

The **Future** of Office Design

yours
BY WORK•LIFE

In partnership with
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Frank

Overview

The past year has had a major impact on the way we work. Although the office will remain a core feature in our working lives, its role is set to change. Businesses have new demands, which is why the function, layout and design of our offices will change.

‘Office design’ no longer just refers to the functional and decorative elements of a workspace – such as furniture and equipment. As well as the practical aspects, it also takes into account the wellbeing of those who use the space. In line with the changing role of the workspace, office design will be a major consideration for businesses of all shapes and sizes.

Featuring research from Knight Frank’s flagship (Y)OUR SPACE report – which collated the opinions of almost 400 global corporate real estate leaders – we predict what the future of office design will look like.

Contents

Office design is not a one-size-fits-all approach. However, there are certain features and functions best suited to each of these growing demands.

In this guide, we'll look at how the design and layout of a workspace can support the changing needs of businesses in 2021 and beyond, enabling teams to return to the office safely, efficiently, and cost-effectively.

01 P4-5

Health & Safety

Coming out of a global pandemic, the office needs to be a place teams can meet and work together safely. Though it is naturally at the front of our minds at the moment, workplace health & safety will be a long-term priority for businesses, which technology, hygiene and some level of office reconfiguration will be able to support.

02 P6-7

Collaboration

We've all missed working face to face with our colleagues; the enforced shift to remote working during the pandemic has highlighted the need for intelligently-designed spaces that can facilitate collaboration and innovation. Workspaces that enable agile working and creativity will be in high demand.

03 P8-9

Employee Wellbeing

As businesses continue to understand the emotional and financial implications of ill mental health – such as burnout, staff turnover and poor productivity, there will be a greater partnership between employees and employers. Workspaces will need to offer holistic environments which support both physical and mental wellbeing.

04 P10-11

Reimagining Space

Smarter use of space is high on the agenda, especially with the rise of hybrid working and an increased focus on the office as a place for collaboration. Workspaces equipped for fluidity and flexibility – where teams can alter the configuration of work settings – will be valuable to employees and companies themselves.

05 P12-13

Company Image

Operating fully remotely has highlighted the importance of the physical HQ for corporate brand and image. When it comes to clients and talent (both existing and prospective), businesses will be keen to demonstrate their company culture, mission, and key achievements. As a result, spaces where businesses can have real input on their office design and branding will be key.

01

Health & Safety

Unsurprisingly, coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic, the delivery of safe and secure workspaces is paramount. This is likely to be a joint effort between building owners/operators, and occupiers. In fact, according to Knight Frank's (Y)OUR SPACE report, of the occupiers surveyed, only **14%** believed it was their sole responsibility to make their future workplace safer.

Of the remaining **86%**, a range of expectations were referenced, with more regular building cleaning, fewer physical touch-points and increased maintenance of air-conditioning systems being the most popular interventions.



02

Collaboration

After the ‘remote working experiment’ of the Covid-19 pandemic, the purpose of the office has changed. Though most businesses will keep an office in some form, the prescriptive 9-5, five-days-a-week routine is likely to change. While menial tasks can be done at home, employees will use their offices more to collaborate, brainstorm ideas and socialise with their colleagues.

In fact, according to Knight Frank’s (Y)OUR SPACE report, **55%** of survey respondents believe that there will be an increase in the proportion of collaborative space found within their portfolios over the next three years.

7 Collaboration

The Future of Office Design



03

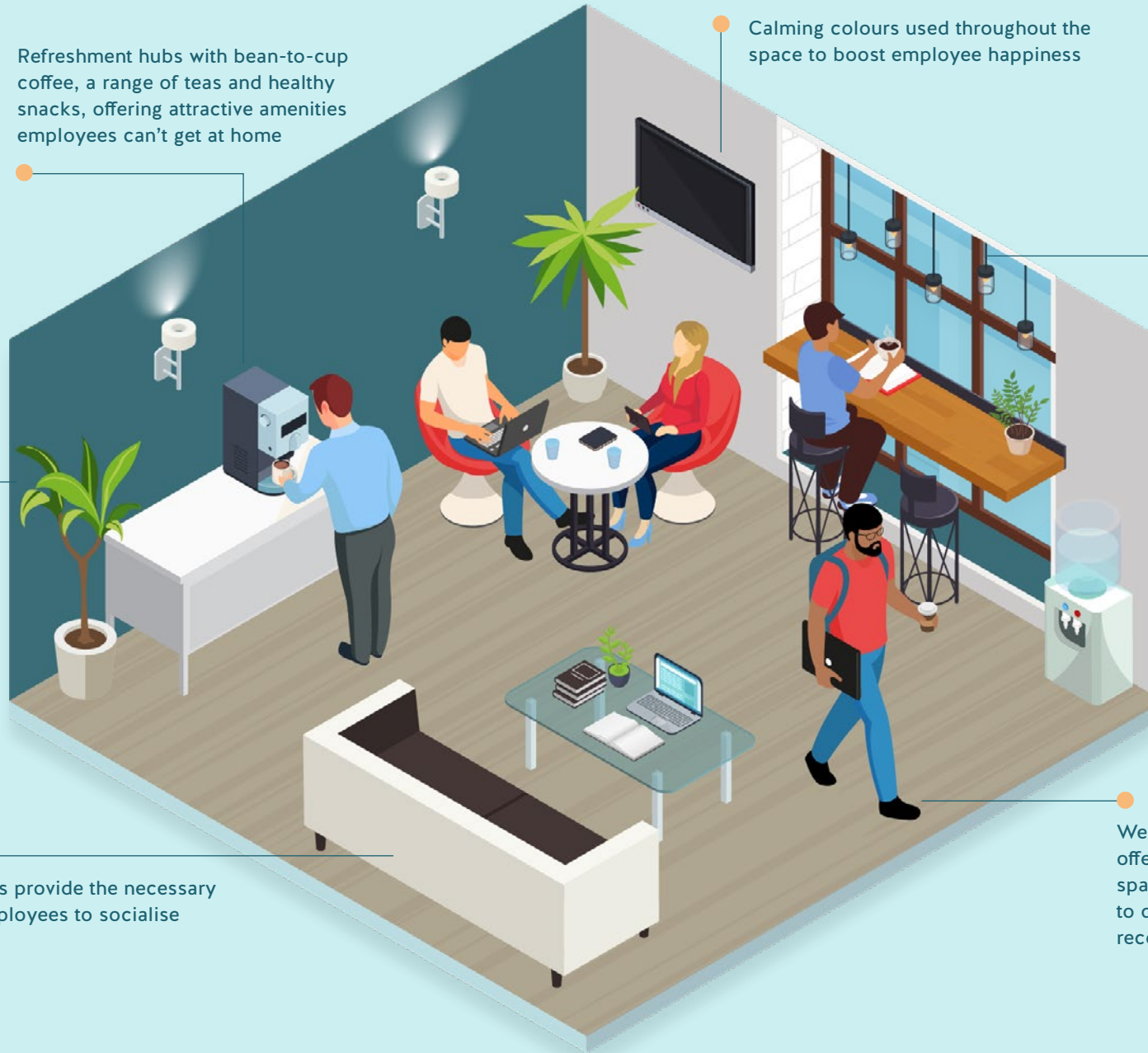
Employee Wellbeing

Given the many challenges employees will have experienced during the pandemic, physical and mental wellbeing are at the top of many business' agendas.

In Knight Frank's (Y)OUR SPACE report, employee wellbeing ranked the third-highest strategic issue identified by respondents (**37%** citing it directly), and the issue has risen two places in the rankings after being fifth in the previous survey in 2018.

With wellbeing clearly a priority, a people-first approach is vital when it comes to office design. In terms of physical features, natural lighting, colours, furniture, and noise control all play a key role in productivity, mood and overall wellbeing. Likewise, bringing nature into a space has been proven to help reduce stress, boost concentration and improve air quality.

Businesses may also wish to offer mental health support, improving communication between employees. Meanwhile, perks like gym membership discounts and on-site amenities - from yoga classes to healthy food and beverage offerings - will play a significant role.



Refreshment hubs with bean-to-cup coffee, a range of teas and healthy snacks, offering attractive amenities employees can't get at home

Calming colours used throughout the space to boost employee happiness

Plenty of natural light, plus high-quality lighting to boost happiness and productivity

Plants on display to help counteract work-related stress

Informal areas provide the necessary space for employees to socialise

Wellness classes and events offered, along with sanctuary spaces allowing employees to disconnect from work and reconnect with themselves

04

Reimagining Space

Post-pandemic, many businesses will be seeking more efficient ways of utilising office space, whether that is moving to a smaller space and reducing their square footage, reconfiguring their existing space, or utilising surplus space.

Fluidity is key. According to Knight Frank's (Y)OUR SPACE report, just over half (**54%**) of survey respondents anticipate extending hot desking and desk-sharing regimes, as our relationship with the office becomes more fluid, and space becomes more collaborative.

On top of that, **36%** of respondents believe that they'll decrease the occupational density in their office portfolios – so that fewer employees are squeezed onto rows of desks. Meanwhile, **77%** of businesses expect to either decrease or maintain the number of desks they have per person over the next three years, with almost six in every ten businesses envisaging desk-to-people ratios of **50%** or below.

Businesses will need to think about remodelling their office to prioritise hot desking, introducing touchdown or overflow space, and making the smartest use of space. An office that can be configured to respond to employees' changing use of space over time will be most valuable.

Businesses will also need to consider how to communicate this shift to employees who may be used to a rigid structure with set desks.

Before



After



05

Company Image

90% of global businesses surveyed as part of Knight Frank's (Y)OUR SPACE report believe office space is a strategic device, and when asked: "What strategic agenda items does real estate support?" **49%** of businesses listed corporate brand & image – positioning it in first place among all other strategic agenda items.

Fundamentally, high-quality, well-designed space (both inside and out) supports brand identity and makes a clear statement. Utilising office space to portray corporate brand & image can range from occupying a green-rated building to signify a commitment to ESG, through to having a rooftop terrace to highlight your company's promotion of work-life balance.

On a smaller scale, when designing a workspace with corporate image in mind, logos and brand colours are obvious considerations. These should be used consistently throughout the space, ideally positioned where visitors would be able to see them, at reception and in meeting rooms.

Company culture and values can also be portrayed through additional features, such as a photo wall, a ping pong table or bean bags, acting as both a social hub and a conversation starter for visitors.



Conclusion

The role of the workspace is undoubtedly shifting in line with rapidly changing demands. Flexibility, wellbeing, and collaboration are in - while set desks, unoccupied workspace and grey, boring offices are out.

The new workspace will require a greater focus on design and quality than ever before, and businesses will need to prepare to reconfigure and redesign their space accordingly. In the past, businesses have needed to do this themselves - which is an undertaking often outside of an organisation's resources and expertise - but there are now many different options available to them.

Yours by Work.Life enables businesses to seamlessly customise their layout, design and service level to create their perfect office space. Our expert Workspace Designers are available to consult on the optimal floorplans for your preferences and priorities, whether it's a collaborative setting, a space equipped for health & safety, or a haven designed with wellbeing in mind.



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to find your new
workspace, or
learn how you can
create your perfect
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