ineffective it was. Previously we had a dirty, cramped and dark space that was not much fun for everyone. We wanted to move away from the standard desk and meeting room spaces configuration, and into something with wider uses which is more engaging and appealing.

"Now we have an open and bright space that is inviting. We saw an almost instant change in the atmosphere. Both the working areas and breakout areas are far and away significant improvements on what we had before and everyone enjoys the space. We specifically aimed to get as far away as a contact centre we could have everyone really appreciated that. The breakout space — steam punk bar — and auditorium have been a particular hit.

"As well as this, we now think having a much more modern office will help us attract and retain the best people. The

previous environment was definitely a turn off for people and now the environment is a much better reflection of our culture. People have a much better idea of what we are about and what it is like to work for us when they walk through the door."

"We wanted to create a space that was inviting and engaging and provided a wide variety of working and relaxing spaces to allow our teams to enjoy working here and achieve great results,".



Agility training - seven ways to master Agile workspace design

Agile workspace design will help attract and retain talent, reduce real estate costs and grow any business. But beware of the pitfalls. Here are our top seven tips.

1 CONSULTATION = OWNERSHIP **2** ZONES AND LEVELS

Any change to environm<u>ent can</u> be disruptive to people who spend half their lives in it. Some will feel it more than others. So most Agile refits go hand-in-glove with a culture transformation to some degree. To help height. Instead, you'll have low sofas, you avoid employee culture shock, get employees involved at the start of the on. If employees feel like they have a say in what's happening they'll feel like they have some ownership. (Read about how this works in the practical workspace consultancy examples listed earlier).

A major aspect of what we mean by Agile workspaces is the variety of levels, spaces and settings. 'Putting in the levels' is what we call it'. This ensures you don't have a sea of desks the same high desks, benches, booths, stools, coffee tables, sit-stand desks and process. It will make it much easier later community tables. You'll have different spaces and settings too, spread across four zones (focus, collaboration, social and learning/meeting).

So, you've consulted the people before the design, you've had the refit and everyone has moved back in. From here it's not business as usual. We advise conducting a satisfaction survey and have a champion (for people to talk to) in the office for the six months after the refit. It doesn't have to be a new role, just someone who people can confide in about the changes. Because change can be more disruptive for some than others, and you may not want to lose loyal, long-serving staff.

4 YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO THE WHOLE HOG

A semi-Agile working environment is a thing. Lots of factors will dictate how far you go with the Agile approach. The percentage of introverts and extroverts in your workforce is one. Headcount forecasting is another. Budget, obviously, is crucial, but don't let that stop you creating an environment where your staff want to be. Increasingly, companies are finding it harder to attract new staff if they don't have a modern and well-thoughtthrough office design.

If you can't afford the upfront workspace consultancy element you can assess occupancy and employee desires anecdotally, update furniture and reduce headcount desk ratio accordingly. Also, a lot of older offices still have clumsy, dated furniture that

was designed for huge PCs and monitors, so you may be able to improve the aesthetics by bringing in more modern furniture, which will not only help provide a boost to morale but also will save you some space.

6 AGILE BY DESIGN

Agile workspace design has its origins in the values and principles of Agile working. If you're contemplating an Agile workspace fit-out, you might be considering some Agile working ideas. But, remember, there is a huge difference between 'doing Agile' and 'being Agile.' To get the best from it you need to adopt an Agile mindset, not just pick and choose practices used by Agile teams. That said, it couldn't hurt to look at visual project management (think Spotify and Google), hold more quick stand-up meetings in temporary areas (when it makes more sense than booking a meeting room) and use that new collaboration furniture, the social sofas and focus booths.

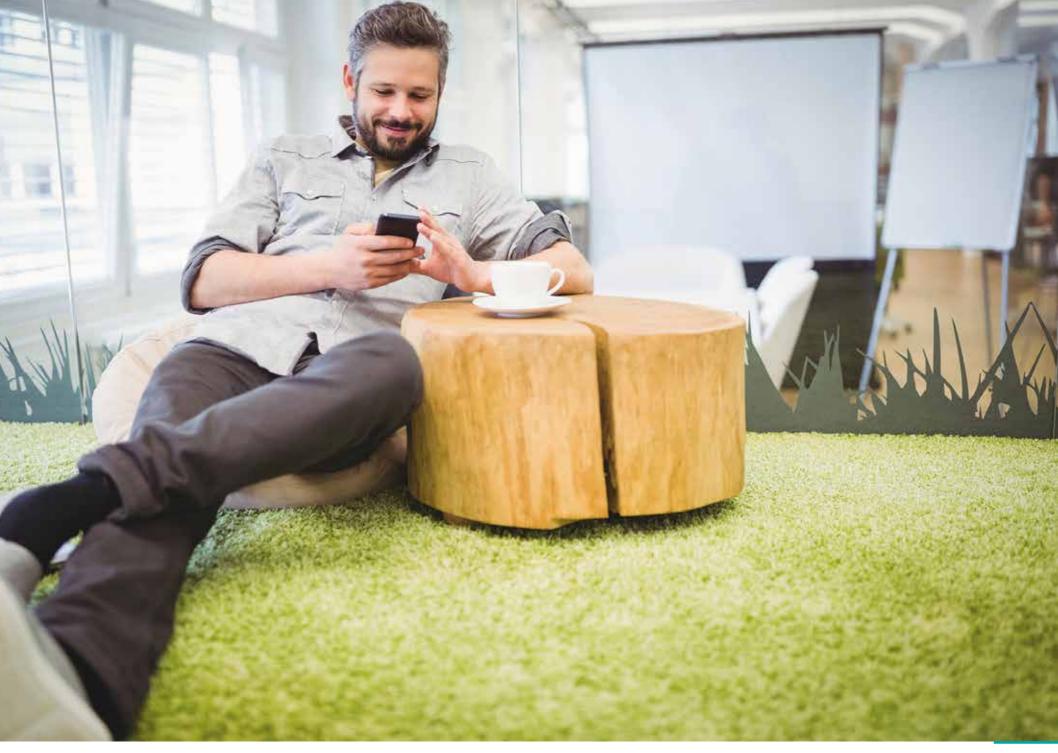
7 CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE NOISE

Long gone are the days where everyone and everything was crowded into one big space (or herded into cubicles) with no real research behind it, and without offering any choice. Today's Agile workspace designers have thought of everything, from sound-absorbing wall panels and acoustic ceilings to zone planning and proxemics. We know about the effects of noise on concentration for introverts and extroverts, how it impacts productivity on different job tasks and, most importantly, we know what workers actually want (because we ask). Today's Agile workspaces feature better acoustics, more options for working environments and, as a result, better creativity, productivity and employee wellbeing than ever before.

And finally, as Agile coach, Belinda Waldock, says:

"Agile by name and by nature. So, take an Agile approach to Agile. If one practice doesn't work for you, change it. Make small, incremental improvements.

Don't change everything overnight. It's not about a big bang. And don't let go of the steering wheel. A lot of people take Agile too literally and throw the plans out of the window. Being Agile doesn't mean you don't have a plan. It's about being able to adapt the plan as you go."





Tech enables tech

The pace of digital change has been phenomenal, and it's only going to get faster

rhinooffice.co.uk/contact-us/

Ironically, the reason Agile working has proliferated multiple sectors in recent years is down to digital. Digital technology has become so embedded in business over the last 10 or so years it's allowed us to work in more fluid ways, so things have had to change, including our environment.

So, a methodology which came from developing technology has changed the way we work because of advances in technology. The spaces which are emerging are being crafted by it.

Every sector can benefit

But Agile offices aren't for every type of business. Or are they? Professional services like legal and financial with big paper trails and desk-bound roles really struggle with Agile offices, but some have already made the move, like PFK Cooper Parry, who seem to be well ahead of the curve. Even some solicitors are knocking down the walls to attract the talent. **So 'last-century'.** That 20th Century dictatorial, hierarchical attitude to people management is dead. Knowledge-based workers are smart, creative cookies — you can't just put them behind a desk and tell them to do their best work.

Agile coach, Belinda Waldock, says Agile is a "perfect fit" for the 21st Century, where the need to manage change in an increasingly uncertain world is creeping up the whiteboard. There is so much more competition to attract talent, and more of those talented people are knowledge-based workers than last century. The market has changed. Employers have to up their game. Yet, despite the move into a knowledgebased economy, where many low-skilled job roles of the last century have been eradicated, many offices have still yet to catch up.

But those that have wholeheartedly joined the Agile office revolution have never looked back. That's because they have the agility to cope with the changes. When they find a new problem, which is part of everyday business, their working environment is set up to adapt quickly, so they can turn uncertainty into opportunity in an increasingly turbulent world.

The question is: are we ready for it?



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