

Top 5 workplace design trends

2024

Achieving the hybrid balance

In the ongoing debate over how and why to return to the office, companies and employees are finding their equilibrium.

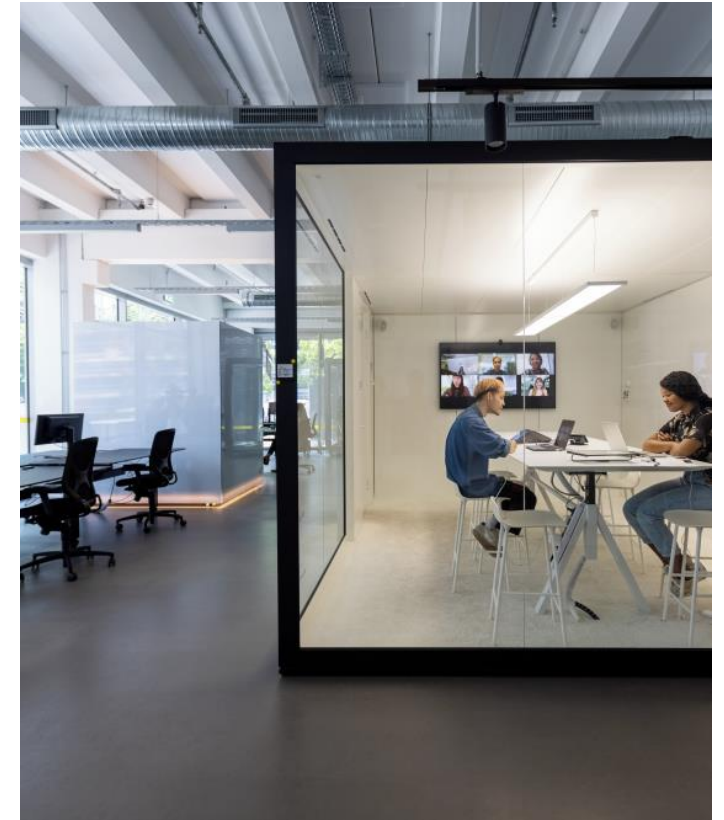
In 2024, hybrid working patterns will stabilise and many organisations will solidify their hybrid policies, supported by tangible workplace and design strategies.

Over the last 18 months, companies of all sizes have transformed their workplaces to better support hybrid work. Though younger businesses, founded after 2000, are more inclined to offer workplace flexibility¹, prestigious Fortune 500 companies have also embraced flexible environments.

JLL research shows that globally employees are in the office for 3.1 days per week while one-third of companies have implemented some form of compulsory attendance.²

By striking a balance between in-person collaboration and the freedoms and autonomy offered by remote work, companies can unlock the full potential of their workforce while catering to the evolving needs of an interconnected world.

Embracing hybrid work is not solely about meeting employee expectations; it is also about establishing an attractive employer brand that attracts top talent and enhances employee satisfaction. The physical workplace is an important facilitator of a successful hybrid work model – and this calls for reimagining workplace design strategy.



01

Designology

Design powered by sociology and biology

Understanding human nature is paramount as businesses re-evaluate how their physical workspaces can engage employees who are adapting to hybrid work.

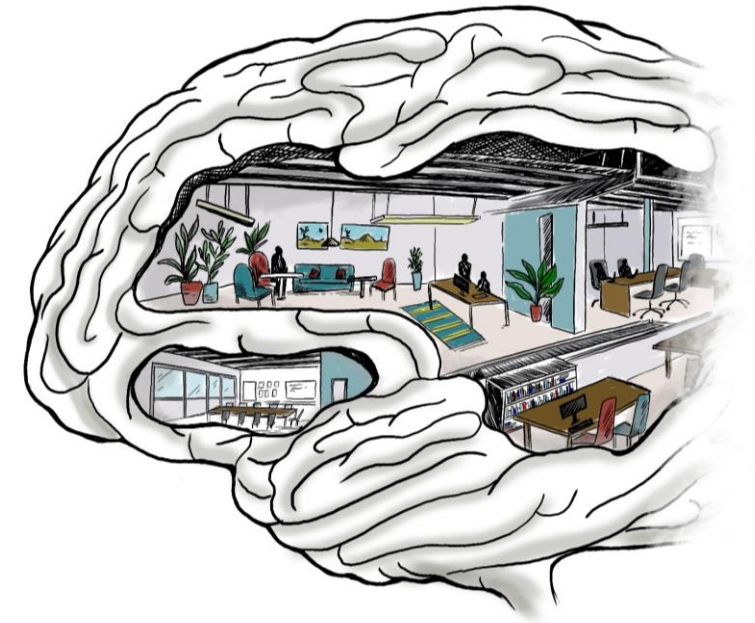
Central to crafting this human-centric workplace experience in 2024 will be ‘Designology’ – a multidisciplinary design approach grounded in sociology and biology insights about people’s social traits, innate preferences and overall wellbeing

At the heart of ‘Designology’ is the recognition of how physical spaces impact emotions and behaviours. This approach to office design leverages scientific research and data to customise spaces that appeal to people’s deep-rooted social inclinations, helping architects and designers craft places that optimise productivity, creativity and general satisfaction.

For example, a study that examined the connection between biophilic design and employee performance found that the inclusion of natural materials, patterns and plants in offices can improve productivity by 6% and creativity by up to 15%.³

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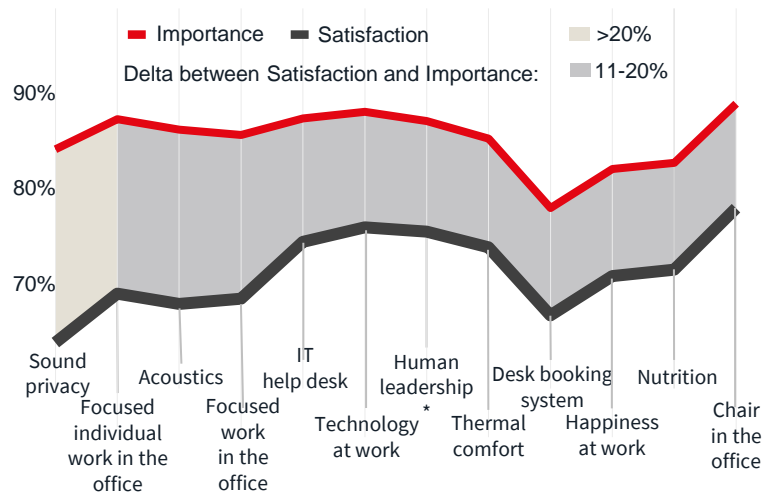
Improvements in technology such as VR, AR and environmental sensors now allow researchers to gather detailed information about how people respond to a space.

A recent study conducted by JLL and neuroinformatics firm EMOTIV used EEG sensors to assess cognitive states in the workplace. It found that for creative and learning tasks, people were less stressed working together than remotely.⁴

Such applications of science in design can provide greater insights into the intrinsic characteristics that enable humans to meaningfully connect with their surroundings and each other, driving more personalised workplace design that improves performance and a sense of belonging for all occupants.

Even as technology and virtual realities proliferate, human core nature remains hardwired, demanding ever more thoughtful consideration in the creation of spaces that truly resonate. By acknowledging the importance of understanding human behaviour and psychology, the holistic approach of Designology will be key in creating the inspiring, connected environments that employees increasingly seek in 2024.

Human experience in the office - where employers should focus their efforts



Source: JLL Research, 2023



02

Character as Currency

The allure of characterful neighbourhoods and buildings

As occupiers' criteria for office space continues to evolve post-pandemic, the "flight to quality" trend favouring new, state-of-the-art buildings will be complemented by a comparable **"flight to character"** in 2024.

Many companies are gravitating towards older buildings or neighbourhoods with historical or architectural allure. More than a just a polished exterior, organisations seek to cultivate a distinct character and authenticity in their work environments by leveraging the interconnected elements of storytelling, heritage and purpose that a historical building can offer. For example, when Tétris fit out an existing office in the regenerated Woodstock neighbourhood in Cape Town, it sought to create a space that connected to and expressed the character of its storied surroundings⁵.



Report

This “flight to character” is driven by a growing demand for offices with identity and connection. Today's younger employees, tired of mundane corporate environments, seek spaces that spark creativity and foster a sense of community. As a result, employers will aim to attract staff back to the office by creating characterful workplaces, set in a well-serviced neighbourhood rich in local amenities.

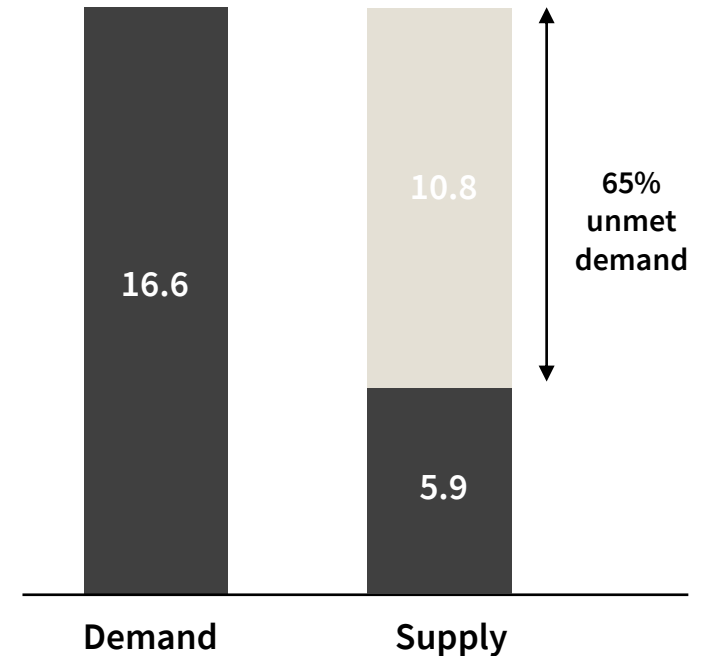
Retrofitting also improves the sustainability of a fit-out compared to the waste and carbon impact of a new building. Deep retrofit of a whole building typically brings energy efficiency saving of 40-60% for office buildings⁶. In Australia, Sydney’s Quay Quarter Towers achieved a savings of 8,250 tons of greenhouse gas emissions (two years’ worth of the buildings’ operational emissions) and about \$130 million by retaining two-thirds of the original building’s structure⁷.

In 2024, the growing impact of climate change and regulatory pressures will force many more corporates to act on their real estate. For every three sqm of demand, only one sqm of low-carbon space is in the pipeline between now and the end of this decade.⁸ Focussing on the unique character of Grade B or C buildings could unlock opportunities for workplace design that embeds culture and identity, as well as improving ESG through retrofitting.

Meanwhile, as more business seek out locations and buildings that deliver both technical performance and unique character, owners of B- or C-grade buildings in culturally rich neighbourhoods will be in prime position to retrofit these assets into energy-efficient, highly desirable office destinations.

Supply-demand deficit (Millions SQM)

Occupational requirements vs. development pipeline



Source: JLL Research, 2023

03

Flex and Focus

Adaptable space refocused on the need to focus

Flexible space is valuable – yet purpose-driven space is equally essential.

Designing for flexibility in furniture, fixtures, and even the physical space itself can better prepare offices to keep pace with companies’ evolving needs in an uncertain business environment. However, there must also be careful consideration of design functionality and effectiveness in addressing specific work requirements.

In the transition to hybrid work, many businesses have viewed their offices as critical collaboration hubs and may seek to create flexible space that encourages socialising in a bid to entice the return to the office. Yet JLL research shows that employees spend 51% of their time in offices on focussed work and 23% on virtual collaboration⁹, reflecting that few employees can work collaboratively for a full working day.

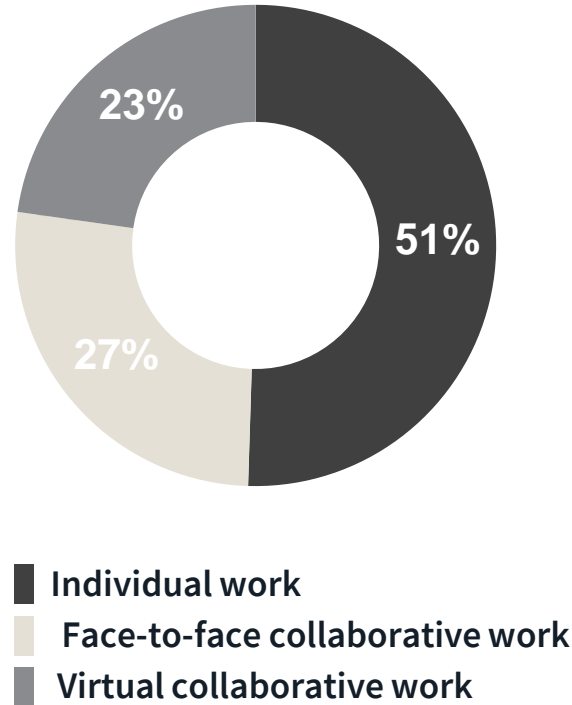


Report

In addition, the JLL Human Experience survey assessed office employees' perception of over 60 workplace aspects and found that the aspects with the greatest reported difference between satisfaction and importance are 'sound privacy', 'acoustics', and 'space for focussed work'.¹⁰ It will therefore be crucial for offices to define spaces where employees can retreat to engage in deep thinking, clear their minds and enhance concentration, in addition to the areas where they can connect in teams.

Space design will shift towards a higher percentage of quiet enclave spaces arranged near team spaces. These individual workspaces are characterised by softer lower-level lighting, high acoustic treatment, pink noise to help filter out background noise and distractions, and work pods with integrated monitors. Technology enabled spaces can also be used to enable personalised acoustic or lighting experiences.

Types of activities in the office



Source: JLL Research, 2023

In hybrid work, meaningful in-person encounters that fuel creativity and community are a powerful benefit of the physical space. However, there remains a strong need for quiet privacy where individual creativity can thrive without interruption. Striking the right balance between flexibility and purpose-driven design can meet these contrasting needs, creating a space that attracts and retains employees, promotes their satisfaction and improves their long-term commitment.



04

The Online Workplace

Technology to enhance virtual collaboration

Video conferencing has evolved beyond facilitating communication; **it's about elevating the entire meeting experience.**

Up-to-date technology for immersive virtual meetings will become increasingly vital in 2024. 80% of real estate occupiers and developers plan to increase their real estate technology budget in the next three years.¹¹ In addition, 77% of CRE leaders currently or plan to invest in enhanced technology to support employees' return to the office.

Trailblazing technologies such as AI and VR, coupled with companies' growing focus on employees' wellbeing, will drive rapid evolution in virtual meeting platforms to better accommodate both remote and in-person teams, fostering higher-quality communication and collaboration.



Immersive remote meeting:

Instead of flat-screen chats, VR headsets can simulate the sensation of sitting side-by-side with colleagues in a virtual conference room or even on a serene beach. Discussions will be more immersive, bringing a unique experiential dimension to remote meetings.

Digital collaboration tools:

On virtual meeting platforms, features such as digital whiteboards, integrated project management, brainstorming tools, and digital sticky notes will make it easier than ever for teams to ideate and innovate together, even from thousands of miles apart.

AI-powered meeting equity:

Today, attendees dialling in from home tend to fit their screens well, while employees calling from a meeting room appear too small due to standard cameras that pan out to capture the whole room. AI-driven meeting room tech will use multiple smart cameras to ensure a consistent, perfectly framed image of every participant, equalising on-screen presence.

Meeting by hologram:

3D hologram technology holds immense potential for near-physical presence in remote meetings. This early-stage technology could gain momentum in 2024, and once mainstream, become integrated into key meeting spaces in the physical workplace.

Admin support:

AI meeting assistants that transcribe, translate, and even suggest responses in a meeting can reduce manual admin and streamline communication.

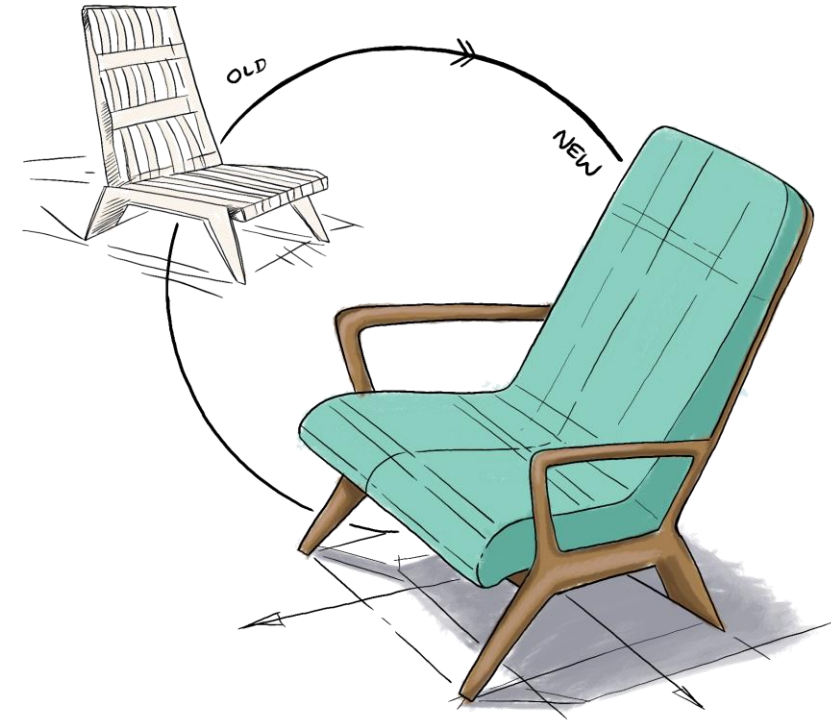


05

Upcycling by Design

Smart reuse and waste reduction in office fit-outs

With sustainability accelerating as a critical global issue in 2024, businesses will embrace office fit-outs that upcycle and reuse materials, furniture and other components. Thanks to a combination of tougher legislation and companies committing to Net Zero targets with looming deadlines, environmentally responsible practices will reshape commercial office design this year.





Upcycled furniture:

From turning old chairs into colourful footstools to refurbishing vintage desks, a key aspect of sustainable fit-outs will involve transforming discarded materials or repurposing existing furniture in creative ways.

Paper-free policies:

Sustainable fit-outs prioritise digital workflows, making use of design and planning software that streamline virtual collaboration and minimise the need for physical paperwork.

Materials with high recycled content:

Carpets, flooring and wall coverings made from up to 70% recycled products are becoming a staple. Sustainable and functional, such products reduce reliance on virgin materials and contribute to a more circular economy.

Robust waste management:

Greater efforts will be made to minimise waste generated throughout the fit-out process and to divert waste away from landfills through recycling, repurposing or upcycling. Through effective waste management strategies, businesses can make significant contributions to reducing environmental impact.

Key Takeaways

New ways of working focused on hybrid working patterns are being adopted as companies and employees align on expectations and policies. Strategic design will revitalise the physical office, crafting a workplace experience that not only attracts but actively engages employees in 2024.

01

Designology:

Design grounded in sociology and biology insights will shape a human-centric office experience that encourages employees' creativity, productivity, wellbeing and sense of community.

02

Characterful spaces:

Old buildings as well as design that connects with local communities will create spaces with authenticity, purpose and story.

03

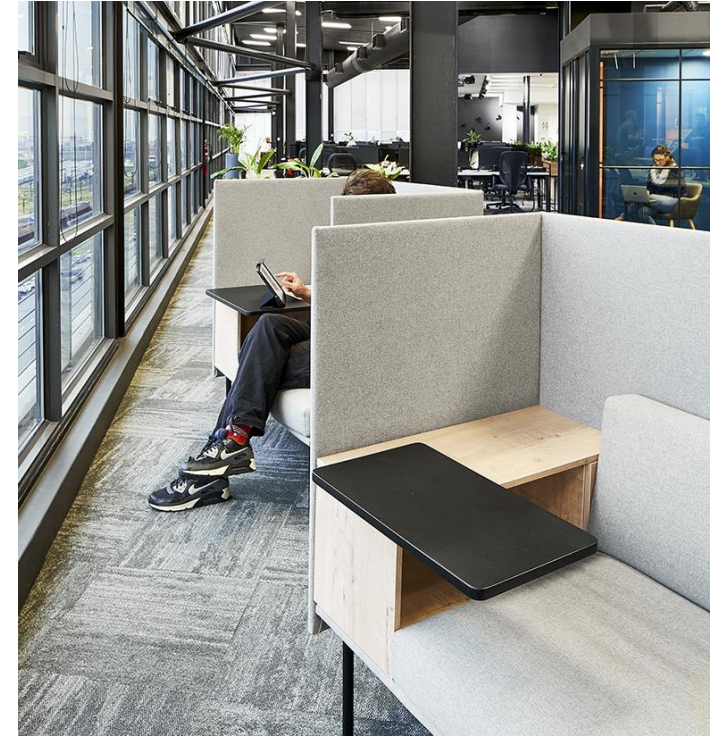
Flexible and purposeful:

Workplaces will integrate flexibility and purpose-driven design to meet employee needs for quiet privacy as well as meaningful in-person encounters.

04

Enhanced collaboration technologies:

As VR and AR gain momentum, up-to-date technology that elevates the virtual meeting will be a pillar of hybrid workplaces.



05

Sustainable fit-outs:

Businesses will embrace fit-outs with reduced environmental impact in the drive to create healthier and more inspiring workspaces for a sustainable future.

Contact

Find out how Tétris can transform your workplace.

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- ⁸ JLL, Based on analysis of 20 global office markets, 2023
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- ¹⁰ JLL Human Experience survey for offices, 2023
- ¹¹ JLL Global Technology Survey, 2023

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