

Workforce readiness must include workplace wellness

The future of work in an
unpredictable world



The end of lockdowns and the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines was supposed to be the beginning of the end of the pandemic. Yet having reached these milestones, coronavirus and its variants remain a concern around the world. There is growing recognition that the pandemic is no longer a problem to be solved or a threat to be eradicated, but rather something to live with for the foreseeable future.

With this change in thinking comes new goals and priorities, including how and when individuals will perform their job duties. The collective desire to “return to normal” has been replaced with a realization among individuals and organizations that “normal” has yet to be defined. Organizations initially thought falling case numbers and practical approaches to reducing virus transmission would be enough to bring people back to the workplace. But employees have been hesitant to return to work without new safeguards and considerations in place.

In the new reality, employees require more than just proper physical safety and security to generate their best work. Employees want a say in how the world of work is being reshaped to address the persistent realities of COVID-19—and that means much more than immediate health concerns.

Americans in particular are quitting their jobs at a record pace, with more than 34 million people resigning through the first nine months of 2021.¹ The previous record for such resignations was 36.3 million throughout all of 2020, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statisticsⁱⁱ which marked the start of the so-called Great Resignation, with those leaving jobs citing a desire for more flexibility in where and how work gets done, better compensation and better management, among others.

The trend has gone global with the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) reporting 20 million fewer workers than in the days before the coronavirus among its 38 member countries, which span North America and Europe and include Japan and Australia. Of that 20 million, 14 million are classified as not working and not looking for work. In 2019, that classification counted just 3 million peopleⁱⁱⁱ. The deeper psychological needs of workers are only now beginning to emerge, requiring new efforts for health and wellbeing within the workplace and new approaches to ensuring employee engagement.

Against this backdrop, it is clear many people are struggling to confront the psychological toll the pandemic has taken, with increased rates of anxiety, stress, depression and even post-traumatic stress disorder being reported^{iv}. But the existence of such stressors doesn't have to mean a new wave of negative emotions and outcomes. These conditions can be the precursor to post-traumatic growth^v, which can lead to enhanced self-efficacy, cognitive flexibility, resilience and better coping skills^{vi}, benefitting both employees and the organizations for which they work.

For companies, creating a thriving workplace where employees flourish will be vital to business success, not just in the emerging new reality but in years and decades to come. Organizations have a responsibility to foster environments where employees can thrive, and that includes creating workplace strategies to help employees bring their full, best selves to work.

For those organizations that have spent the past year plus creating physically safe and healthy environments—with the option for employees to work from other locations as needed or desired—this might feel like taking a step back, undoing the lessons that have emerged in the aftermath of the first waves of the pandemic. But ignoring the changing reality of what workers need could lead to dire outcomes as the fight for talent expands at a global scale.





What the **pandemic exposed**

Stress and burnout are, unfortunately, not new phenomena in the workplace but the need to address them is urgent. 2020 was officially the most stressful year in recent history, with 40 percent of adults worldwide saying they experienced stress “a lot” during the previous day—that’s 190 million more people globally who experienced stress more often than the previous year^{vii}. Stress disorders are on the rise, with physical symptoms including high blood pressure, digestive disorders, headaches, muscle aches, rashes, ulcers, fibromyalgia, diabetes and more^{viii}. Compounding the problem is the causes and symptoms of these disorders feed off one another, generating new symptoms and disorders that together can create lifelong afflictions. The annual cost of burnout on the global economy is estimated at \$287 billion, measured in rising corporate healthcare commitments, as well as poor workplace performance, eroded relationships, lost revenue, employee turnover and replacement costs^{ix}.

To this mix, the pandemic introduced a psychological ripple effect that is more similar to the trauma soldiers experience returning from war than other disease outbreaks or natural disasters, according to research from Boston University School of Public Health, which shows depression rates in the U.S. jumping from 8.5 percent pre-pandemic to a staggering 27.8 percent in the early months of 2020. Unlike past disasters, this elevated rate of depression not only persisted but worsened, affecting 32.8 percent or 1 in 3 American adults in 2021^x.

The prevalence of stress and depression are worse among those just starting their career, according to JLL Research^{xi}, with 57% of Gen Z respondents saying they feel under pressure and are worried about the future of their jobs. Young parents and caregivers are also at risk, with 57% saying they feel overwhelmed by the mental load of their work and caregiver responsibilities. Those who live alone, or in spaces that don’t offer much or any differentiation between personal and professional time, also reported feeling more burdened by remote work.

Despite these findings, the pandemic also provided many people with the opportunity to take a step back from their routines and imagine a new reality. While for some remote work created a blurring of lines between work and professional boundaries, others found an opportunity to take stock and realize new priorities, values and expectations. In order to consider going back to the office in some capacity, the majority of workers want their organizations to create workplaces that are more authentic and human, that allow for social interaction and collaboration, and also show resiliency and adaptability in the face of anticipated change^{xii}.

Returning employees to the workplace at least some of the time can help stop the erosion of values, attitudes and behaviors that previously drove business culture, success and innovation. Not surprisingly, many organizations have focused on meeting the physical safety needs of their employees and developing hybrid strategies to make that possible. But as those pieces fall into place, organizations must also consider the profound cultural implications of the pandemic, remote work and a new era of ambiguity and uncertainty.

Theory F

The next evolution of work

The concept of work is not static. If there is a silver lining to this ongoing upheaval, it's that ideas and attitudes about work have shifted before and the workplace has evolved to meet them, emerging more productive, safer and human-centric at every turn.

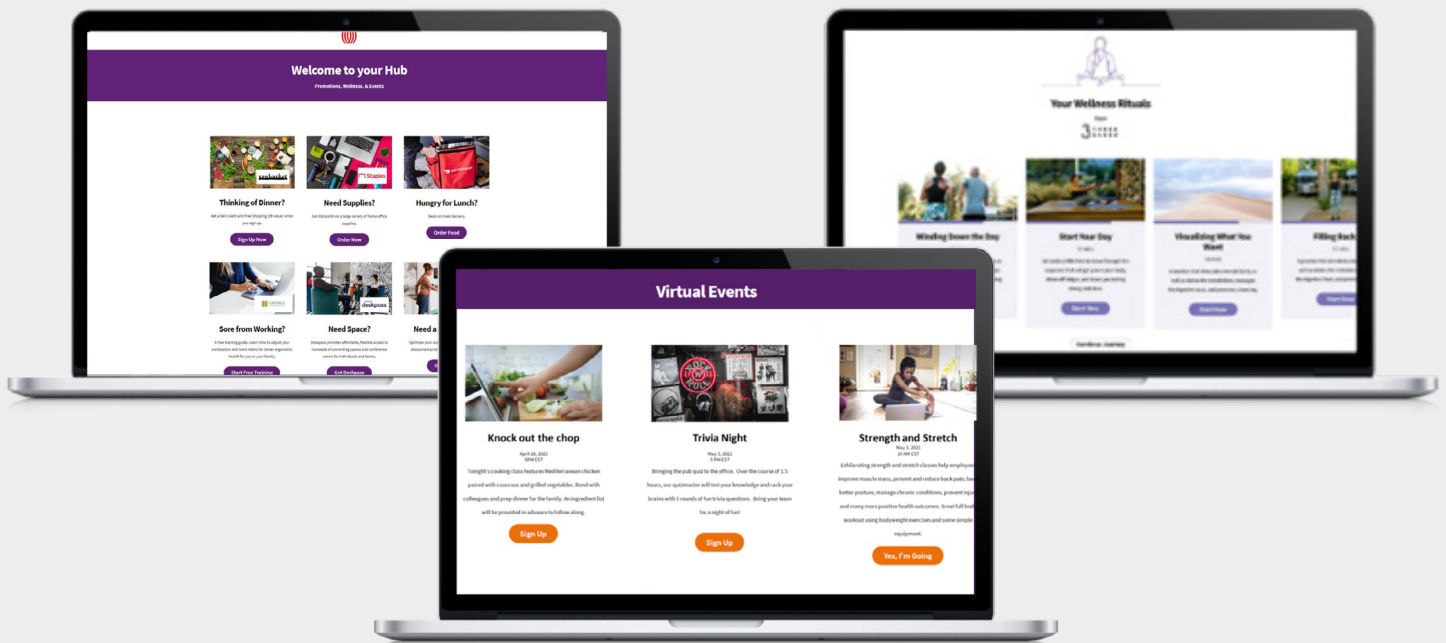
In the industrial age, the workplace revolved around strict supervision of scripted, command-and-control work, what academics referred to as Theory X management that prioritized productivity and efficiency to quickly generate new products. That ultimately yielded to Theory Y management, the belief that personal fulfillment of the employee was more effective than managerial rewards and punishments. The workplace of Theory Y was not the always-on factory, but the office, with design that encouraged sharing of knowledge and information to produce better ideas and approaches.

The pandemic brings a similar break from the past. Rather than merely focusing on working harder and faster, the workplace of the future will be designed for a new workplace management approach: Theory F, or a management approach that allows employees, and hence the business, to flourish.

Theory F begins with a simple premise: People who feel they can bring their whole selves to work, do their best work. They learn, grow and leave their work healthier and happier than when they started. A Theory F workplace exhibits engagement, but also recognizes the need to develop resiliency to survive and thrive in an unpredictable world. Rather than a factory or office, Theory F workplaces encompass entire ecosystems, including a range of remote work options.

To realize the potential of a Theory F workplace, organizations need to combine the best of human connection with digital experiences to empower and engage employees, no matter where they are working. Solutions like JLL's Experience / Anywhere utilize a digital hub to give employees access to the comforts of the office—ergonomic furniture, healthy food, office supplies, and wellness offerings—and program management to increase adoption and provide seamless connection to workers in all locations. The program gives employees the time, space and platform to make positive, incremental behavioral changes to their workday that can add up over time.

Experience / Anywhere's digital hub provides employees with easy access to resources, tools, and events that help the day run more smoothly and help them to be more productive.





Despite the evolving digital mandate, return to office is a critical time to put Theory F principles into practice. The employees who are returning to the office are not psychologically the same as the ones who packed up their belongings during the first wave of the pandemic and their work rhythms will change with a hybrid approach. These individuals are cycling through the psychological stages of trauma, coming to terms with their experiences and beginning to heal from months of isolation and uncertainty. Any efforts to bring people back to the workplace without acknowledging and addressing these massive attitudinal shifts is bound to lead to employee estrangement.

Employees will likely have one of two images when returning, one nostalgic and the other apprehensive. The nostalgic view is largely driven by office environments that were considered “outstanding” pre-pandemic. Workers who were previously “highly satisfied” with their office environment are most likely to miss the office and the role it plays in their work, according to JLL research^{xiii}. Similarly, the apprehensive view is driven by those individuals who don’t see the purpose of the office or who don’t trust their organization to account for all their needs in returning to the workplace. Both views are vital parts of the discussion in planning the return to the workplace, less organizations risk significant hesitation or outright refusal to adapt to the emerging work rhythm.

Returning to the office requires more care than most change management efforts consider. Organizations can look to other traumas, whether on the personal or societal level, to understand how supportive relationships, reorienting, retraining and patience can help employees return and begin to thrive. But this approach takes time and is the antithesis of those companies who tried to “flip the switch” and bring employees back to an old paradigm.

Psychological restoration includes reframing a traumatic experience, creating emotional distance, and finding meaning, inner strength and renewal. Individuals and organizations that have “grit,” or that are able to bounce back and grow from trauma, have these six attributes^{xiv}:

- Resilient mindset that includes determination and positive emotion
- Opportunity to activate one’s natural strengths daily
- Circle of five quality vital relationships
- Energy, comprised of eating well, active movement and quality sleep
- Purpose and meaning
- Progress daily, focusing on marginal gains

These attributes provide a compass for building workforce resilience using design, behavioral economics, environment, physical awareness and culture crafting as vehicles to restore employee health and mental well-being on the road to resilience.

Since the 1980s, companies have been insisting employees are their most valuable asset. Now they must deliver on this promise and engage in the hard work of reducing workplace stress, creating environments of holistic well-being and enabling employees to do their best work.

Dr. Michael Roizen, the Chief Wellness Officer for the Cleveland Clinic, boiled it down to one mission: develop healthy employees who bring energy to work. That's the only way the corporation can survive^{xv}. The pandemic turned a chronic organizational issue of unlocking employee health and well-being into an acute crisis and future threat. Now organizations have the opportunity to turn it into a powerful tool for attracting and retaining talent—if they are committed to “walking the walk.”

Putting well-being theory into practice has proven difficult for many organizations yet failing to do so erodes trust. One need look no further than workplace wellness programs, which typically only see about 15% participation^{xvi}, to see disjointed walk and talk in action. Bob Chapman, CEO for Barry Wehmiller—a global supplier of manufacturing technology and services—and author of the bestselling book *Everybody Matters* put it bluntly:

“When we say our people matter, but we don't actually care for them, it can shatter trust and create a culture of paranoia, cynicism, and self-interest. It's biology. We are social animals, and we respond to the environments we're in. This is why leadership matters. Leaders set the culture. Leaders are responsible for overseeing the environment in which people are asked to work... and the people will act in accordance with that culture.^{xvii}”

As the Great Resignation demonstrates, employees leave when distrust in their organization is high. Trust takes effort. Employees only give it when certain key questions are answered:

1. Are my employer's intentions good? Do they care?
2. Does the company deliver on its promises?
3. Have they proven reliable?
4. What do they want? Is it clear or ambiguous?
5. Why do they want it? What's the context?

Many organizations who feel they have weathered the storm of the pandemic may be surprised by how little trust is evident among their workforce. When companies loosen expectations, push back return-to-office dates and offer hybrid options, they reduce the immediate tension employees feel but do nothing to address the potential for distrust. When companies tighten demands and threaten to achieve compliance, they confirm and harden employee distrust. The only way forward is to build trust by committing to the values that allow employees to flourish and creating a workplace that reflects those values. Physical space provides a tangible expression of what an organization values; how it is used can also help employees answer the question “Is this a place that makes my life and work better?”





Workplaces tell employees what the organization does on both a large and small scale. They communicate which people are important to the company, what ideals and activities are essential, and who the organization is accountable to. The goal of workplace design is to create space that reflects and amplifies these messages and facilitates productivity naturally. In reality, most workplaces aren't clear beacons but rather "communication accidents" that send mixed signals.

These mixed messages can contribute to employee stress, the master villain companies must defeat on the road to creating workforce resilience and fulfilled employees. Returning to office environments that fail to address this baseline reality—and the newfound stress of the pandemic—can erode culture and remove many of the benefits of on-site work. Stress, after all, is cumulative. At the end of a long day of navigating ambiguous or contradictory signals, the body is fatigued, the mind foggy and nerves frazzled. For workers, that diminished capacity bleeds into family relationships, increases reliance on unhealthy coping behaviors and interferes with sleep—all of which can contribute to more stress and more unhealthy coping behaviors. But even one day with less friction and more positive experiences creates a positive reinforcing loop.

For employees, coming into the office, navigating to their department and sitting at their desk creates an unconscious roadmap for how and where they should spend their time. While stress can be managed or negated in the office, working remotely eliminates that guidance and reduces the daily interdepartmental interactions that often spur new ideas at work. Unless organizations are intentional about providing this guidance to their remote workforce, employees are left to self-organize networks of communication, cooperation and commitments, and create their own alternatives when those networks inevitably falter. It turns out that long-held work patterns and programs are more effective than a "choose your own adventure" approach to workplace strategy and may take pressure off employees in terms of how they prioritize different aspects of their duties.

As organizations look to improve the workplace for health and well-being, they must also take care to address the behaviors and design that were detrimental to employees prior to hybrid work and may prove downright disastrous if left unaddressed in the new paradigm.

Workplace strategies to help employees flourish

To achieve a high-performing, resilient, trust-building workplace where employees thrive, organizations need to focus on five crucial areas of support for human flourishing: design, behavioral economics, environment, physical awareness and culture.

Together, these areas provide leaders with the optimal starting points for workplace health and well-being, reimagined for a post-pandemic office. But while companies are looking toward the future, they also have the opportunity to improve the workplace mistakes they've made in the past.

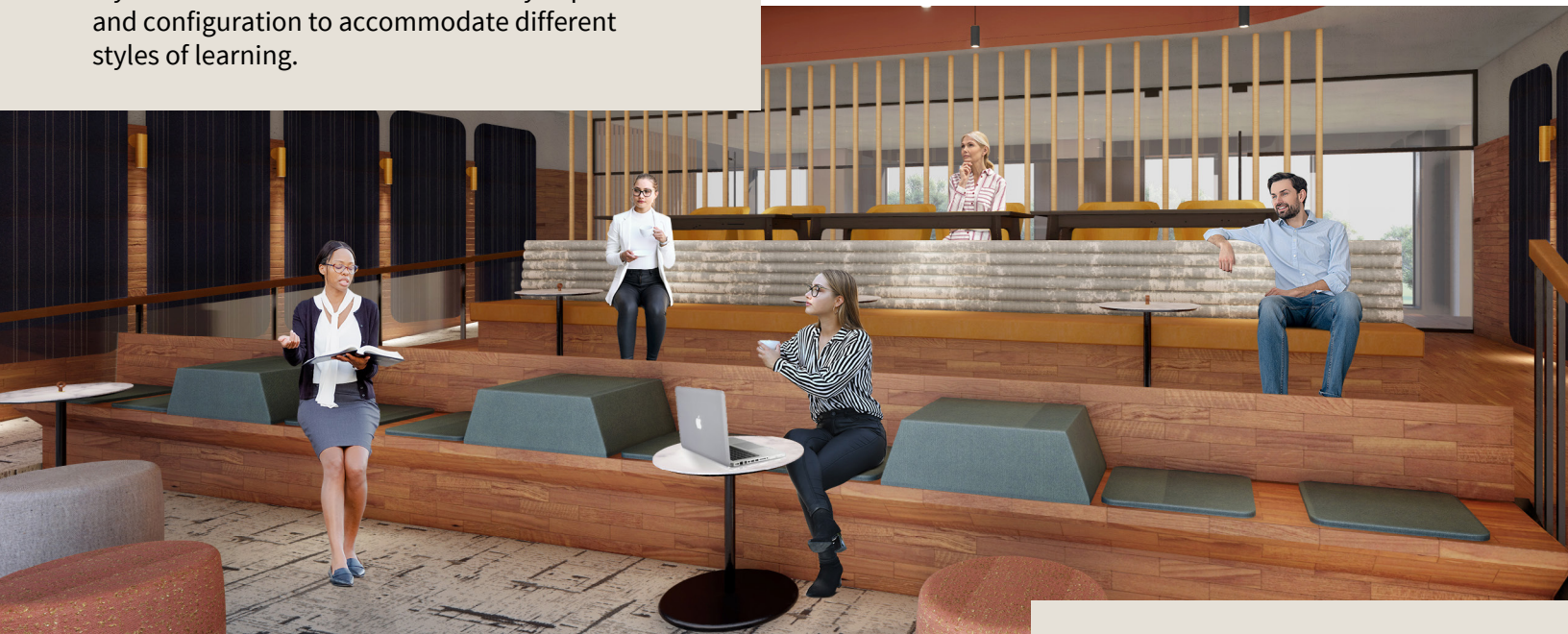
For most organizations, space is a proxy for culture. The actual designed places for work, conferencing, amenities, signage, parking, eating, walking, etc. reflect the company's values and purpose, whether they intend to or not. Those spaces also shape the patterns of behavior and interaction for every person who enters them and should be designed and updated to stay relevant with changing needs and demands.

Reduce stress through legible design

For four decades, Harvard's Healthy Building Lab has been collecting scientific evidence that supports the foundational elements of healthy buildings, including ventilation, air quality, moisture, dust, water quality, noise and lighting^{xviii}. While they focus on the materials and operational design of healthy buildings, a growing body of research is uncovering new lessons in how office layouts can affect health and well-being by adding to or reducing employee stress^{xix}.

High-density work environments, such as a "cube farm," can create a disorienting maze where every floor plan displays monotonous regularity. This "illegible" layout suppresses the easy flow of workers among workspaces, increases wasted time and reduces the overall sense of control many people crave in their work environment. As more workers return to office, some companies are experimenting with pre-designed concepts like JLL's Experience / Spaces, which rapidly transform traditional, staid office environments into work destinations—areas that invite people to collaborate, learn, focus and recharge as needed. Utilizing pre-designed space concepts helps companies rapidly test smaller areas to drive employee experience before committing to a full-scale office renovation.

The sensory learning space in Experience / Space's *Elevate* concept provides an auditorium-style environment that adds flexibility in posture and configuration to accommodate different styles of learning.



The meeting room in the *Flourish* concept creates an equitable experience for hybrid meetings.





The pantry in the *Create* concept provides a place to get drinks and snacks, as well as take a break.

Making people feel welcomed within the workplace doesn't just happen; it requires thoughtful design to bring areas to life with specific purpose. A vibrant, colorful space full of games and snacks invites people to create and collaborate. An intimate café can foster a sense of community and relationship-building. Cool, quiet spaces off the beaten path offer a chance to refresh and recharge. If the intended use of the space is ambiguous, people will simply avoid using it rather than experimenting or guessing what need it is supposed to meet.

The reason for this is not indifference or a lack of curiosity but rather mental fatigue. The body has a limited energy supply and the brain consumes the largest portion, up to 25% each day^{xx}. In an illegibly designed space, the brain works overtime to compensate for the surrounding distractions, inconveniences and frustrations it encounters. Most companies are unaware of this drain—until the mid-afternoon slump is pointed out to them.

In a Theory F workplace, the brain-body drain is replaced with an energy gain by creating “legible” space that users intuitively know how to read and navigate. This can be achieved through five guiding principles^{xxi}:

1. Architectural and interior landmarks orient people to their location within the larger context of the space. Without landmarks, people feel anxious, displaced or lost. Stairs are a universal landmark, helping orient people to the floorplan. Graphic walls and the intersection of major thoroughfares also serve this purpose.
2. Predictable layouts and design give people the confidence to know how to use or relate to the space. Open spaces for brainstorming and closed spaces for quieter work are just a few examples of design that can easily be interpreted by individuals.
3. Visual access and a line of sight allow people to navigate efficiently. Glass walls and partitions, as well as visibility to outside landmarks, can improve mental mapping.
4. Visual variety stimulates interest. Visual differentiation creates a shorthand approach for helping someone recognize the function of one area compared to another.
5. Signage and graphics add context and clarity to moving through buildings.

Legible design allows the brain to decode its surroundings easily, operate efficiently, experience coherence and establish a productive work rhythm. Done well, it serves as the quiet motor that powers an individual's workday.

Design “nudges” to support healthy behavior

While legible design can help individuals navigate the workplace, organizations can further support healthy decision making through simple design solutions.

When it comes to making healthy decisions, human beings rarely act rationally. In-the-moment enjoyment frequently wins out over long-term health benefits. But if healthier options are presented on an even or elevated playing field, people are more likely to embrace the choice that benefits them in the long run. Understanding these principles and putting them into action falls under the umbrella of behavioral economics.

For example, if a restaurant wants to help its patrons make more heart-healthy choices, its menu will bury the most calorie-dense foods that are loaded with saturated fats and highlight vegetable-heavy options. Many workplaces offer a similar kind of gentle encouragement, making printers scarce to save paper or encouraging employees to walk more by placing fewer shared amenities on every floor. This design feature is referred to as a “nudge,” which can be created and put into effective use via seven principles^{xvii}:

1. **Default:** Make healthy or desired choices the default option. Let people easily opt out but make the preferred choice obvious and automatic.
2. **Appealing:** Give the nudge a solid appeal, especially as it relates to the person being nudged.
3. **Intuitive:** The City of Fort Worth, Texas painted a simple sign above the stairwell door in their elevator lobbies: StairWELL.
4. **Simple:** Less is more. Two or three good, healthy choices are far better than a dozen options, which can easily overwhelm a person’s decision-making abilities^{xviii}.
5. **Feedback:** Giving people immediate positive feedback reinforces their behavior. Receiving recognition on the cafeteria receipt for a healthy choice or getting a small discount on the next purchase signals a job well done and encourages individuals to recreate that experience.

6. **Forgiving:** Does the system have airbags for “oops” moments, or are people penalized for wrong decisions? An ATM that tells a person to retrieve their card before it dispenses cash is one example of an airbag. Errors and bad decisions are inevitable but nudges can help individuals get back on track.
7. **Norms:** Leaders produce positive behaviors by personally modeling, recognizing, measuring and rewarding. A leader who joins a casual conversation in a visible socialization spot is modeling that behavior for everyone who sees them and broadcasting that this is the expected use of the space.

GoDaddy’s nudge audit

GoDaddy took a hospitality industry approach called “the guest journey” when designing its Global Technology Center. The process maps the journey for a range of typical employees to identify positive and negative touchpoints, creating a “nudge audit.” For GoDaddy, that included human and space interactions like parking, signing in at the reception station, accessing amenities, scheduling conference rooms, etc. Each touchpoint was categorized as a friction point, neutral or enjoyable. The resulting audit provided a map for understanding how moments add or subtract from an employee’s day—and how stress can be reduced through simple design fixes.





Facility management strategies support total health and well-being

GoDaddy developed a second innovative approach for reducing stress and increasing exceptional moments by training facility staff to become “Experience Managers” (XMs), closer to a hotel concierge than the traditional “fix it” approach facilities management required. While the facilities staff had previously experienced high turnover, elevating the role to oversee user experience helped improve morale and reduce stress at every level of the company.

XM training included the hospitality rules that power brands like Four Seasons. Rather than being behind-the-scenes, XMs are now front and center in employee care. They make eye contact at 10 feet, provide a verbal greeting at five feet and assess how the individual employee’s day is going in that brief period. If the employee appears stressed, the XMs offer help. XMs are encouraged to create random acts of kindness, which may include flowers on the desk of an employee and other personal touches people are likely to encounter at high-end restaurants or luxury hotels.

The facilities management role is also expanding beyond the workplace, with JLL Experience Ambassadors serving as a critical link between organizations, their employees, service providers and other key parties—all of whom may be operating from different locations on any given day. As the key connection between employees and employers, Experience Ambassadors support a fluid work environment, providing immediate support and helping to facilitate community-building activities across work locations. As greater change comes to the workplace, Experience Ambassadors can help manage new processes and procedures, while ensuring employees adapt with ease.

Views of nature reduce stress

The Sonoma County, Calif. Main Adult Detention Facility waiting area offers an ideal environment for testing the impact of nature views on stress.

New arrestees may be first-time offenders, under the influence of drugs, suffering from mental or emotional complications, or simply angry about the chain of events that brought them to this place. Once on site, they sit in a square, windowless room for 10 to 12 hours while being processed. Naturally, this presents a volatile and potentially dangerous environment. Efforts to reduce stress also reduce interpersonal tension, minimizing the likelihood of danger and creating a sense of higher safety among the correctional officers processing the prisoners. So how to change this unwelcoming environment to keep prisoners and correction officers safe?

Researchers took on the task of gauging the effectiveness of nature views on reducing stress, measuring officers’ heart rate and stress level under typical “white box” conditions and then after installing a wall-sized mural of a savannah in the prisoner intake area. The results showed the restful painting of the savannah substantially lowered heart rates and stress levels^{xxiv}.

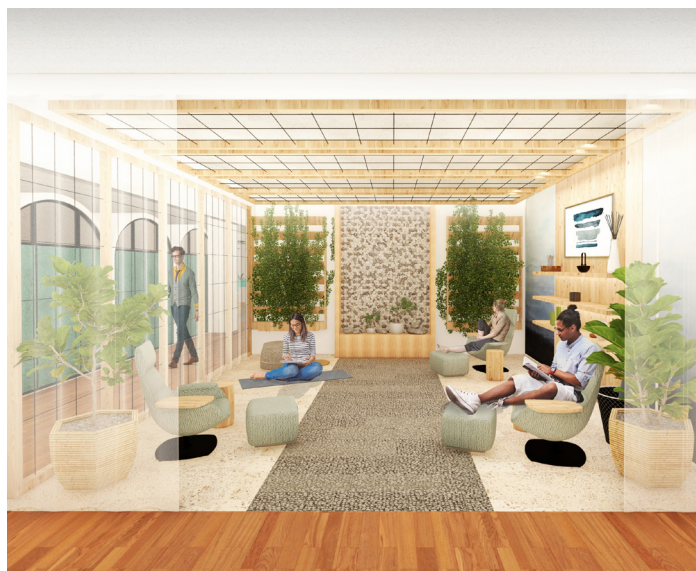
In a Theory F workplace, design takes full advantage of environmental opportunities to reduce stress via a positive brain response. Even when access to nature isn’t possible, simulated views, artwork, living plants or the sound and sight of water improve body chemistry, releasing the calming compounds that offset stress triggers.

Create technology-free zones to reduce environmental stress

The ability to perform deep work is increasingly rare just as it is growing in demand and value^{xxv}. Organizations that help their workers cultivate this skill, rather than expecting them to find the time for deep work on their own, will thrive.

Smartphones, social media and email rob workers of their ability to perform deep work. Americans check their phones more than 250 times per day, approximately every four minutes. These continuous distractions make quality work impossible while also activating the addiction pathways in the brain, meaning the urge to check social media often wins out over the willingness to look at a problem from a new angle^{xxvi}.

In a post-pandemic workplace, organizations will be tasked with mitigating the harm digital distractions and addiction have on companies and employee mental health. Digital-free zones offer employees the physical environment to let their minds decompress from constant digital stimulation and to practice weaning off their dependency, even if they only use the space for a few moments per day. JLL's Experience / Spaces solution was designed with digital-free zones in mind, like the oasis and ideastorm.



The oasis puts wellness out in the open, encouraging employees to take a break and emphasize personal wellness.

Room to regenerate: Creating environments to recharge

The corporate break room has fallen out of favor and with good reason. These spaces are too often a design afterthought, a smattering of chairs and tables that do little to help employees relax and recharge. Consequently, these areas are frequently misused as meeting overflow or are outright ignored and underutilized.

In a recent study of hospital break rooms, researchers found nurses were more likely to use break areas if they included four key elements: proximity to workstations, opportunity for both privacy and socialization, and access to private outdoor space^{xxvii}. Taken together, these elements had a considerably greater perceived restorative potential than any one factor alone.

Rejuvenation stations are one solution to bring these elements together in nearly any workplace. HD touchscreens and surround sound deliver soothing nature images, calming music, mindfulness practices and light exercise to nearly any underutilized workplace area. They can also be deployed on a larger scale in meeting rooms and conferences to help employees restore and socialize. The same wellness programming can be offered via an always-accessible app, giving workers many opportunities to engage with wellness, wherever they are, throughout their day.



The ideastorm is a designated tech-free space to host wider team discussions and interactions.



Optimizing health through sensors, data, analytics and integrated systems

Not all technology is the enemy when it comes to reducing workplace stress and its effects on individual and organizational health and well-being.

Fitness and health tracking devices allow individuals to monitor energy levels, blood sugar, sleep, steps, oxygen consumption and other biometrics. The data links to large databases that offer feedback to compare health stats, set goals, track progress and receive reminders. Personal devices are trending toward non-invasive, 24/7 real-time feedback.

One example of how body awareness can impact culture is Nick Watney who in 2020 became the first professional golfer diagnosed with COVID-19, despite not having any obvious symptoms. When Watney saw a significant drop in his recovery score and an elevated respiration rate—tracked through his wearable device—he went to the doctor, where he tested positive for COVID. Watney pulled out of the PGA tournament, reducing the spread of the virus to others and avoiding the potential forced cancellation of the entire tour.

Whether employee concerns are around COVID or other transmissible diseases, or just their own biological response to stress and work, this level of proactive protection may be coming to more traditional workplaces than the golf course.

Wearable devices like the one Watney used are increasingly commonplace and can send data anonymously to a team or company dashboard to assess current risk. JLL partnered with ART Health to deliver Wellbeing and Performance Insights that help quantify the wellness of the workforce, safely capturing data via wearables, apps and other means to measure employees' mental state, moods and emotions, focus and productivity. Once captured, these metrics are validated and assessed to help organizations make decisions about filling potential gaps in their wellness offering, ensuring wellness investments are reaching all employees, and continuing to add and tailor well-being offerings.

Future wearable devices may go so far as to measure the quality of the air, water and food its wearer consumes. They will measure biometrics for happiness, stress and other conditions to nudge individuals towards action in the moment, for their benefit and the benefit of their team.

Such devices are already in use with high-risk populations. The LibreLink device from Abbott Labs adapts a non-invasive diabetes monitor as a biohacking tool to optimize metabolism. This device receives instant feedback on how different foods, exercise and rest affect metabolism. It also makes recommendations for improving performance.

Workplace wellness tracking won't fall to individuals alone. Sensors are increasingly being embedded into the workplace to understand usage patterns and improve overall design and efficiency. VergeSense collects real-time occupancy data and analyzes effectiveness to adapt and adjust to changing work habits. Four Winds Interactive provides a digital display platform that connects different databases and a content management system to provide employees with the real-time company and department performance feedback.

The trend is moving toward connectivity and integration, connecting personal, building systems, and environmental data. Buildings will one day display a dashboard providing real-time feedback on environmental conditions and their impact on collective and individual biometrics, but in the meantime, making individuals aware of their work's effect on their body and their biology's effect on their team can help create a happier, more productive workplace.



Managers—and meetings—hold the keys to defining culture

While pandemic-driven stress has been reported by employees at every level, managers have been especially hard hit. Amidst the uncertainty of COVID-19, managers had to find the inner strength to rally their teams, providing emotional support while also coordinating work remotely, which requires additional time and energy^{xxviii}.

These very same individuals are now essential to setting the tone of the hybrid workplace. One area where their efforts will be highly visible and effective: meetings.

Many executives feel overwhelmed by meetings: On average, they spend nearly 23 hours per week in meetings, up from less than 10 hours in the 1960s. What's more, the meetings are often poorly timed, badly run, or both^{xxix}. In most organizations, meetings function as the primary forum for making decisions and getting work done. Yet few people like meetings or think they are effective.

At the organizational level, meetings often don't meet their engagement potential. From inadequate, unappealing meeting space to clunky technology that creates a lag between in-person and remote attendees, hybrid work will only compound the challenges of making meetings effective. JLL's Meeting Services helps ensure service,

standards and programmatic personalization are all woven into the fabric of meetings—with renewed attention paid to the space and technology that powers hybrid connectivity.

There are significant energy demands required when attending back-to-back meetings, especially meetings that are occurring online, either in whole or in part. The majority of people are at their sharpest and most effective early in the day. Each successive meetings consumes the finite supply of energy they start the day with, causing them to become progressively less efficient and effective with every meeting in which they participate.

A second problem with back-to-back meetings is the residual cognitive load and stress build up. Microsoft's Human Factors Lab studied brain images of individuals who participated in back-to-back meetings, comparing those who took breaks to those who did not. Breaks appeared to provide the benefits of a brain "reset," reducing the cumulative buildup of stress across meetings, which otherwise starts to compound with every subsequent conference^{xxx}.

Viewed in this light, the stress stamina required for meetings is like the short bursts of energy athletes use in competition. There's a reason games are divided into

innings, periods and individual plays. Too many people approach a day of meetings like a marathon, with few if any breaks. Doing that day after day is simply unsustainable.

Improving meetings begins with an understanding that breaks are necessary. A few more guidelines for reducing meeting stress and fatigue that managers can enact and model:

1. Use conference room scheduling systems to change meeting times. Convention dictates that meetings are either 30 minutes or 60 minutes. Change time frames to 20 minutes and 45 minutes. Keep the conference rooms empty during the interim period. If conference rooms are treated like a field of play or a performance venue, participants are more likely to come prepared.

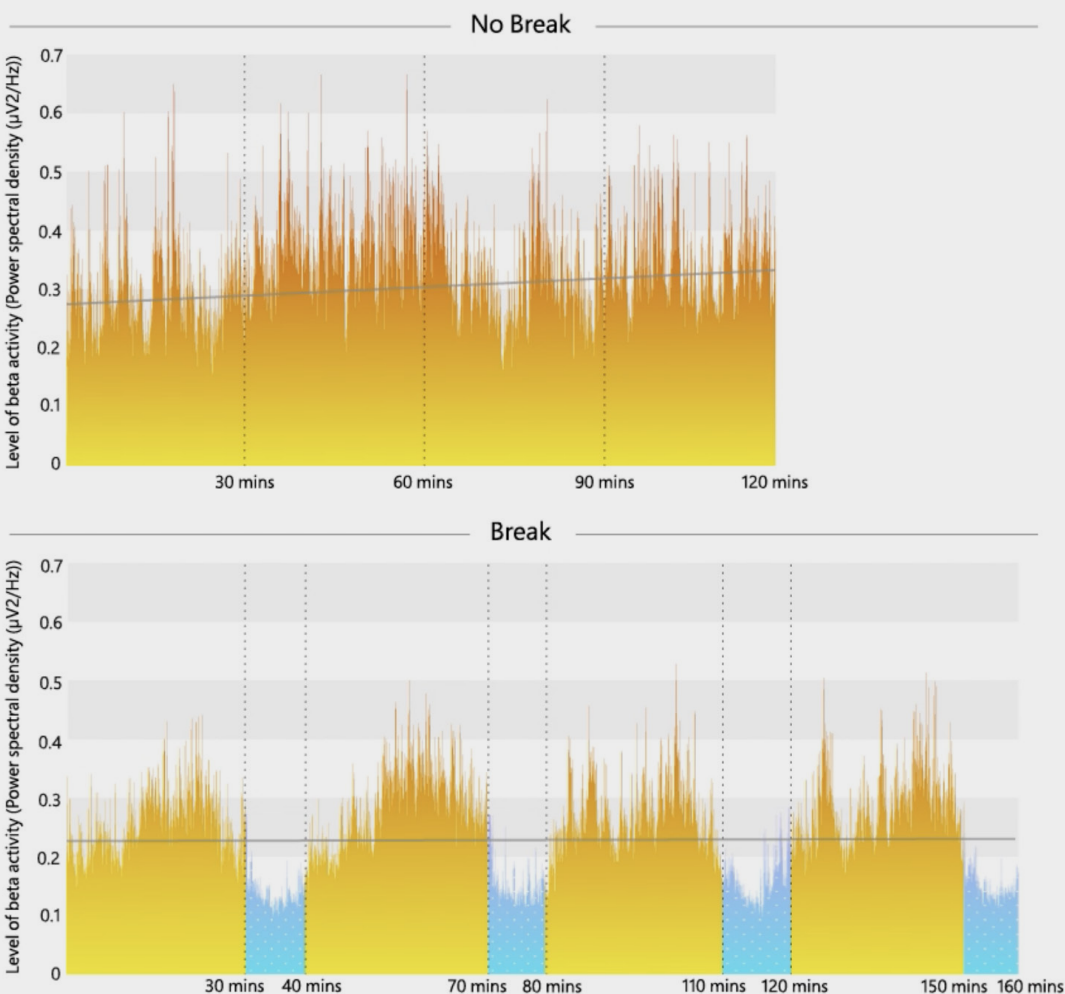
2. Condition and train managers to use break times to reset mentally. Microsoft provided a guided meditation app for the participants in its experiment. Managers who did not have breaks showed a significant rise in stress with every meeting. Those who took breaks maintained a relatively low or baseline stress level. Provide spaces near conference rooms for recovery, just like athletes use the sidelines or the locker room.

3. Provide space near conference room for preparation (warm-up). Not everyone will come prepared or having reviewed the pre-work. Providing 10 to 15 minutes at the start of a session for participants to review the work makes everyone feel ready to participate.

Jumping directly from one meeting to another can cause spikes of stress.

Taking breaks between conversations eases that stress.

● Stress level during meetings ● Stress level during breaks



Source: Microsoft Human Factors Lab study, April 2021

Workforce readiness must include workplace wellness

The workplace of the future is based on care

Where do companies begin in creating a post-pandemic work ecosystem? With the communication structure of an organization. The formal and informal networks that existed before the pandemic have changed, causing communication patterns to alter, relationships to shift, new resources to emerge, old constraints to disappear and new constraints to surface.

The pandemic removed old work structures and exposed the human communication networks beneath them, which had far too often been hidden, undervalued and restricted. Under the emerging work conditions, how will these networks continue? How will value be created and who are the value creators? How can organizations help individuals create networks that center care, cooperation and commitment?

How networks are formed and how they are maintained may prove to contribute more to the emerging world of work than merely looking at individual behavior and contributions. How future interactions are designed will become the difference between workers who feel they are running on treadmills and those who are flourishing.

Connected one way, a group of people can be happy, healthy, cooperative and innovative. Change the connections and they become unhappy, unhealthy, unwilling to cooperate and uncoordinated in their efforts. It's the same group of people, yet some connections cause groups to transcend the attributes of the individuals to create something greater—group attributes—that can only be achieved when the right connections are in place^{xxxi}.

Creating workplaces based on care is one way to ensure the right connections are made and maintained, whether workers are in the office, at home, or in some third location. This care, expressed in the quality of design and the commitment to promoting people-first values, is essential in the Theory F workplace. When employees feel their needs beyond physical safety and security are met, they can bring their whole, supported self to work. And that is swiftly becoming the new normal for workplace wellness.



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