

An illustration from a top-down perspective showing four people seated around a light blue rectangular table. The background is a solid dark blue. The people are depicted in a stylized, flat-art manner. Clockwise from the top left: a man in a grey shirt, a woman in a light blue shirt writing on a notepad, a woman with blonde hair in a grey shirt using a laptop, and a man in a light blue shirt with glasses holding a pen. The text 'The Middle East Office Design Toolkit 2021' is centered on the table.

The Middle East Office Design Toolkit 2021

12 design secrets of an
utterly brilliant workspace

Curated by:

roar

12 design secrets of an utterly brilliant workspace



1: From Covid to Liquid: why 'liquid workforce' is the game-changing legacy for office design



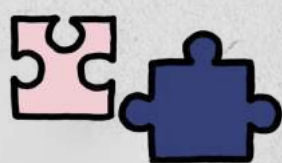
2: Sharing is caring: hotdesks, hoteling and co-working are here to stay



3: Activity-based working: from 'my own desk' to the 'right space for the right job'



4: Placemaking: use geography, history and the 'destination lobby' to tell a story



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11: Environment: design green offices for the circular economy

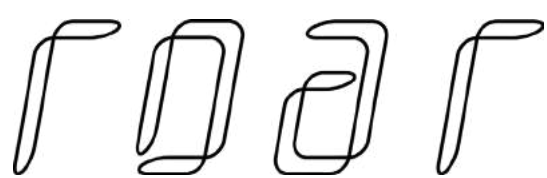


12: Hotels and Homes: steal designs from other buildings

Overview

“In this report we reveal the secret sauce of utterly brilliant offices: the 12 design ideas that form the bedrock of happy, healthy & productive workspaces which are both functional and fun. Some are new – the response to COVID-19 – while others are timeless”.

Pallavi Dean



ABOUT

Roar is an interior design and architecture studio based in Dubai Design District. Roar's portfolio of office projects across the Middle East include McKinsey & Co., Takeda Pharmaceutical, Edelman and the Sharjah Research and Technology Institute.

Roar is also active in hospitality, education and residential design – and believes firmly that incorporating elements of these diverse fields makes for better work environments.

www.designbyroar.com // [instagram @designbyroar](https://www.instagram.com/designbyroar)



01:

From Covid to Liquid

why the 'liquid workforce' is the game-changing
legacy for office design



Quick Summary:

If there'll be one long-term legacy of COVID-19 for office design, we believe it's this: **the liquid workforce**.

This is a workforce that flows seamlessly between working from home and working from the office. Zooming in their pyjamas in the morning, before power dressing for a high-stakes pitch at a client's HQ at lunchtime. Taking time off for their kids' sports day on Tuesday afternoon, but pouring over spreadsheets in Starbucks on Saturday morning.

Here's why believe that while most 2020 office design fads will quickly fade, designing for a **liquid workforce** will stick around...



"Clients don't hire us to design an office for today; they hire us to create a future-proofed workspace for the next decade."

Short-term tactics

In the short-term, office life has been turned on its head. But we believe that many, if not most, of the 'new normals' of 2020 will soon fade away. This matters, because office designers think not in months and years, but decades: the working life of a typical office fit-out is 10 years or more.

As such, it's our job to ignore short-term fads and focus on enduring, long-term principles. So ask yourself: for how long will the following features be a regular part of office life?

- 2m social distancing
- Security guards with thermometers
- Arrows on the floor to ensure "one way" walking
- Posters saying "wash your hands for 20 seconds"
- Police-style tape to block off every second desk
- 'A teams' and 'B teams' spending alternate days in the office
- Meeting rooms and collaboration spaces in mothballs
- Zooming at home with kids crying in the background
- Face masks

We give them a year or two at most.

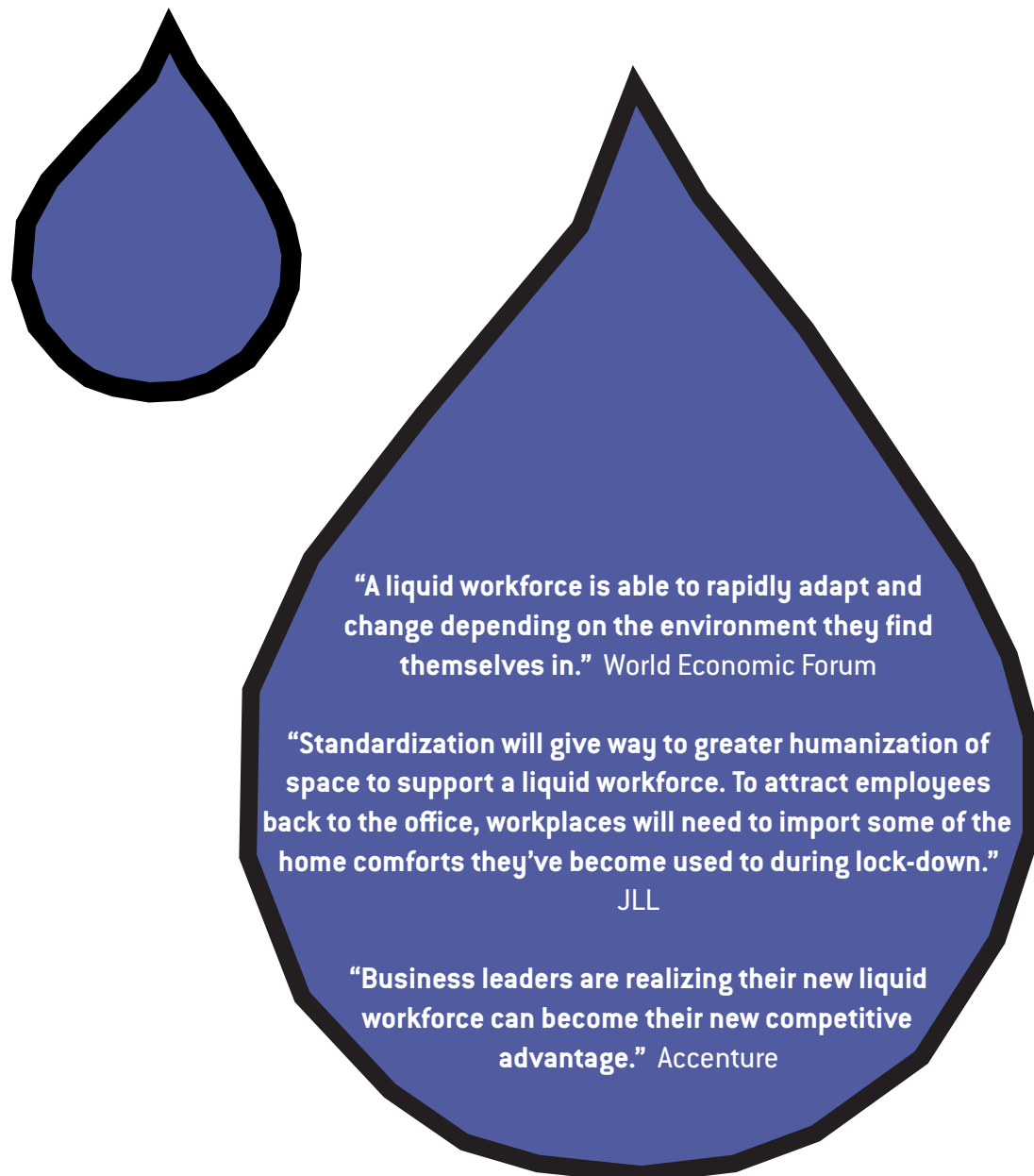
Herman Miller describes these as "short-term tactics", and they make perfect sense during a global pandemic - but not in a post-pandemic world. As office designers, clients don't hire us to design an office for today; they hire us to create a future-proofed workspace for the next decade.



Long-term strategy

Which brings us to the liquid workforce. Evidence suggests that this will be the enduring change to office life from COVID-19, and by extension, the enduring change for office design. Don't take our word for it – many of the world's top organisations agree:

Why liquid is here to stay!



The Middle East has been slow to embrace #workfromhome – but COVID-19 is a game changer.

According to a report by the Dubai Future Foundation, *pre-pandemic only 10% of UAE firms allowed office staff to work from home one or two days a week*, compared with 32% in Japan and 69% in the US. But the enforced #workfromhome policies of mid-2020 made regional companies and governments rethink a range of HR policies such as productivity, visas, technology and working hours. All of which have big implications for office design.

One or two days a week is the likely sweet spot for remote working.

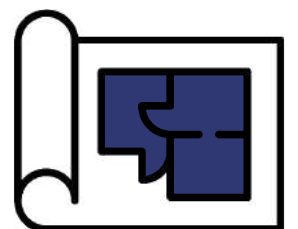
Quick Summary:



Netflix expects one day a week to be the norm for remote working, with four days in the office. Researchers at Stanford University expect two days a week of remote work to be the norm. *JLL says only 4.9% of staff want to work from home full time*; a third want to work in the office full time, with the rest in favour of hybrid.

Focus on the areas of the office where the magic happens.

If we're spending less time in the office, we need to make every minute count. Which means building more spaces where the magic happens – and those are often the public/collaboration spaces. McKinsey & Co. says office designers must "resize the footprint creatively" post-COVID. It asks the following questions: *"should 80 percent of the office be devoted to collaboration rooms?"* **80% is a big number!** It may not be quite that high for every organisation. But settling on the optimal split for your operation is crucial to the success of your office.



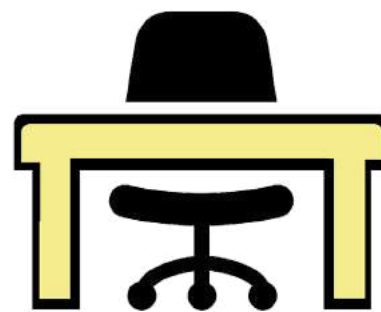
"If I had to guess, the five-day workweek will become four days in the office while one day is virtual from home."

Reed Hastings, Netflix.



"Working from home is here to stay, but post-pandemic will be optimal at about two days a week."

Stanford University

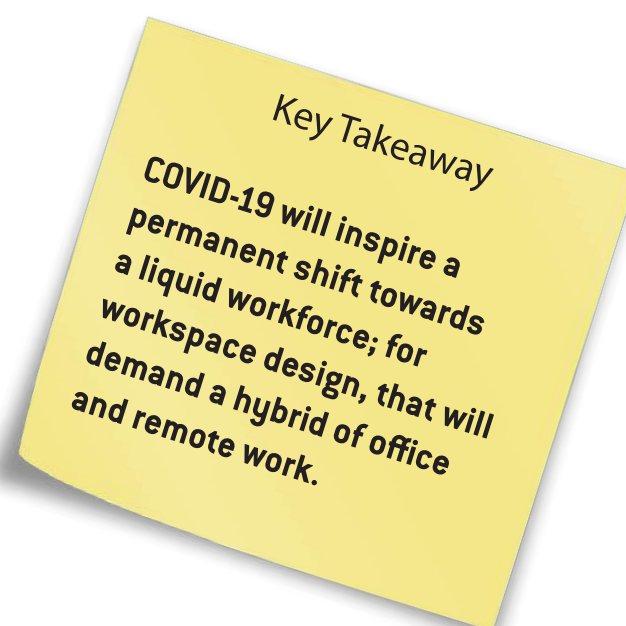
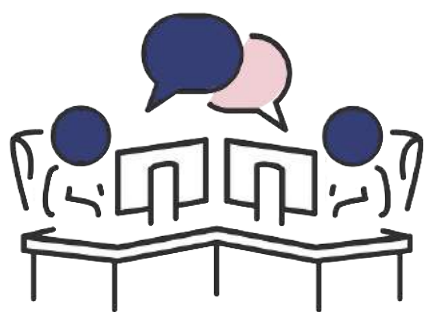


Rethink traditional density ratios.

Old rules of thumb like 100 sq ft per employee may no longer be relevant¹, as office utilization rates decline. Concepts like hotdesking, hoteling and co-working – already gathering momentum before the pandemic – will come into greater focus. Short-term, health concerns will reverse these trends. But long-term, as hybrid working becomes more commonplace, *having ‘my own desk’ in the office may be increasingly rare.*

Traditional head offices will remain – boosted by flexible co-working space.

While some companies may thrive with zero commercial real estate, most will retain some kind of head office. Research from JLL suggests that these *head offices may be smaller*, as companies look to cut back on expensive, long-term leases. Instead, companies may ‘top-up’ their office capacity as needed, with short-term rental of WeWork-type spaces.

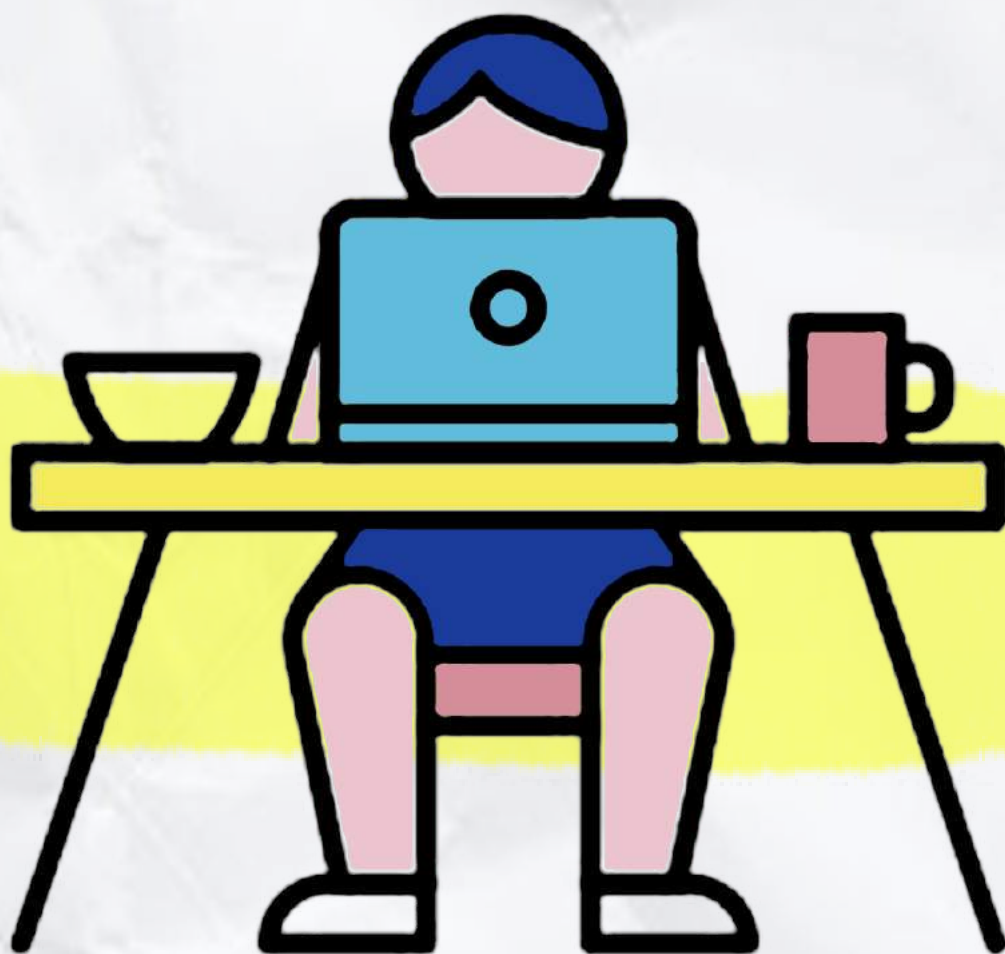


¹ The DMCC Free Zone in Dubai stipulates one employee visa per 9 square meters, or 96 square feet of office space.

02:

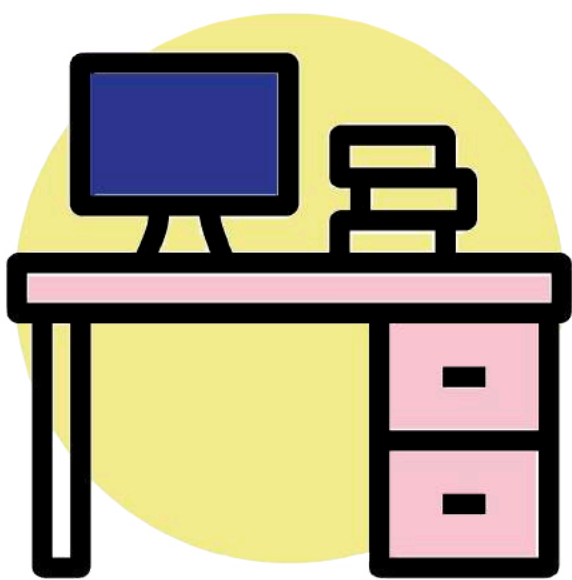
Sharing is caring

hotdesks, hoteling and
co-working are here to stay



Quick Summary

We believe that for many – not all, but many – office workers, the future will lean towards **sharing desks**. Here’s why:



We are rarely at our own desk.

Pre-pandemic research by Herman Miller shows that for rank and file employees, our chair is empty 60% of the working day. For senior managers, that rises to 77%. As more companies deploy sensors to track our movements, data like this will become more compelling.

We perform low value-add tasks at our desks.

Adobe says workers spend 209 minutes every day checking work email. These are typically low value “process and respond” tasks performed at our own desk; our sofa at home or a comfy chair in Starbucks would be efficient substitutes.

Of course, many staff do justify their own desk. A number of corporate functions - HR, finance, legal and others – demand confidentiality. Many staff perform high value ‘deep work’ tasks at their desks. Many managers value the privacy of their own office for one-on-one meetings. But for the rest, desk sharing is likely to accelerate once the acute phase of the COVID pandemic has passed. Ultimately, we believe the economics will overrule medical concerns.

Having your own desk is expensive.

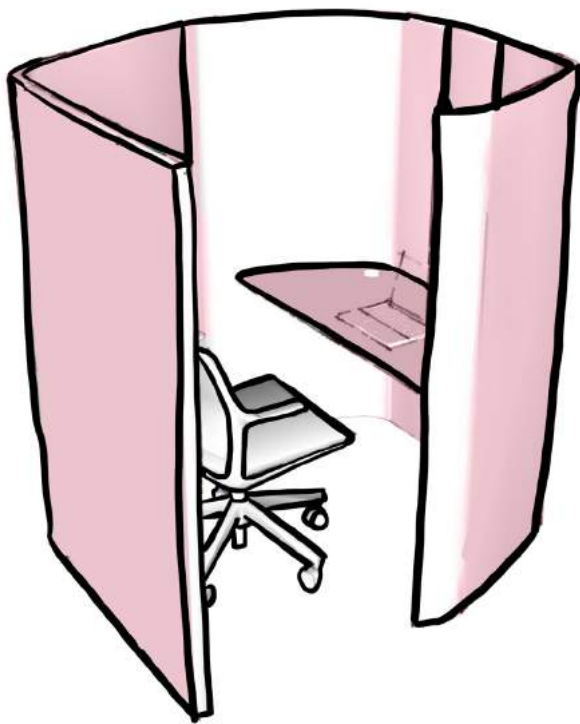
McKinsey & Co. estimates that 10%-20% of the cost-per-employee for companies is office real estate. Simply put, many of us just aren’t worth our own desk.

Here are the 3 types
of **desk sharing**
we believe will grow
in importance:

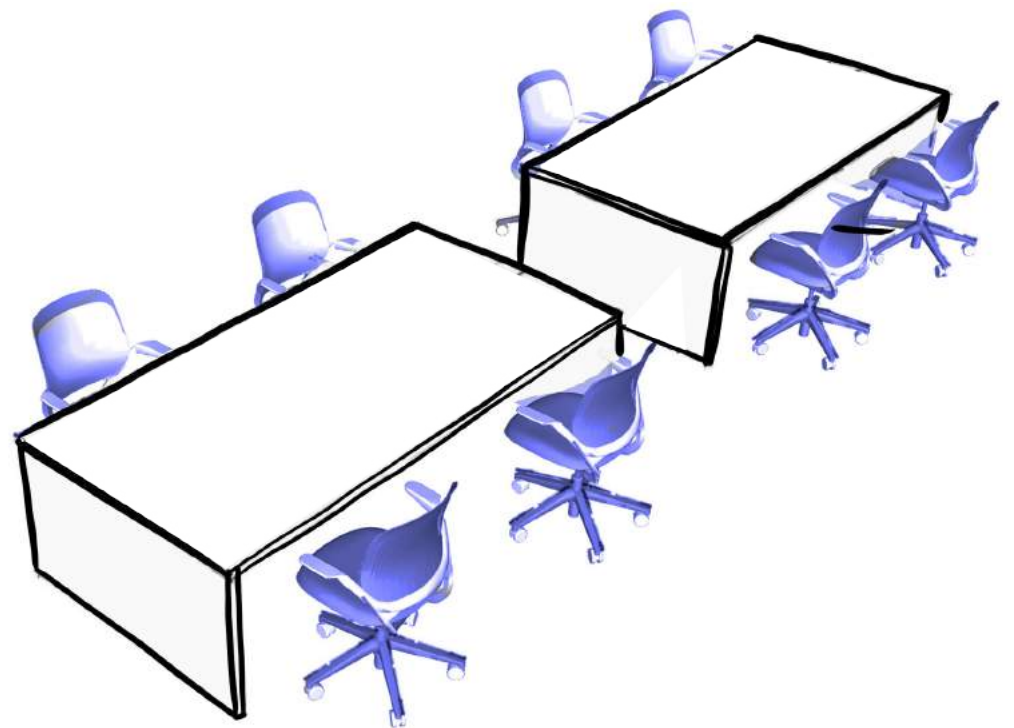
Practical
Design
Solutions

Hot-desk: The original first-come-first-served approach to shared desks. Typically we think of a long bench with chairs spaced a few feet apart, and there's no doubt that this type of bench seating can work well in an office. But hotdesking as a concept applies to a much broader range of seating styles.

Steelcase and the University of Wisconsin-Madison conducted a study contrasting two extremes. One group of participants worked on a shared bench, while a second group worked in an individual work pod called Brody, which is closed on three sides, offering a degree of visual and acoustic privacy. All participants completed Sustained Attention Response Task (SART), a test that measures how well/badly people maintain their focus amidst distractions.



Individual work



Shared work bench

The results: the pod won, with only 41% of wrong answers in the test. For the bench group, 49% of responses were incorrect. Clearly this performance comes at a price: these pods typically cost more than \$2,500. But it demonstrates an important principle. Hot-desking doesn't have to mean a noisy, open-plan bench: with a bit of creativity, it can be more akin to the semi-privacy of a business or first class airline cabin.

Hoteling: A close cousin of the hotdesk, but with an added feature: reservations. It requires a central booking system, but these are fairly common now, usually involving a simple smartphone app.



Co-working: These spaces are increasingly popular with large enterprises as well as plucky start-ups. So expect to see bankers in pin-stripe suits alongside entrepreneurs in hoodies at your local WeWork. The co-working model is so popular that many large companies and governments are creating their own in-house co-working spaces, with soft 'lean-back' furniture and baristas.



Still not convinced? Check out this case study from Accenture.

The global consultancy embraced the concept of shared desks early on, reaping the benefits with an office design model it calls Workplace 2.0. Take their office in Houston, Texas. It went from three floors and 66,000 square feet down to one floor of 25,000 square feet, yet still supports over 800 people. That's just 31 sq ft per person. Clearly they cannot all work there at the same time. But Accenture crunched the numbers on office density (the company employs consultants who often work away with clients) and made it work for them.

Key Takeaway
Sharing desks will increasingly replace 'my own desk' for many office workers – so designers must use a variety of shared seating options to make it fun and productive.

Each company and each office is different, and nobody would advocate a one-size-fits-all cookie-cutter design. But we do need a consistent approach. Thankfully, a growing body of research is at hand in fields such as proxemics (the study of interpersonal space) and Deep Work (the study of personal productivity). This is helping designers make evidenced-based decisions, mitigating the role of hunches, bias, inertia and trendy fads.

03:

Activity-based working

from 'my own desk' to the 'right space for the right job'



Quick Summary

The concept of activity-based working (ABW) is nothing new: American architect Robert Luchetti coined the phrase in the 1970s, while Dutch designer Erik Veldhoen spread the word in the 1990s through his classic book *The Demise of the Office*.

Here’s how Veldhoen describes it:

“Through the course of a typical working day, employees engage in different and varied activities, and they would therefore benefit from a range of work settings. That’s a major change in direction for organisations where employees have designated desks.”

At its best, the principles behind ABW really do help employees to be more creative, productive and happy. At its worst, proponents are so dogmatic that they throw the baby out with the bath-water: sometimes giving a worker a good, old-fashioned cubicle or private office really is the right design decision!

What does ABW mean in practice for office design and fit-out in the 2020s? WeWork helpfully breaks it down into “Eight kinds of space your office needs for activity-based working.” They are:



- Phone booths
- Café-style atmospheres with hot desks
- Restaurant-style booths
- Formal conference rooms
- Informal conference rooms
- Soft seating
- Quiet nooks
- Outdoor terraces



Look, no list is exhaustive. Herman Miller has its 10 “Ideal Settings” for work, including havens, show-and-tell and plazas. Maker spaces are all the rage at the moment. We could go on. The point is not that one space is inherently superior to another: it’s to change the mindset from “how many desks do we need for our people?” to “what activities do our people need to carry out?”



The Evidence

Crucially, the evidence suggests ABW works. Herman Miller and Leesman studied a number of office redesign projects that incorporated the principles of ABW, conducting a series of before-and-after surveys on workplace effectiveness. Before redesign the offices scored 56; after redesign they scored 76; the global benchmark is 62.

One word of caution when it comes to introducing ABW in your office:

people! Leesman is a passionate advocate of ABW, but acknowledges that some staff are resistant. It breaks workers down into four types, ranging from the “**camper/squatter**” who never wants to leave their desk, to the “**intrepid explorer**” who loves walking around the office to perform different tasks. (more on this in chapter 5...)

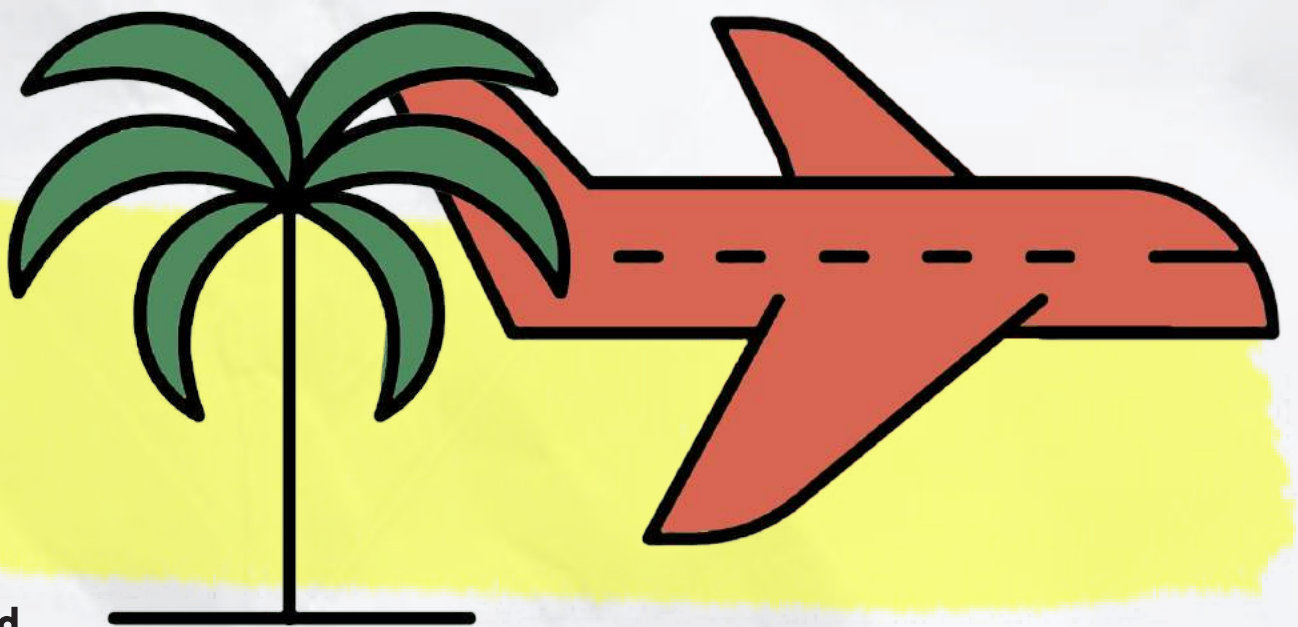
Key Takeaway

We don't have to embrace the most extreme form of activity-based working – but many of its basic principles can make for creative, productive and happy staff.

04:

Placemaking

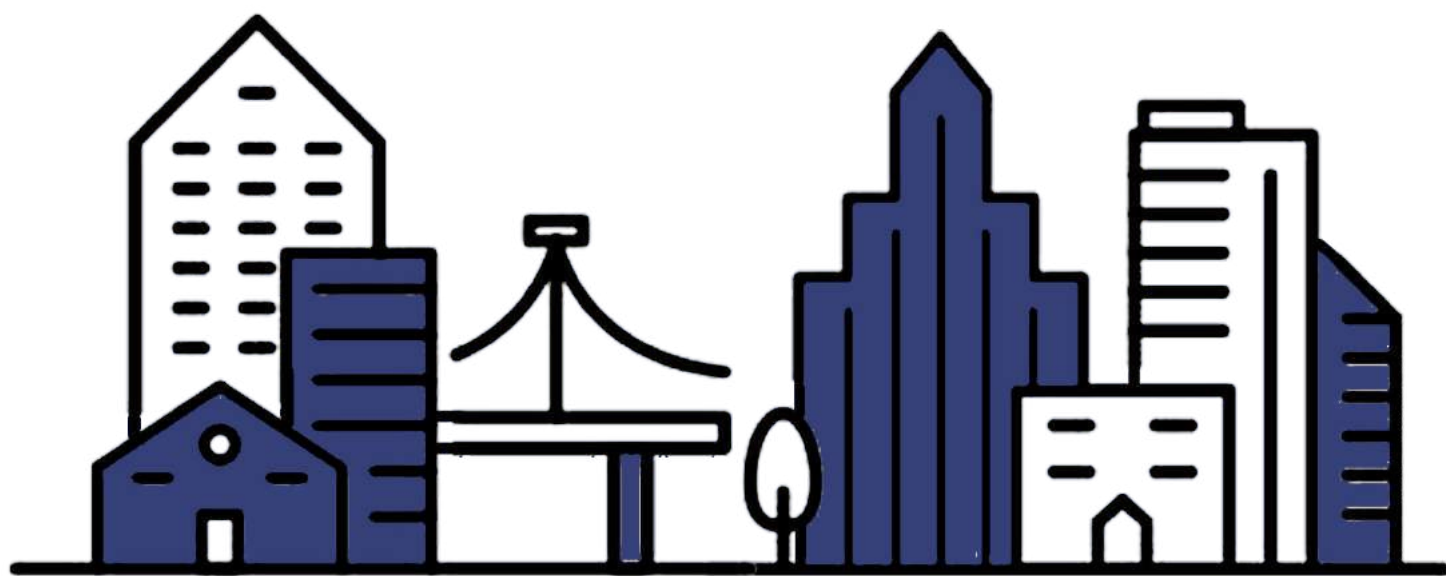
use geography, history and
the 'destination lobby' to tell a
story



Quick Summary

Placemaking is a fork in the road for office design. It switches direction from a purely functional, task-based approach to something more narrative. It elevates the office from a utilitarian workspace into a place that can inspire. It gives a **space personality!**

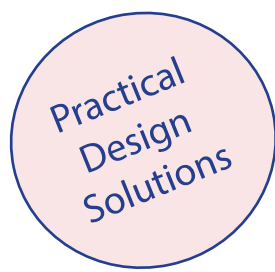
The concept of placemaking began in outdoor public spaces in the 1960s and 70s. Landscape architects and urban planners began making a conscious effort to create areas in towns and cities that would act as a vibrant hub for the community, attracting residents and visitors. Tools included planting trees, creating walkways, art installations, café culture, and generally giving the areas a **“sense of place,”** creating a story around the neighbourhood. Successful examples of placemaking to create a vibrant public realm include Detroit’s Eastern Market and the area around Burj Khalifa in Dubai.



Office designers are taking these principles and applying them to the workplace. The most obvious examples are the campuses of large companies such as the Googleplex in San Francisco – a world famous destination that both reflects and reinforces the culture and story of Google.

But it’s also happening small scale. CBRE notes that placemaking in office design is gathering momentum, as a way to attract and retain talent; it defines placemaking in offices as **“integrating design, amenities, and community to create a unique space where people want to be.”**

Take so-called ‘destination lobbies’. Whereas the traditional office lobby was mainly a gatekeeper space, to keep out unwanted visitors and send legitimate guests to the right place, destination lobbies make a statement, borrowing elements from hotel design. They’re not purely functional – they’re places with a buzz and a vibe.



Biophilia – bringing the outdoors inside through indoor trees, plants, water features etc



Local – reflecting local culture, history and nature through materials, imagery and craftsmanship



Culture – reflecting the organizational ethos through colour, typography and branding



Social – making the lobby a hangout space, with comfortable seating and F&B options



Finally, remember that the lobby isn't the only space that can get the placemaking treatment: these techniques work throughout the design, in both public and private areas. Sure, lots of companies name meeting rooms after local landmarks, and that's a good start! But there are far more strings to the designer's bow...

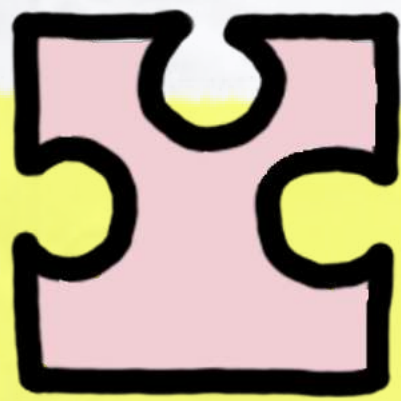
Key Takeaway

Placemaking techniques can elevate an office from a drab, functional place of work to an aspirational destination where people want to gather. A place with personality!

05:

People are different

design for introverts, extroverts and all points between



Quick Summary:

Here's the bad news for office designers: different people like different types of offices.

Yep, that can be frustrating and expensive! But the reality is that if you want to get the best out of everyone on your payroll – from the extrovert sales heroes to the high-performing introverts – you've gotta design not one workspace, but a variety of workspaces that deliver for all of them.

Here's the good news: with a bit of thought and planning, it's possible.

Below are the key findings from a great piece of research on this subject by Myers Briggs and office furniture specialist KI.²

"Different personality types have different views about their workplace, and work more effectively when certain environmental conditions are met." This may seem like stating the obvious – but the reality is that most companies don't make personality type a big factor when making decisions about workspace design.

81% of extroverts are happy at work, but only 61% of introverts.

That's because many offices are designed by extroverts, for extroverts. Think about it: C-suite executives tend to be extroverts, and have unintentional bias towards the type of office they like. The ones who shout loudest tend to get their way on office design decisions. That must change.

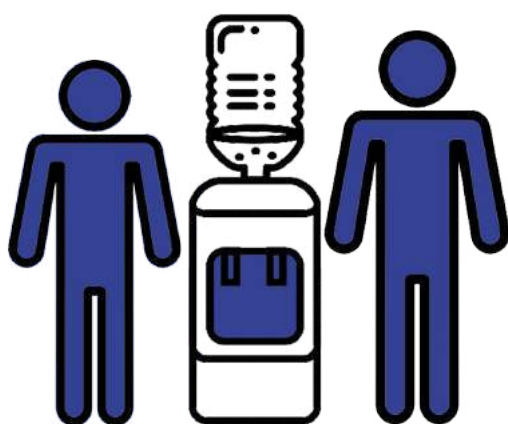
Conservers

Conservers are quiet and keep themselves focused on the task, so may use walls and furniture to create their own defined area of the office. These personality types are practical, organised and thorough.



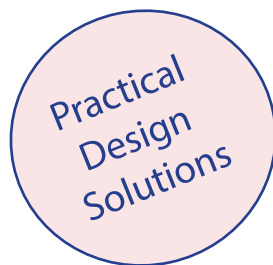
Activists

Activists are spontaneous, social animals who enjoy the buzz of the workplace. They are unlikely to stay sitting at their desk for long periods, instead preferring to migrate to where things are happening



JLL has a similar breakdown of the different personality types in an office. At one extreme are “Anchors”, who spend 80-100% of their time at their desk – a typical example is an HR role. At the other extreme are “Navigators” who spend less than 20% of their time at their desks – typical example is a sales role. Remember Chapter 3 on ABW? Leesman talks about Squatters vs Explorers. The labels don’t matter: the point is the same.

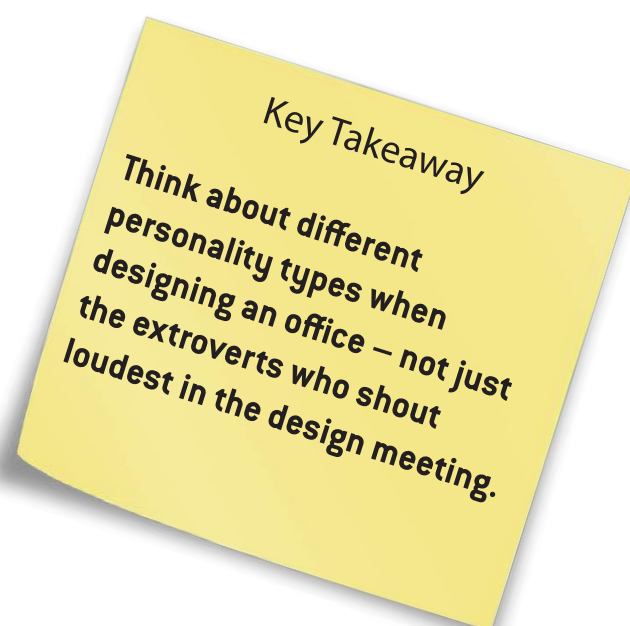
How do you design an office that keeps both the *'squatters'* and *'explorers'* happy and productive? Here are a few practical design tips from the KI/Myers Briggs research:



***Noise** Create 'neighbourhoods' within open plan offices using partition panels, booths or storage, with acoustic panels to cut down on noise. "Designate quiet zones to provide a much-needed oasis for employees."

***Variety** "Create variety in the scale and intimacy of hot desk zones," so people can find a place that works for them. If you can't give everyone their own desk, at least give them their own locker, so they have a bit of personal territory.

***Build a 'Cool Office'**. There's one thing all personality types agree on – everyone loves a 'cool office'. The research found that "well-designed, aesthetically pleasing offices were almost universally appreciated by those we surveyed." The research cited quirky lounge chairs in breakout zones; well-equipped dining areas; and state-of-the-art tech such as 3D printers. These things meet with near universal approval, regardless of personality type.



06:

Culture

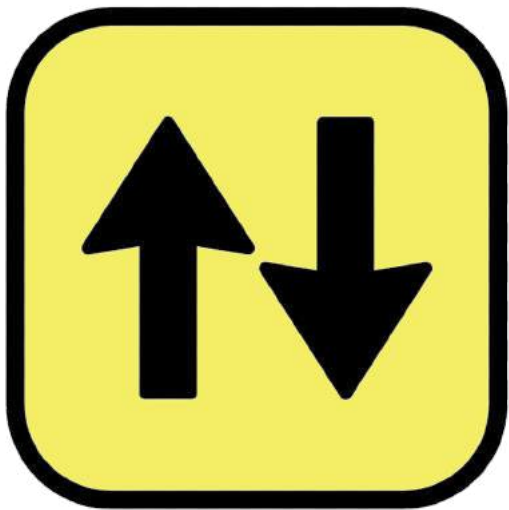


Culture drives office design – but
design can also drive culture

Quick Summary

The relationship between workplace culture and workplace design is a two-way street. On one level, *culture drives design*: a tech start-up will want a different look, feel and layout to a 100-yr-old law firm. But on another level, *design drives culture*, reinforcing the behaviours and norms that a company aspires to. Let's look at them in turn.

Culture drives design



Design Drives Culture

Culture drives design

Understanding an organisation's culture is a well-trodden path for office designers. The designer will ask about the work culture, the history of the firm, brand values, core mission, the written and unwritten rules about "this is how we do it here" etc. The designer then goes away and creates a design story to reflect this.

This story drives design decisions. Sometimes in a very literal way, such as carving the company's slogan on the walls of the entrance lobby. For years, Google had the phrase "Don't be evil" emblazoned across offices, in the company's signature multi-coloured font.

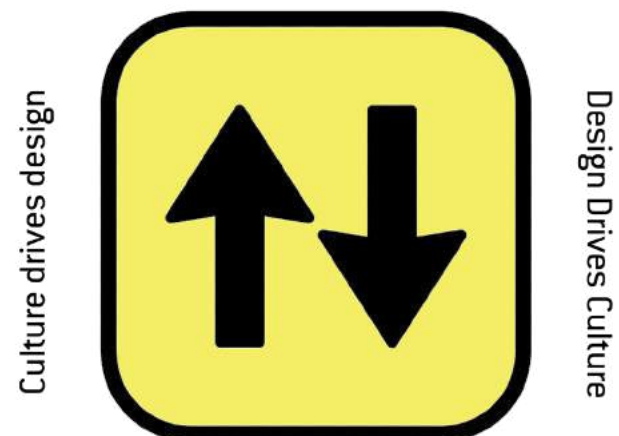
Other times it's more subtle. If flexibility and collaboration are core values, that drives the space planning, with fewer personal desks and more breakout spaces. By contrast, for many conservative companies and governments in the Middle East, privacy is important. Staff value a private office, so maximizing the number of enclosed and semi-enclosed small offices drives the space planning. That's how culture drives design.

Design drives culture

Sometimes the cause-and-effect works in the opposite direction: office design can be a tool to break an old culture and create a new one. One example: at Roar, we designed a new Middle East headquarters in Dubai for global media company Edelman,³ following its acquisition of local PR firm DABO & Co . Creating a unified culture among two firms that had been competitors for years was a key part of the design brief.

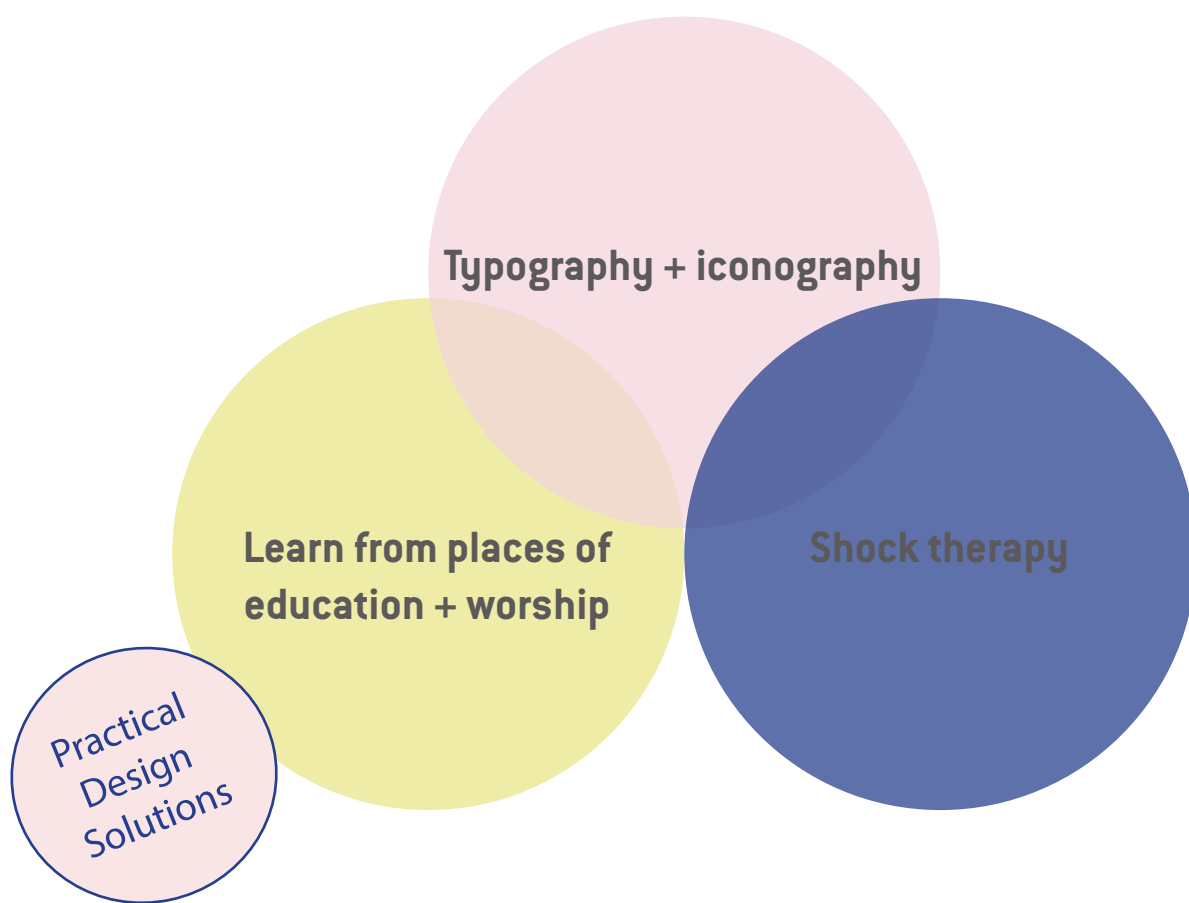
Harvard Business Review wrote a 2016 case study on how tech giant Adobe re-designed its New York office to re-shape the culture⁴ . Staff were increasingly working remotely; bosses were concerned that the firm was losing its cultural identity. *“The space itself wasn’t giving people a compelling reason to come to the office unless they had to,”* wrote HBR.

The solution: create a “destination” work environment. The new Adobe design included more collaboration spaces, more informal breakout spaces, but also clearly defined quiet areas for deep, personal concentration. Not to mention buzzing F&B venues with views over Times Square, known for hosting *“epic New Year’s Eve parties.”*



³ <https://www.commercialinteriordesign.com/insight/42048-fusion-of-colour-and-culture>

⁴ <https://hbr.org/2016/05/7-factors-of-great-office-design>



***Typography + iconography:** Ditch the framed A4 printout of your mission statement above reception. Instead use graffiti, stone carvings, back-lit glass, 3D printing, a video wall, laser-cut wood or neon lighting. Borrow shamelessly from restaurant and retail design.

***Learn from places of education + worship.** Schools and universities have been using mottos and crests for centuries, in the design of everything from grand assembly halls to uniforms. Places of worship also have a rich history in reinforcing their culture, values, stories, rituals and behaviours through building design.

***Shock therapy:** Use an office redesign as shock-therapy to break an old, destructive culture and replace it with a healthy new one. Say your company has a 'hierarchy' culture – but wants to foster a new 'clan' culture⁵. Rip out the old private offices and cubicles with fixed walls, and replace with a variety of collaboration spaces, cafes, and a hoteling policy for private workspaces. (*Warning: some staff will hate you!*)

Key Takeaway
The existing company culture must drive the design of the office, reflecting the history and values. But it also works in reverse – office design really can help to mold a new company culture.

07:

Wellbeing

Not just a nice-to-have anymore



Quick Summary

For all the downside of COVID-19, there may be one long-term upside for office design: employee wellbeing has moved from being a niche ‘nice-to-have’ for a handful of enlightened bosses, to a core part of every workplace design strategy.

“We spend approximately 90% of our time indoors – our environment is the largest determinant of our overall health.”

International Well Building Institute.

Practical Design Solutions

In total there are Ten Concepts that underpin the Well Building codes. We’re not going to repeat them in full, but for busy people who are short on time, here they are broken down into three simple action points.

- ***Nature:** Improve the quality of Air, Light and Water – both for drinking and moisture management.
- ***Ambient:** Improve the quality of Temperature, Sound, Materials and Movement around the space.
- ***Enrichment:** Improve Food, R&R and Community interaction outside the office

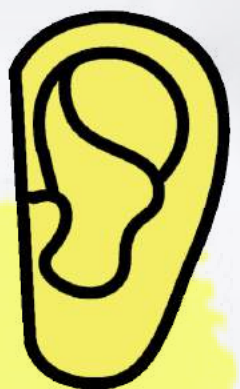
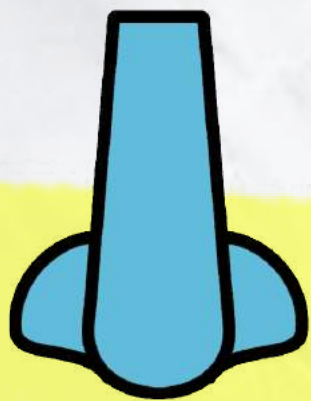
Key Takeaway

The wellbeing of employees has jumped from the sidelines to centre stage. Use practical design solutions to make it happen.

08:

Five senses

Close your eyes to feel, hear
and smell the office



Quick Summary

The key to great office design – indeed, any interior design – is imagining it with your eyes closed. For this insight, we’ve gotta thank the great Canadian-Egyptian designer Karim Rashid. In an interview with Roar founder Pallavi Dean at the Index design event in Dubai, Karim made this point: *“For any interior space I design, I imagine myself blindfolded, and think about the experience I would have.”*

Sure, interior design is primarily a visual experience. But the other four senses – touch, sound, smell and even taste – also play a roll.

Academic research backs this up. Joy Malnar is Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Illinois, and co-author of the book Sensory Design. She writes: *“It’s important for interior designers to raise their perception of sensory data and not just focus exclusively on the visual aesthetic.”*

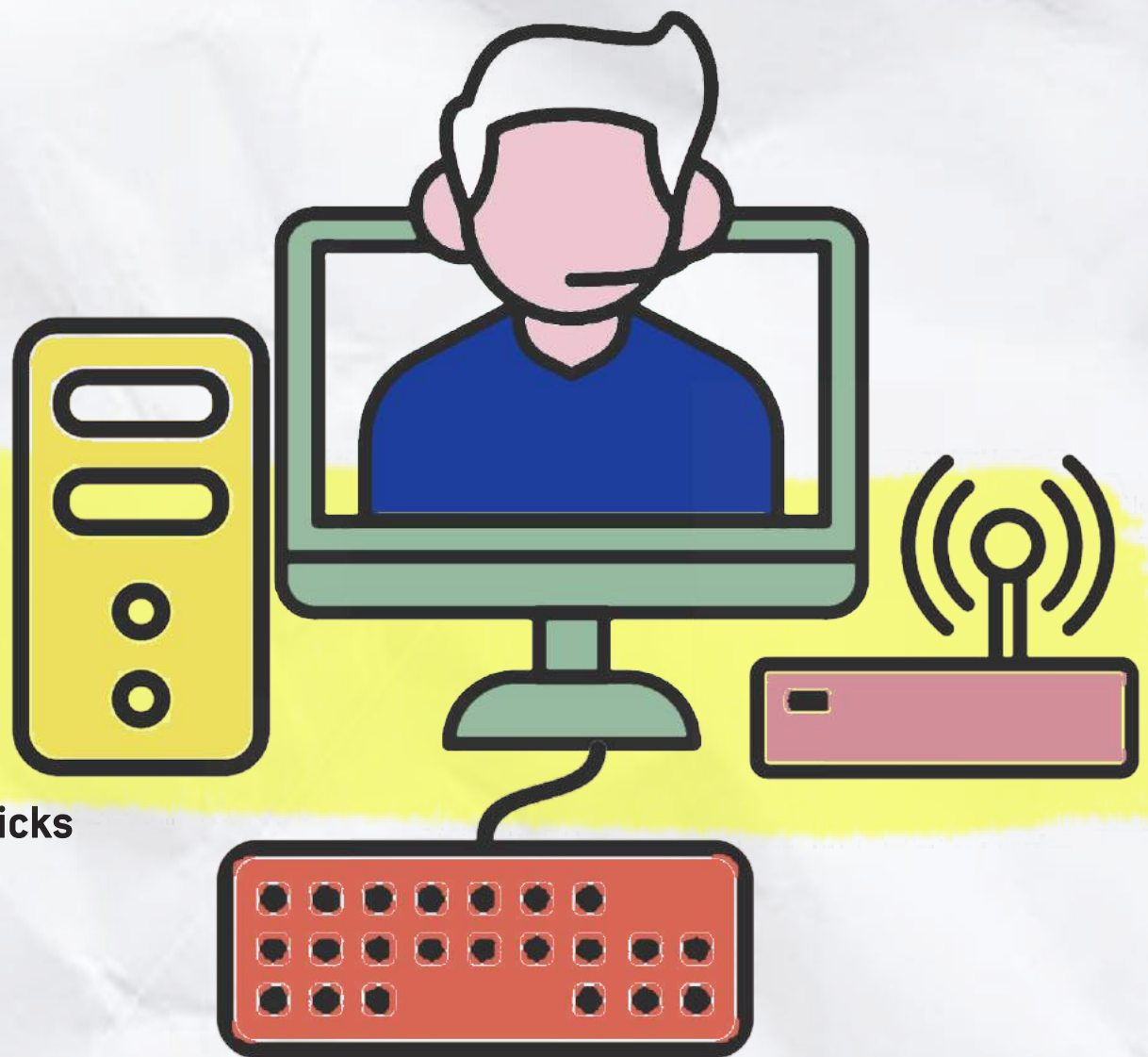
Prof Malnar says spa designers were the first to really get this: they realised that to create truly immersive, enjoyable experiences for customers coming for a manicure or massage, multiple touch points had to hit the spot.



Visual still matters in office design - lighting is vital, as is creating a ‘wow’ factor Instagram moments. Just don’t forget to layer on top the other senses. For a moment, think like a spa designer.

09: Technology

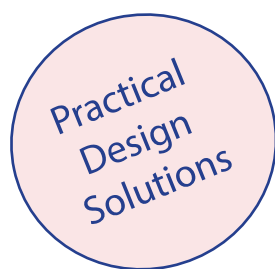
separating expensive gimmicks
from efficient function



Quick Summary

Here we separate the fads from the functional. Sure, some technologies are just expensive gimmicks – solutions looking for a problem, not the other way around. But at its best, tech really can boost the experience for office workers, and cut costs in the process.

Below is a list of must-have technologies to consider for your new office. The good news: most of them don't cost the earth.



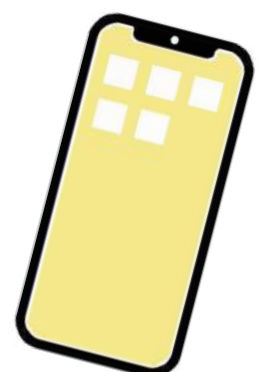
Sensors

Systems such as Herman Miller's Live Platform monitor which spaces are being used most in an office – and which are empty. This helps solve arguably the No.1 problem in office design: space planning. So if the data shows you that your boardroom is only used 18% of the working day, but there are never enough tables in the café, you can convert the space. (Warning! Some staff will hate you as they'll think you are spying on them!).

Booking apps

The upside of an agile, flexible workspace with remote working and hotdesks is efficiency. The downside is that it all falls apart when everyone turns up at the office on the same day. The solution: booking apps.

Take Deloitte's Amsterdam office known as The Edge, which was described as 'The Greenest Office Building in the World' when it opened in 2015. There are 1,000 desks for 2,500 workers. So Deloitte developed an app to book the space you need for your day – a sitting desk, a standing desk, all manner of meeting rooms, a 'concentration room', or a sofa in the lobby-style atrium. Deloitte developed their own app for this, but many can be bought off the shelf: Siemens created one of the best, Comfy, for what they call "density management". Many similar hoteling-type apps are available relatively cheaply.



Communication

Zoom, Teams and Webex have democratised video conferencing in 2020, but the crappy camera and microphone on your phone or laptop often let you down. Creating an acoustic room for these calls with good speakers, cameras, microphones – and a control panel to make it all work – can cost just a few thousand dollars. Zoom has created its own range of products such as the Neat Bar. Again, many others are available relatively cheaply.



Cutting carbon footprint

Technology really can reduce the amount of energy an office consumes, which means cheaper bills, a healthier planet and healthier workers. (No more scenes of your staff shivering in 19 degree A/C, putting their coat on when arrive at their Riyadh office in August, at the peak of the summer heat!) Systems such as Comfy use AI to optimise everything from air conditioning to lighting levels. Again, many others are available quite cheaply.



Technology with 'wow' factor

While most of the practical tech solutions we like are just that – practical – there's no harm in having a bit of fun! Video walls still make a stunning impact, and are a great way of communicating short, important messages. Transparent screens and holograms add extra buzz, while face recognition that welcomes staff by name still has that 'Minority Report' futuristic feel. Dancing fountains and chandeliers in the lobby are also crowd-stoppers, albeit expensive ones.

Key Takeaway
Technology really can boost the experience for office workers, and cut costs in the process.

10:

Money

use a calculator - get more bang for
your buck in every sq ft



Quick Summary

Office designers will have to get far more friendly with their calculators post-pandemic. The budgets of office clients are being squeezed – which means tenants are squeezing every bit of value from every sq ft of office space.



For interior designers, that means more number crunching. To be fair, data points like density ratios and employees per sq ft were always part of the design process; this data-driven decision making will only accelerate.

Here's JLL's take on how this will play out in the Middle East, according to regional head of research Dana Salbak. Pre-pandemic, there was really only one setting for office work: the corporate HQ 9-to-5. Post-pandemic, there are three settings: the corporate HQ, home, and co-working spaces scattered around the city. ["There is room for the headquarters in Dubai to service the region – it's just going to look very different. It's not going to be the massive floorplate that we're used to,"](#) said Salbak.

Pre-pandemic the sweet spot for corporate HQs in Dubai was 100,000 sq ft plus; by late-2020 it had shrunk to 10,000-50,000 sq ft.

Number Crunching

100,000+ sq ft	pre-pandemic typical HQ size in Dubai
10,000-50,000 sq ft	post-pandemic typical HQ size in Dubai
300 sq ft	space per worker in typical US law firm
150sq ft	space per worker in typical US office
96 sq ft	space per worker in Dubai Multi Commodities Center (minimum for visa)
31 sq ft	space per worker in Accenture Denver office
0.4	desks per worker at Deloitte Amsterdam office
10%-20%	% of worker's salary employers typically spend on real estate

Source: JLL; Cushman & Wakefield; DCCA; Accenture; Deloitte; McKinsey; Roar

The design problem is to do more with less – to sweat the asset. Practical design solutions include things we highlighted earlier: hybrid, hotdesks, hoteling and activity-based work etc. Ultimately, it's the economics 💰 that will force the hand of office tenants and make these design solutions happen.

Key Takeaway

Data-driven design decisions will become increasingly important in office fit-outs. Interior designers must learn to crunch the numbers.

11:

Environment

design green offices for the circular economy



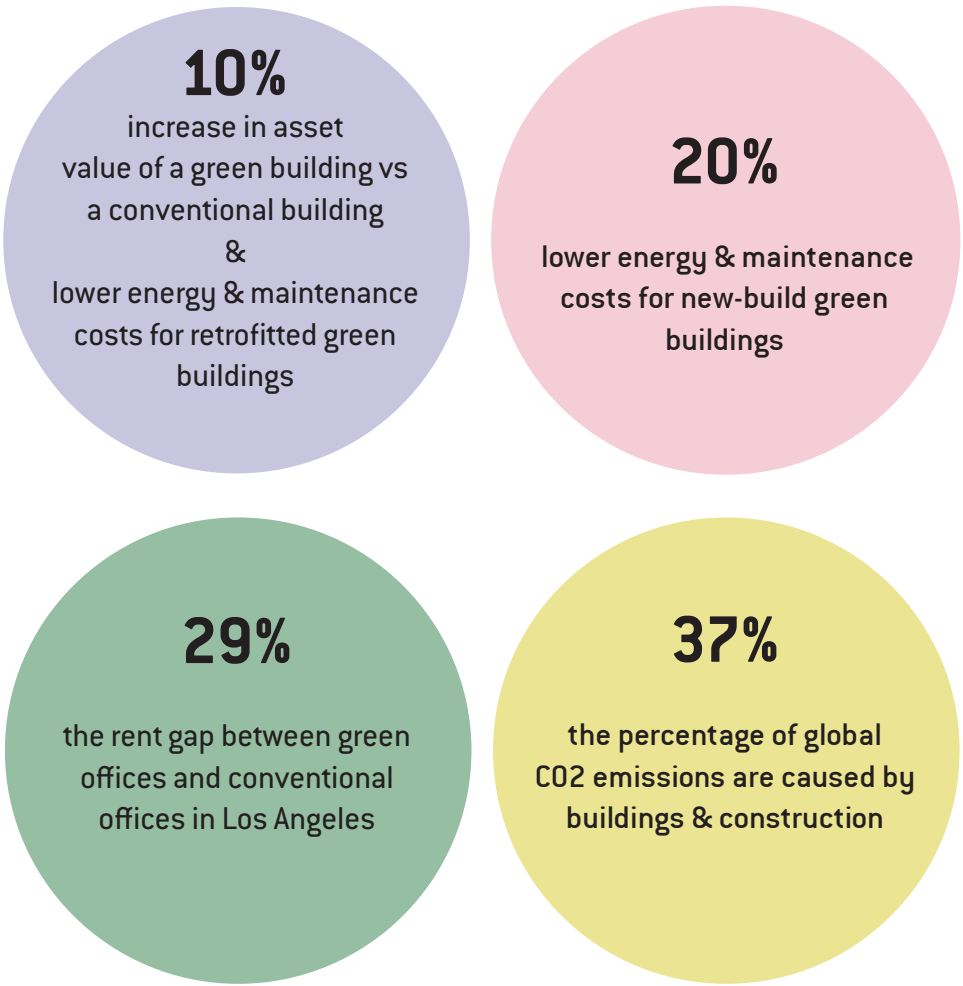
Quick Summary

Here are a handful of quick-and-easy design hacks to make your office greener. Look, the world has no shortage of detailed manifestos for green building design, from LEED globally to Estidama in Abu Dhabi. We won't try to replicate them in this report - just a handful of helpful hints to score a few quick wins.



“It’s not that easy being green”
Kermit the Frog

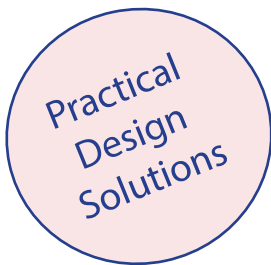
Reasons to go green: the numbers



Source: US Green Building Council

Check this out! **Green design case study:**
Takeda Pharmaceutical Dubai

For the Middle East headquarters of Japanese drug firm Takeda Pharmaceuticals, Roar partnered with Summertown Interiors. The project was certified LEED Silver. Summertown has built its reputation as one of the most eco-friendly contractors in the region. Here are a handful of quick, cheap and easy design hacks to make your office greener.



Furniture.

Reuse surplus furniture where possible, rather than automatically purchasing new office furniture, such as file cabinets, desks, etc.

VOCs.

Use low VOC materials. VOC stands for Volatile Organic Compounds, such as paints and glues that include nasty chemicals such as formaldehyde.

Lighting.

Install lighting sensors, so lights only switch on when people are in the room. Better still, maximise the use of natural light, and use LED bulbs (which use one sixth the energy of conventional bulbs).

A/C.

Install smart thermostats. Set the temperature to around 23 degrees. Encourage people to wear light clothing in summer, not suits and ties. Perform an audit of air quality.

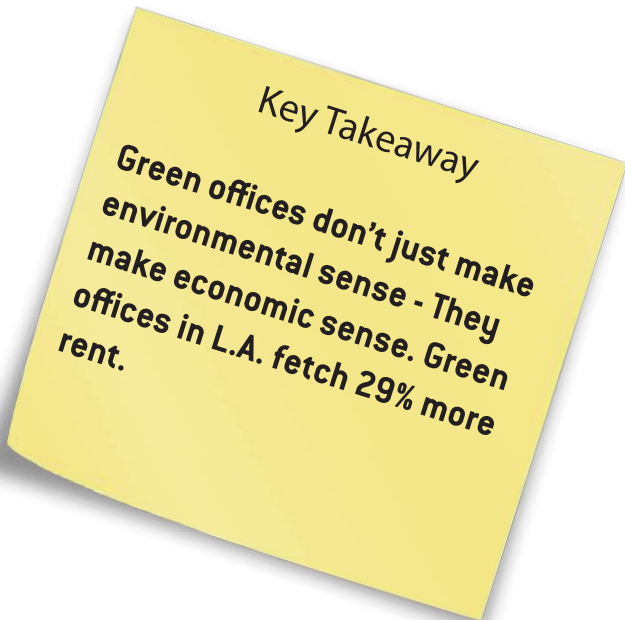
Commuting:

Provide bike storage and showers so people can cycle to work.

Recycle:

Hire a company like Bee'ah in Sharjah to implement a recycling strategy; speak with your drinking water/coffee supplier about plastic bottles and capsules.

Source: Green Office Champions by the US Green Building Council.⁶



⁶ https://www.usgbc.org/sites/default/files/USGBC_GreenChampions_Final.pdf

12:

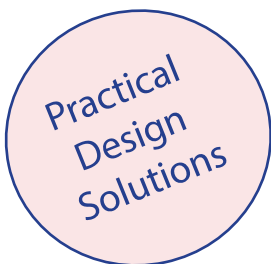
Hotels & Homes

steal designs from other buildings



Quick Summary

Office designers need to be thieves! They need to steal ideas from other interior spaces: hotels; schools; restaurants; homes; gyms; museums etc. That doesn't mean plagiarism – it means doing your homework, taking inspiration and creating your own unique version.



Hotel lobby

Good hotel lobbies have always been vibrant social magnets – some historians say the key decisions of the Second World War were made in the entrance of The Ritz in London. Today in the UAE, homegrown hotel brands such as Rove and Zabeel House have created lobby areas that are buzzing social spaces. They're a vibrant mix of café, bar, co-working space and meeting lounge. Try to create a version of this 'destination lobby' in your office, even on a small scale.



Schools

Progressive schools and colleges understand that learning is not optimised by rows and rows of desks – it's much more organic. Formal and informal training is a huge part of office life, so take these lessons (pun intended) seriously. Two quick wins: pretty much everyone loves a library and an amphitheatre.



Restaurants

Workers love café-style spaces: it's the one thing extroverts and introverts agree on, according to the research in Chapter 5. So don't let your contractor install a bog standard canteen – do a best-practice study on the type of F&B spaces that the demographic in your workforce loves. Ask them where they go for breakfast on a Saturday morning. Then work with your designer to create an original space that captures these design values.





Homes

Remember the quote from JLL in chapter 1: “To attract employees back to the office, workplaces will need to import some of the home comforts they’ve become used to during lock-down.” As with restaurants, spend an hour looking at the best-practice residential design for your workforce demographic. Create your own version of that. Soft-seating, lean-back sofas, vintage furniture, deep rugs and soft cushions rarely fail. At Roar, we have an old-school vinyl record player in the corner, which everyone seems to love.



Gyms

Look, if you’ve got space to install a full-scale exercise space in your office, go for it! The bank HSBC has a yoga studio in its Dubai headquarters that opened in 2019 – but that office had a reported price tag of \$250 million. For those on a more modest budget a quick, simple hack is to install TRX bands from the ceiling. We put these in one of McKinsey’s Gulf offices – it’s not a full workout, but it does give staff the chance to stretch, after hours sitting at a desk. Desks with treadmills are another quick, cheap, easy health hack.



Museums

If you can turn your office into a gallery, happy days! Let’s be honest – you’re unlikely to have the space for a full-blown museum, or the budget for a Rothko on the wall. But even in mid-sized offices, you can create a powerful version of this. One example: for Edelman headquarters in Dubai, we commissioned pieces from Emirati designers Zeinab Al Hashemi and Khalid Shafar for the reception area. They are stand-out talking point for visitors, and didn’t blow the budget!

Key Takeaway

Don’t limit yourself to studying cool offices - study a range of brilliant interior spaces. Never plagiarise, but taking inspiration is fine.

To learn how to apply the 12 design
secrets of an utterly brilliant
workspace to your next office please
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