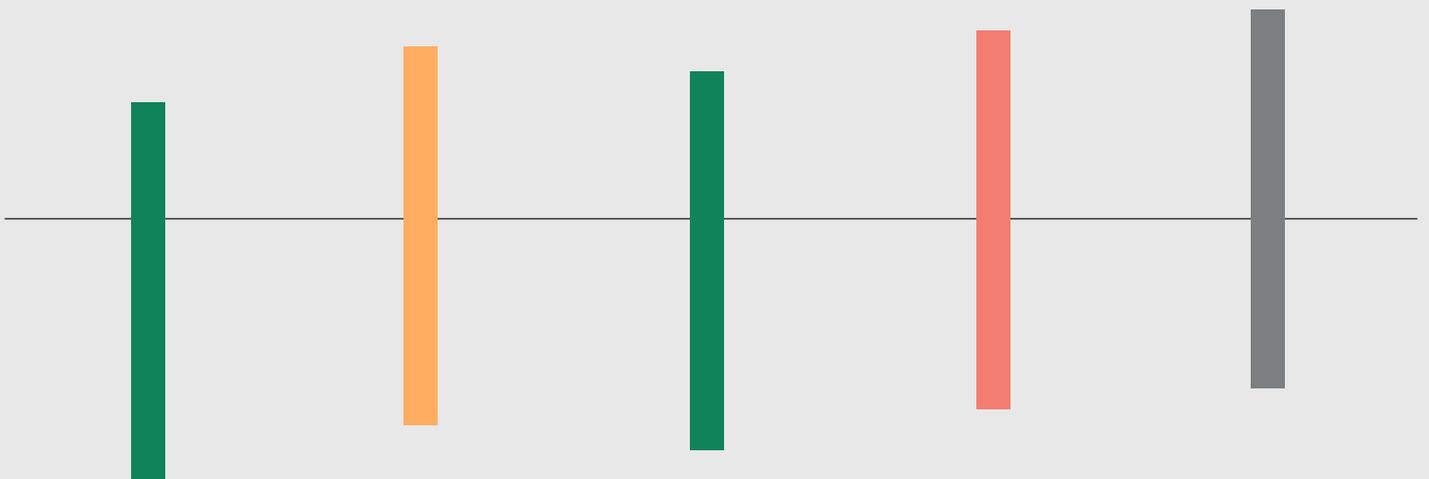
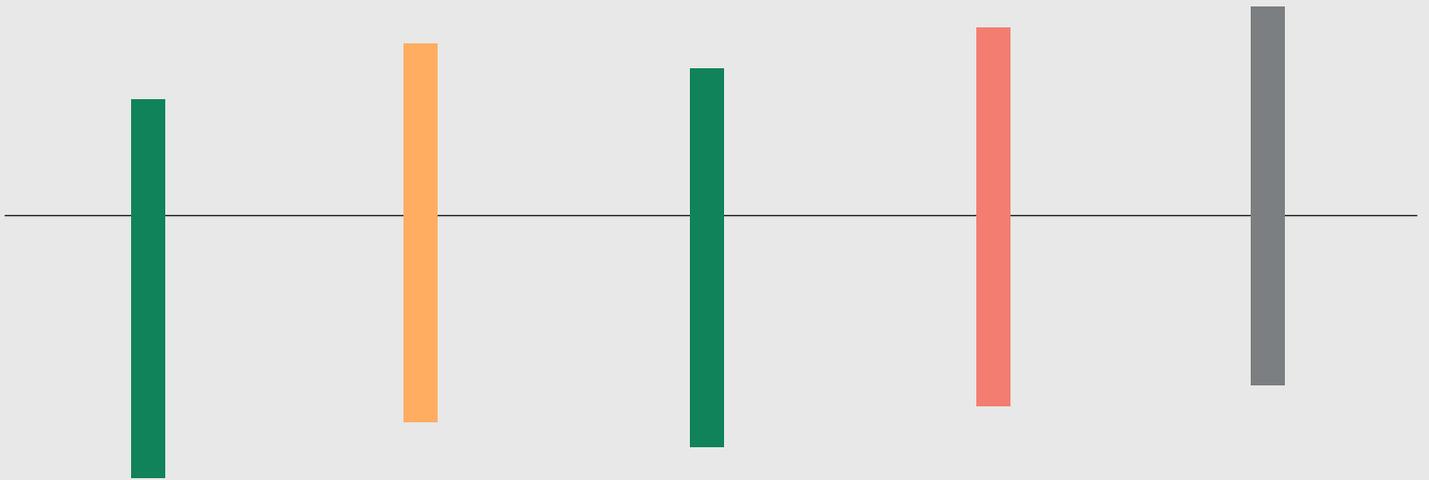


THE WORLD OF WORK IN 2021

Future Trends from the Global Partners of WORKTECH Academy





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A YEAR FOR RENEWAL

The World of Work in 2021

Welcome to WORKTECH Academy's survey of the year ahead, compiled with our Global Partners and taking a sober look at key challenges and opportunities for organisations.

As we begin the new year in a fragile and uncertain world still struggling with the effects of living and working in the shadow of a global pandemic, it is not easy to predict what will happen next with any confidence. Indeed, we are reminded of the godfather of knowledge work, the economist Peter Drucker, who famously said: 'Trying to predict the future is like trying to drive down a country road at night with no lights while looking out the back window.'

A year ago, in this publication, we optimistically declared at the dawn of the 2020s that 'anything seems possible'. What we didn't predict was the coronavirus crisis and its devastating impact on work and workplace. So, in 2021, our mood is inevitably more cautious and sober as we present ten viewpoints on what to look out for in the year ahead. We've again drawn on the resources and knowledge of our Global Partners in WORKTECH Academy to sketch out some of the challenges that organisations face as they scramble to navigate a new landscape of work.

We start with an introductory essay by Philip Ross, CEO of UnWork and Academy chairman, which sets out the contours of 'the next normal'. We look at the importance of building social capital inside organisations at a time when remote working is keeping people apart. We examine the enabling technologies that will help offices to reopen successfully, and we

explore the idea of the 15-minute city as a new spatial framework for life and work.

No survey of trends for 2021 would be complete without some evaluation of the new purpose of the office as a social destination rather than a place for daily, routine attendance. There is also space to assess new approaches to workplace wellbeing post Covid-19, and the role that the connected innovations of the Internet of Things (IoT) can play in restoring a semblance of normality.

We conclude *The World of Work in 2021* with three short essays around human behaviour and experience – we look

'We present ten viewpoints on what to look out for across the new landscape of work...'

at trends in food delivery, at what the workplace can learn from innovations in the retail sector, and at what the design of temporary urban events such as markets, festivals and pop-ups can teach us about creating shared experiences.

We're grateful to the Global Partners of WORKTECH Academy – Aramark, Condeco, Fourfront Group, Haworth, Signify and UnWork – for their contributions to this publication and for their all-round support in ensuring that we bring our members the very latest evidence and ideas on the future of work and workplace from around the world. In 2021, to be informed is to be prepared.

CONTENTS

THE WORLD OF WORK IN 2021



THE NEXT NORMAL

Five features will define a new landscape

2021 will become a pivotal, challenging and, without doubt, defining year for the world of work. The potential for a root-and-branch shift in how and where work is done is now understood. UnWork spent much of 2020 advising corporates and researching the transformation of work that was appearing before our eyes. Here is our view of the 'next normal'. By Philip Ross, founder and CEO of UnWork.

By default, in the pandemic, 'workplace' has been catapulted into the agendas of the C-suite as companies try to come to terms with a new landscape and the opportunity for radical change.

The work-from-home experiment imposed by Covid-19 has produced better than expected results. People have been pleasantly surprised. For decades, decision makers were mostly hesitant to let their people work remotely. Driven by the familiarity of presenteeism, lack of trust or poor technology, people commuted to the corporate office and worked in a way largely unchanged since the industrial revolution led to the birth of the white-collar workplace.

But Covid-19 struck just as many of the enablers for change were emerging. Rather than reinvent work, it just accelerated the undercurrents that were already in play: reducing travel and commuting to meet carbon commitments and improve work-life balance, playing to the expectations of new generations of talent, adopting flexible working to embrace diversity and inclusion,

and downsizing the footprint of leased space to drive efficiency of occupation costs.

But the real enabler of change is digital innovation. The office was already pivoting from its role as the container for corporate technology to a bit part where it was largely unneeded. As the pandemic struck, and people hurried home with a laptop, smart phone and (for some) the office chair, many companies had the technology infrastructure ready in place to enable a new way of working.

Software, systems and data delivered from the cloud collided with homes equipped with high-speed broadband wi-fi. Mobile smart phones with 4G completed the connectivity conundrum. Laptops, tablets and other devices combined with web cams, headphones, displays and peripherals to provision work.

The implementation of Microsoft's 365 suite brought Outlook, Teams and the rest of the Office suite to any device, synchronising seamlessly, as well as the now ubiquitous

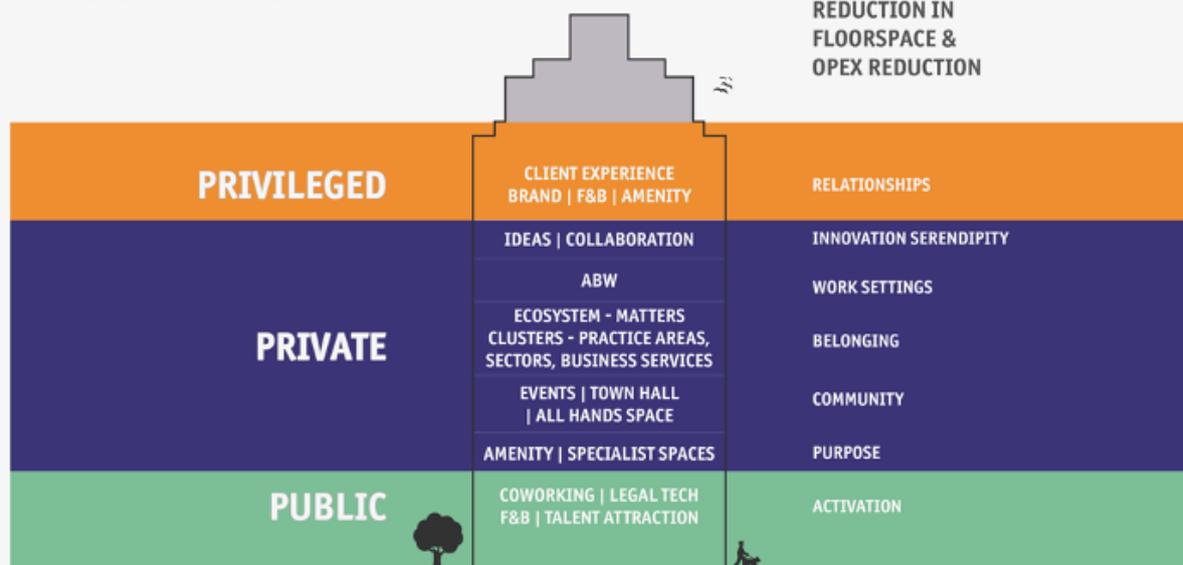
"The office was already pivoting away from its role as the container for corporate technology..."

Zoom for video conferencing. Couple this with other breakthroughs such as eSignatures and electronic document management and storage platforms, and we could visualise a new, digital workplace.

UnWork's vision for the impact of the pandemic on the future legal workplace – a reimagined space that drives purpose and reduces real estate by 40 per cent

THE FUTURE LEGAL OFFICE

40%
REDUCTION IN
FLOORSPACE &
OPEX REDUCTION



THE WORLD OF WORK IN 2021

In effect, people using this technology were now bypassing the office altogether. There was no need to 'dial into a server' that was housed in the building – all systems and platforms were remote. So, as we were enforced to work from home, the role of the office became redundant as the node or nexus of technology.

Productivity hasn't suffered on the whole – indeed, for many, it increased as people balanced their work and life and allocated many of the hours spent commuting to work. Managers shifted to results-orientated approaches – managing by outputs and not time spent in the office.

And so people have been able to perform surprisingly well. But what's missing is important to recognise. Surveys point to the social effect of the workplace – the network effect. For many younger employees at the start of their career, learning and development is a challenge as is building their 'social capital' when the very people that

should be teaching and mentoring them are not there.

The other limitation is the unplanned and unscripted behaviours that drive new ideas and innovation. The collaboration, the 'water cooler moments', spontaneous interactions and serendipity all are vacant in a world of scheduled video calls. Indeed, it's interesting to define who should be 'there' on any given day. Rather than the 'return to the office' plan being a random team A or B approach to repatriating people with the desk, one of the benefits of new technology is that we can now use data to inform who should be in the office with whom, and when.

With Microsoft 365 insights and the Workplace Analytics platform, UnWork's data scientists have looked at the organisational network analysis (ONA) that shows who is emailing whom, who is invited to Teams or other Outlook events and who is sharing documents with others. It builds a picture of the real work at play, the interactions and clusters, the



tribes and communities as well as correlating who is collaborating with whom. And so we can plan our buildings with science, driven by a logic that determines patterns of occupancy.

Apps are also helping to define the new workplace experience. By sharing who has booked to be in on a particular day, by nudging or suggesting when would be good to go into the office, and by providing great user experience (UX) when people go to work, the app will become the pivot to workplace experience. From finding colleagues to navigating to a desk or meeting room that has been booked, ordering food or checking on availability of classes or the queue at the genius bar, UX will define the success of the workplace.

The net result of these trends is the potential for an extraordinary reduction in real estate. Pre-Covid-19, workspace worldwide was not well utilised, with just 47 per cent of desks in use at any point on an average day. Now, as people suggest they want to work from home

“Providing great user experience will define the success of the workplace ...”

for two days a week, come into the office for two days a week and work in third spaces one day per week (a typical 2+2+1 pattern) there is an ability to reduce floorspace leased by 40 per cent.

So, as we understand these forces and embrace a new world of work, the office will morph into a different shape as people reappraise the need for traditional space with allocated desks in a world where many people

are working elsewhere. Here are five key features for the Next Normal:

1. Agile – people’s work patterns will change

Agility ratios will be used to work out the correct approach for each user based on a typology that aggregates an agility index with a work-from-home index.

2. Activity Based – spaces must be shared and specialised

The purpose for coming into the office will get more defined. When people come in, they will want an optimised experience. Space must be aligned to tasks and activities, enabled by appropriate technology.

3. Digital Equality – hybrid work creates challenges

As people (employees, clients and so on) start to work in a hybrid way, with some in the office and some connecting from home or elsewhere, we will need spaces with advanced audio-visual technology that no longer mean that remote participants have a second-class experience.

4. Diverse - one size doesn’t fit all

We will celebrate diversity and provide choice so that when people need a space it aligns with who they are and what they prefer. As well as physical, we need to also embrace cognitive diversity.

5. Data – everything will be measured

Data science and analytics will take centre stage as the method to manage the new workplace, with the ability to use artificial intelligence and machine learning to suggest and nudge people as well as define the optimal clusters and ecosystems.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Building your culture remotely

The experience of employees spending so much time apart has made the question of building organisational social capital a crucial one for 2021, according to Haworth research.

While existing social bonds have carried many through the initial impact of the pandemic, continued remote working – either as a result of the pandemic or a future desire for ongoing flexibility – means that organisations will need to think much more consciously about how to build social capital online as well as through in-person interactions.

Broadly speaking, social capital describes the functioning of social groups through interpersonal relationships. These relationships are defined by a shared sense of identity and belonging, shared norms and values, trust, reciprocity, cooperation, and an increased mutual understanding. Robert Putnam, the father of social capital theory, notes that the value of all ‘social networks’ and the inclinations that arise to do things for one’s fellow employees defines the level of social capital that an organisation has.

Essentially, improved social capital through more numerous and higher quality relationships creates value through greater trust, reciprocity and cooperation. Organisations that successfully build and sustain high levels of social capital are more likely to get employees attuned to the company culture, and more attuned to the goals of the broader organisation.

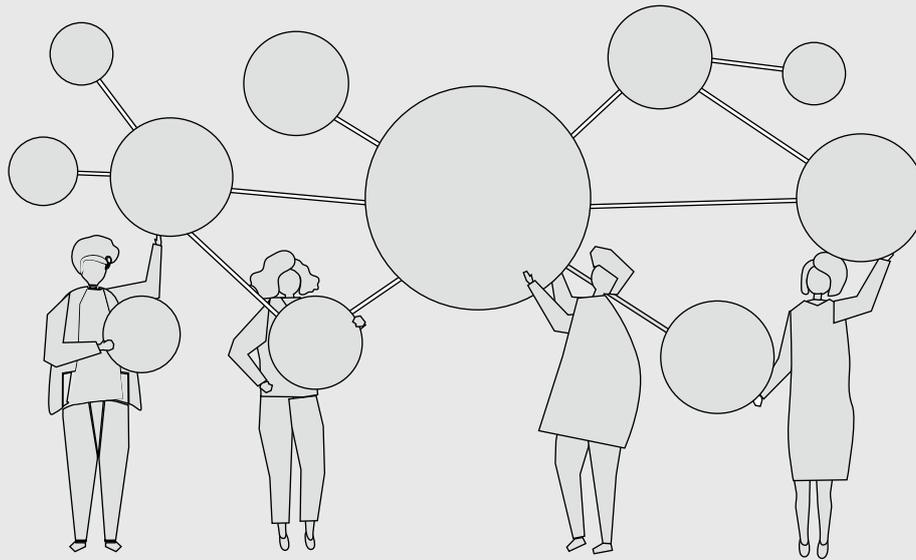
For individuals, levels of social capital closely reflect one’s sense of purpose

and belonging, as well as feelings of trust and safety in their workplace. Combined organisational and personal elements are likely to lead to improved performance outcomes, enhanced attraction and retention rates, and higher employee engagement.

‘Increased social capital creates value through greater trust, reciprocity and cooperation...’

There are two key aspects in understanding social capital development – who you know (quantity) and how closely you know them (quality). Typically, measurements of quantity and quality— with the goal of more higher quality relationships—are a good way to judge an organisation’s social capital. Organisations with many employees who feel close to a wide range of their fellow co-workers should feel good about their levels of social capital. Organisations where most employees feel isolated, with few close co-workers, should be concerned and take action to increase camaraderie and team cohesion.

In a traditional workplace, social capital is successfully built through the development of elements of trust, belonging and cooperation between diverse employees. This typically involves individuals and groups spending time together, learning together, and generally growing closer to one another through shared experience. With few, limited, or no opportunities to



visit the office in person, employees are more likely to struggle to maintain and deepen their existing relationships – or to develop new ones. It is clear that many organisations may be facing a crisis if social capital is not managed properly.

In 2021, this means taking concrete action to build better relationships virtually in addition to face-to-face interactions. There are a number of potential approaches to this, including:

- Organising more frequent one-to-one conversations – perhaps without a specific agenda – between members of a team. This is a good way for people to deepen their relationships, and for new-hire employees to meet the team and spark some crucial connections for rapport and trust.
- Casual team happy hours at the end of the day, even if only for 30 minutes, are a good way to celebrate a team

achievement or to close out the week together.

- More frequent shared social recognition occasions celebrating team members from time to time. These allow an increase in employees' time spent together while empowering and motivating them at the same time.

Ultimately, enhancing social capital is about providing employees with time to spend with their co-workers through whatever resources they have available. Giving employees the freedom to socialise—and opportunities to learn more about each other—allows for deeper emotional connections, particularly during difficult times.

Source: Haworth, Spark, *Social Capital Challenges Amidst Covid-19: Allowing time for more social interactions in remote work*, Aaron Haworth, January 2021

THE GREAT RETURN

Technologies will make reopening offices easier

Covid-19 will have a lasting impact on organisational operations and office spaces through 2021 and beyond. Bringing people back to the workplace will require companies to consider key investments in enabling technologies, according to a CB Insights report.

Although in some countries the return to the office has begun, surveys reveal a significant level of discomfort amongst employees, making worker safety and peace of mind a top concern for the year ahead.

Looking beyond the pandemic, many companies will likely reconsider their real estate footprint and remote working policies, and it will be crucial to create optimal conditions for employees to work remotely as well as in the office.

To stay ahead of the curve, companies will therefore need to consider key investments across wellness, remote collaboration tools, mobile cybersecurity tech, accessible HR tools, and workforce training programmes for professional development and upskilling. New generations of tech will meet these diverse needs. Here are some emerging trends:

Lobbies and building entrances: Health screenings and contactless wellness checks will likely become common, with biometric kiosks or even code-based immunity passports providing an additional layer of security. While privacy needs have to be treated sensitively, this approach will offer comfort in the return to the office.

Elevators and common spaces: New technologies include improved air filtration and far-UVC to neutralise contaminants along with a range of cutting-edge touchless technologies such as mobile device access, gesture detection, and elevators retrofitted with holographic buttons.

Desk space: Spatial intelligence platforms and people-counting sensors have made it easier for management teams to proactively plan for and monitor social distancing. Looking ahead, they will provide continuing value by helping decisions makers understand how their real estate is used and make thoughtful design and strategy decisions as a result.

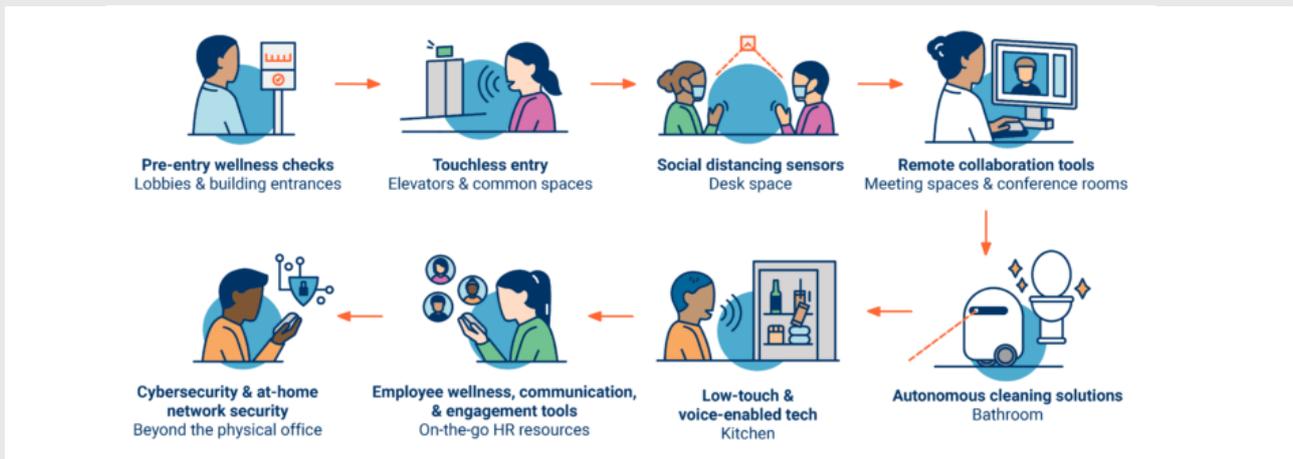
“To stay ahead of the curve, companies will need to consider key investments...”

Conference rooms: While video-conferencing platforms have been key in recent months, 2021 will see the development of solutions that take remote collaboration a step further. These include improved chat tools that replicate ‘watercooler’ moments, better digital collaboration, and AI that clears space and time for higher-value activities. Companies are also experimenting with using AR/VR as a way of capturing more human qualities in our virtual interactions.

Bathrooms: Cleaning stations, touchless features and self-cleaning solutions are



Source: CB Insights: The tech-enabled office journey



likely to feature, while sensors will allow occupancy to be managed and facilitate efficient, on-demand cleaning in the longer term.

Kitchens: With many corporate cafeterias staying closed, 2021 is likely to see an increase in the provision of fridges, touchless microwaves, and single-serve coffee that allow employees to safely prepare a meal or drink. In an extension to traditional food and beverage options, there will also be a rise in the use of individually packaged food delivery options – and even fresh food vending machines with made-to-order offers.

On-the-go HR: The three immediate focuses for new HR tools will be communication, engagement and manager effectiveness, and employee wellness. Mobile is rising as a key way to enable connectivity across organisations, including new communication platforms, performance management software, and apps that offer mental health or mindfulness services. As the pandemic dissipates, new tech offerings around

recruiting and talent will also ramp up.

Beyond the office: Cybersecurity concerns will only increase in importance as many employers continue their work-from-home policies. The leap in the use of personal devices and internet connections has created a new frontier to defend. A new suite of tools will help to meet this need, including new email security and data loss-prevention platforms, machine learning that recognises abnormal behaviours, and employee training programmes.

While some changes will be short-term, the pandemic will have long-lasting impacts even after the crisis has passed. Smart building investments may create a healthier and more pleasant work environment, even when Covid-19 is no longer a primary concern.

Source: CB Insights Research Report, *Reopening: The Tech-Enabled Office in a Post-Covid World*

CITY OF PROXIMITIES

Working and living in easy reach

In 2021, there will be a resurgence of the 15-minute city as city planners and designers grapple with the purpose and functionality of the post Covid-19 urban environment, says Kasia Maynard of WORKTECH Academy.

The concept of the '15-minute city' is based on research into how city dwellers' use of time could be reorganised to improve both living conditions and the urban environment. Urban necessities such as work, home, shops, entertainment, education and healthcare should all be available within the same time a commuter might once have waited on a railway platform.

While this may not be a new concept, it is one that has gained a lot of attention as a result of the global pandemic. One of the first lessons of Covid-19 was that we could radically change our outlook on how and where we work on a global scale. The pandemic shined a harsh light on the inefficiencies of work patterns such as daily hour-long commutes and rigid 9-to-5 working hours. As a result, working patterns have been forced to become more flexible and, with that, the urban environment is currently playing catch-up.

The 15-minute city concept was developed by Professor Carlos Moreno at the Sorbonne in Paris. He has influenced vigorous implementation of pedestrian and bicycling schemes across Paris and worked as a special envoy for Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo. Moreno's aim is to turn the French capital into what he calls 'a city of

proximities' where the city is not divided into discrete zones for living, working and entertainment but as mosaics of neighbourhoods in which most urban needs can be met within a 15-minute walk or cycle.

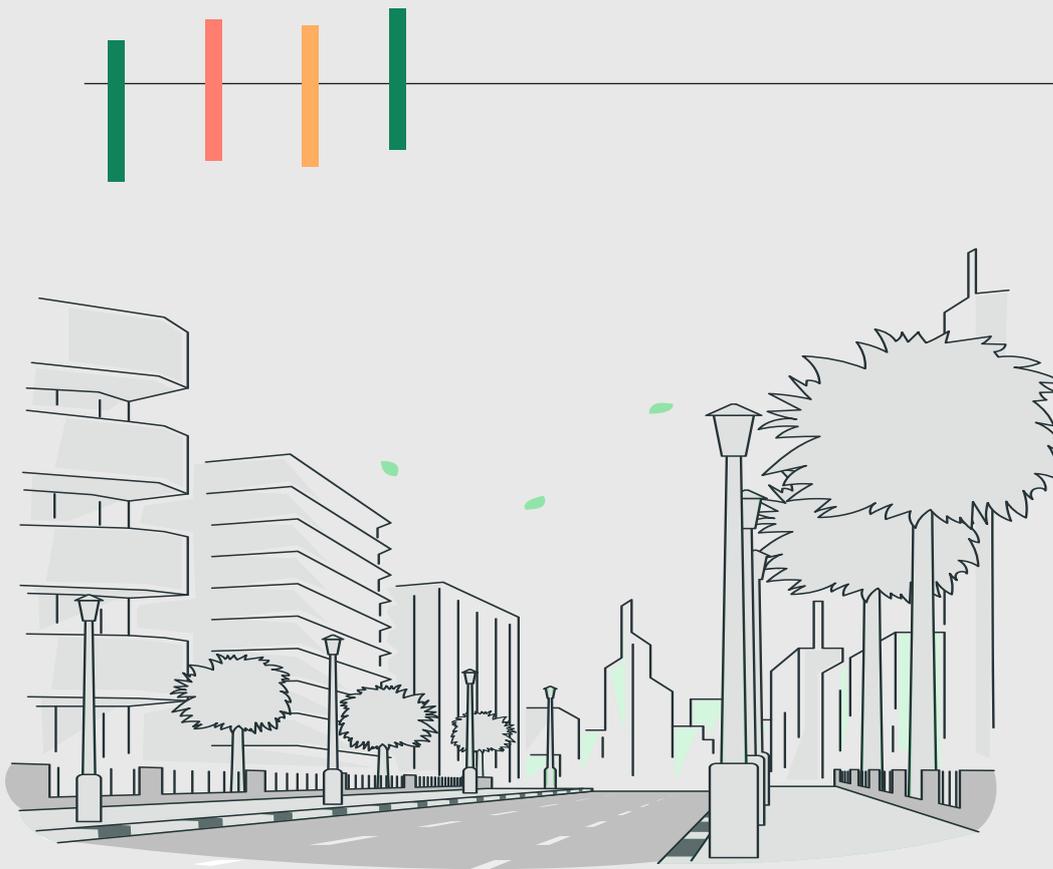
As a result of the pandemic, a new relationship has developed between citizens and the rhythm of life in cities. Currently, urban life in most major cities has been placed on pause and is labelled as 'tentative' by designers, architects and city planners. The same people also unanimously agree that the pandemic will not be the death of cities and the central business district (CBD), but they do recognise it has caused a significant shift in the way we perceive and use our cities on a daily basis.

The next frontier of urban design will be to bring workplaces, shops and residential

"The 15-minute concept opens the door to creating innovation districts across the city..."

infrastructure together in closer proximity. Consequently, street space previously dedicated to cars will be freed for bike lanes, pedestrian pathways and civic spaces such as parks.

While the idea has been pioneered in Paris, other leaders across the world in Barcelona, Melbourne, London, Milan and a number of Chinese cities are all working toward similar visions. The hope



is to refashion cities as places to primarily walk, linger, socialise and enjoy rather than simply to commute in and out of. The proximity concept calls for the return of a more local and somewhat slower way of life, where commuter time is invested in richer relationships with people and place.

However, despite this idea being championed as an urban planner's new utopia, critics argue that the 15-minute city comes with many limitations. The most prominent is that it acts as a lasso which restricts citizens rather than enables them. Moreno counters that 'We don't want to oblige people to stay in the 15-minute district. We don't want to recreate a village. We want to create better urban organisation.'

The 15-minute city we anticipate in 2021 will not only advance a global commitment to a greener future, but also opens the door to creating innovation districts across the city. For the last 50 years, the landscape of innovation has been dominated by places like Silicon Valley –

suburban corridors of spatially isolated corporate campuses, accessible only by car, with little emphasis on the quality of life or on integrating work, housing and recreation.

Now, urban planning is taking notes from the legendary urban planner and theorist Jane Jacobs whose idea was that diversity and innovation is born from mixed-use development, short blocks of streets for better social interaction, more walkable routes, and a dense concentration of people to provide a source of vitality and creativity.

As the 15-minute city concept comes into play in 2021, we can expect to see a greater commitment to carbon neutrality through increased pedestrian and cycle routes, more flexible uses of public infrastructure, and a more managed and organised urban environment where citizens have choice and autonomy to easily access services and provisions they need. Workplace strategists, take note.

DESTINATION OFFICE

A smart pivot from place to purpose

As companies change their management style in 2021 to adapt to post-pandemic working, the integrated capabilities of cloud technology and workspace management will play a vital role in forging new patterns of productivity and social interaction, according to research by Condeco.

The post Covid-19 workplace requires a significant shift in mindset, both in terms of how we work and what the physical office means to us. According to a 2020 Gartner study, 40 per cent of employers will change management style to increase employee autonomy and flexibility through 2021. As part of this shift in leadership, employers need to adopt long-term, flexible strategies which can adapt to new challenges as the year unfolds. It is becoming clearer that technology is a vital part of these new management styles.

A well-planned technology strategy can support the transition to a more flexible work pattern as employees start to come back to the post Covid-19 workplace. Returning to the office in 2021 will require advanced planning and scheduling – office space will become a bookable commodity similar to seat on flights or hotel rooms. As a result, offices will become destinations for specific business tasks instead of hubs where everything happens.

The shift to more focused task-based working in the office calls for new workplace design and the implementation of integrated technology. There are five

key areas where technology will enable the office landscape to shift to new ways of working in 2021:

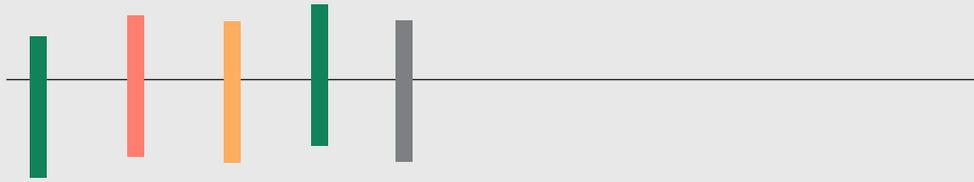
Employee needs: The first is that the office will become reactive to people's needs. Data on workspace usage and employee attendance trends means the office can seamlessly adapt to suit employee requirements. Employees access live space availability through a workplace app that can help them make informed decisions about where they should work that day and what spaces are available to them.

Flexibility: Workstations and meeting rooms can be used at different times by different people for different things, with total clarity on scheduling and availability. The transparency that technology brings to space allows employees to make calculated decisions on the type of space they need

“The workplace will now be used for team building and to strengthen relationships...”

for specific tasks from collaboration space and meeting rooms to technical space and focused workspace.

Collaboration: This is the area where research and studies have repeatedly found that employees are struggling the most. Virtual collaboration in larger groups is often difficult to implement successfully and this has serious implications on creativity and innovation output. More



planned and productive collaboration will occur in the office in 2021 as employees use booking systems to plan and meet colleagues in the office at specific times.

Social: One of the primary functions of the office moving forward will be the social aspect. Multiple lockdowns across the world have led employees to crave social interaction to some degree. While many people have embraced working from home and managing their own time, the workplace will now be used for team building and relationship strengthening. This purpose will be particularly significant for the onboarding of new team members.

Safety: Above all, the office in 2021 needs to feel safe. Booking systems and utilisation data enable employees to safely

enter the workplace and understand where the areas of least density are. This allows the needs of the employer and of every employee to be fulfilled in a way that doesn't compromise anyone's safety or health.

As smart technology comes into play, it will enable employees to take control of their work schedule and experience flexible working in its truest sense. Employees will make more conscious decisions in using the workplace as a destination to complete specific tasks which enhance their productivity and social bonds with colleagues.

Source: Back to the new normal: Returning to the office after Covid-19. (2020), Condeco

WELLBEING RESET

Time to get on the front foot

Workplace wellbeing will become more proactive, people-centred and strategic in 2021 as design brings organisational values to life, says Guenaelle Watson of 360 Workplace.

Before Covid-19 struck, employee wellbeing was firmly on the up. Faced with evidence demonstrating the detrimental cost to business of poor physical and mental health, many organisations were either investing in corporate wellness initiatives or thinking about doing so.

However, this pre-pandemic focus on wellbeing was mainly based on reactively addressing the negative impacts of poor wellbeing – such as presenteeism, absenteeism, burnout, stress, depression and so on – as opposed to proactively promoting a health-inducing workplace.

Place-based assets such as 24-hour gyms, healthy food bars and other real estate amenities were prioritised over programmes aimed at people. And many of the initiatives deployed were geared to individual wellbeing and happiness than addressing strategic organisational goals around culture and performance. Indeed, one of the puzzles of workplace wellbeing is the gap between its personal impact and what it can mean at an organisational level.

Covid-19 has essentially provided the opportunity to reset the dial in workplace wellbeing. At 360 Workplace, we assembled an expert panel drawn from a range of disciplines including neuroscience, positive psychology, ergonomics, employee engagement, mindfulness and the built environment to explore how things might

change. Our research unearthed some key directions in terms of design for 2021.

A place-led approach to wellbeing led organisations to invest more in biophilia, ergonomics, activity-based working, food and fitness amenities, and sensor technologies to measure environmental conditions. These trends are set to continue and even accelerate post Covid-19, but the emphasis will change to what people want from the spaces they work in.

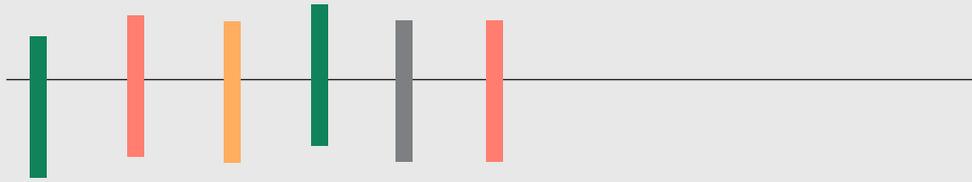
People will demand more transparency and accessible information on how our buildings support health and wellbeing. Applicants will not only be interviewing you; they will be interviewing your building.

WELL Building Standard registration trebled during the pandemic – an encouraging sign that a people-first approach is growing in popularity, and certifications such as WELL and Fitwell or AirRated will demonstrate a genuine commitment from organisations to achieve this.

Large investments in such assets as high-end gyms will come under much more scrutiny. Instead of leaders predicting or assuming what is best for employee wellbeing, they will communicate more closely with their people to determine which amenities are most closely aligned with employee needs.

Elements of co-design or employee participation will become a greater part of the design mix. Approaches will also become more proactive and preventative to maintain physical and mental health, anticipating problems rather than reactively trying to fix things when they are already broken.

Organisations will no longer squeeze more



people into high-density spaces at the detriment of employee wellbeing. Instead of following a standard numbers-driven approach to space-planning, companies will be more creative in breaking boundaries and providing inclusive environments in which people feel safe and valued.

Many office spaces will shift in purpose to become an oasis to escape the pressures of home. This is an emerging theme that will draw on design for user experience and service-led approaches. This trend will be combined with a retreat from the statement company HQ in favour of smaller, better provisioned hubs and a flexible working policy that allows people to choose what might suit them best. The workplace design itself will embrace elements borrowed from our home environments. The 'homification' of the workplace will contribute to a sense of comfort, happiness and safety.



more compassionate leadership. There will be more recognition of the dangers of working long hours online.

Perhaps, above all, there will be a greater understanding in 2021 of the multi-faceted nature of wellbeing, which has psychological, emotional and spiritual as well as physical dimensions; and greater understanding too of the power of design to make wellbeing strategy visible in the workplace so that, simultaneously, individuals can thrive and companies can be more productive.

Source: *The Puzzle of Wellbeing: Where Next for Workplace Wellbeing Post Covid-19?* (2020), 360 Workplace with WORKTECH Academy. 360 Workplace is part of Fourfront Group

“Elements of co-design or employee participation will be part of the design mix...”

Wellbeing focused around remote and hybrid working models will be a new area of interest in 2021, with an emphasis on giving people flexibility and choice, and supporting employees across different places of work. Performance will be driven by output rather than presence, and supported by a new style of open,

SMART SYSTEMS

Connected innovations will support safety

2021 will be a year of recovery and innovation as we collectively work together to regain control and normality of daily life. Smart systems have a large part to play through the integration of the Internet of Things (IoT), says Jonathan Weinert of Signify.

We can expect that connected systems and smart technology will be used to promote safety and recovery in public spaces and the workplace, but they can also be used to create a more resilient environment for future health crises and disruptions.

Before Covid-19, smart systems in the workplace focused on engineering serendipitous encounters and promoting creativity and innovation through density. Now, the conversation has shifted to using the same systems to keep people apart and safe. As we progress in 2021, we will see these smart systems as a means of necessity to keep employees from harm.

Smart indoor navigation and tracking applications have ensured that office workers can use their workspaces efficiently for some time now. Through the use of a single app on an employees' tablet or mobile they can identify empty meeting rooms, book workstations and find colleagues and offices using wayfinding software.

In 2021, this technology will venture one step further as smart systems can navigate employees through the building with the least contact with other people and guide them to less dense areas in the office.

The same connected systems can identify areas of the office which have been heavily utilised and subject different parts of the office to be disinfected. Data from smart sensors can not only inform safer office design through the regulation of HVAC systems but also definitively determine how the office is being used and when. These space management applications can give decision-makers a real sense of usage levels over time, replacing speculation with hard data to inform their long-term planning.

Such IoT-powered mitigation efforts from employers will pay dividends in recruitment and retention. A company that puts smart solutions to work in safeguarding worker health and wellbeing is likely to attract more talent.

While organisations are focused on bringing their employees back to the office in 2021, they firstly need to ensure that the spaces they are providing are safe. Safe spaces start with decontamination. One powerful way to decontaminate an area is through ultra-violet-C (UV-C) light.

UV-C is a powerful germicide and it has been effectively used in devices that disinfect everything from drinking water and air to surfaces and shared devices such as keyboards and headsets. UV-C will be used more frequently when people return to the office to ensure a constant and effective level of hygiene and cleanliness in the office. However, the challenge is to use it in a way that is safe – and that's where light controls come in.

Upper air disinfection can occur while people are present because the UV-C luminaries are directed upwards to the



ceiling, but surface disinfection can be safely done when space is unoccupied. UV-C light systems can be triggered by motion sensors to ensure that the light is only used when no one is left in the space. These sensors will also turn lights on and off without requiring people to touch switches.

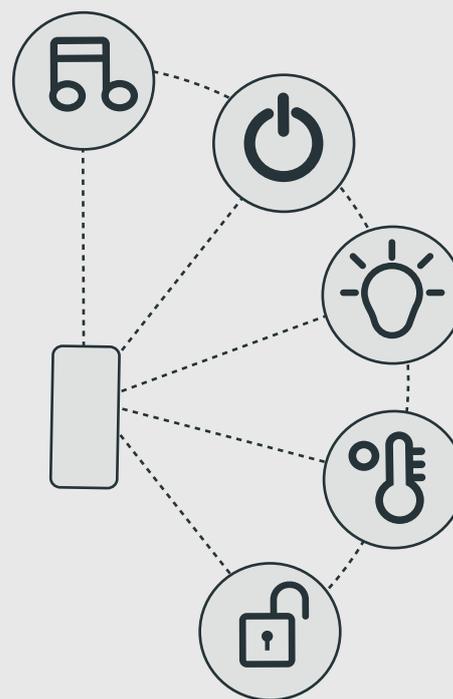
It isn't just classic office space that will benefit from smart systems in 2021. Retail, industry and healthcare will also reap the benefits. As brick-and-mortar retail stores recover from the pandemic, tracking applications will help store managers keep numbers of shoppers at safe levels. Wayfinding apps can also load customised maps onto shoppers' phones to guide them directly to the items they are seeking.

In factories, warehouses and other industrial facilities, predictive maintenance capacities of connected technology will make intervention by human workers less

“IoT applications are pointing the way out of the lockdown era and towards a more resilient future ...”

necessary. Sensor-equipped machines will trigger alerts when they need servicing and human workers will be led to a specific area that needs maintenance.

The data collected will also help managers improve operations and logistics caused by acceleration of e-commerce during the pandemic. Space management



technologies, such as heatmaps that visualise the usage of a space, can give valuable insights to optimise the order-picking processes, and can help business run efficiency processes in a smart, data-driven way.

While 2020 was the year of discussing the art of the possible, 2021 will see these smart technologies take precedent in the workplace and beyond. As tech in general has risen to the Covid-19 challenge by making possible the transition to at-home work, IoT applications in particular are pointing the way out of the lockdown era and toward a more secure and resilient future.

Source: *How IoT systems can help cope with Covid-19 and its aftermath*, (2020), Interact – a connected lighting software brand from Signify

FOOD FUTURES

New delivery models on the menu

Changing consumer behaviour will accelerate innovation in the food and beverage industry in 2021 as employees prioritise healthy, local produce, according to Aramark research.

The onset of the coronavirus crisis almost instantly changed consumer behaviour, including how and where we eat. These changes are likely to be long lasting as consumers make every effort to stay healthy. Greater access to food and elevated dining experiences for employees will be keynote themes in 2021.

As access to food changed during the Covid-19 pandemic, foodservice operators adapted to meet evolving needs. Businesses needed to deploy leading-edge food service innovations that gave essential employees easy, convenient and safe access to food. Recognising these needs, more business are making modifications to their operating models. For example, Uber launched Uber Direct and Uber Connect in select cities. Fine dining establishments began offering take-out and family meals, chain restaurants became grocery markets for essential items, and some restaurants began selling DIY meal and drink kits.

Technology also played its part in offering an alternative dining experience. According to data from Aramark, many consumers tried new technologies for the first time during the pandemic, including using food delivery services and online food shopping. On the business side, many companies partnered with mobile-first delivery providers to ensure access to food.

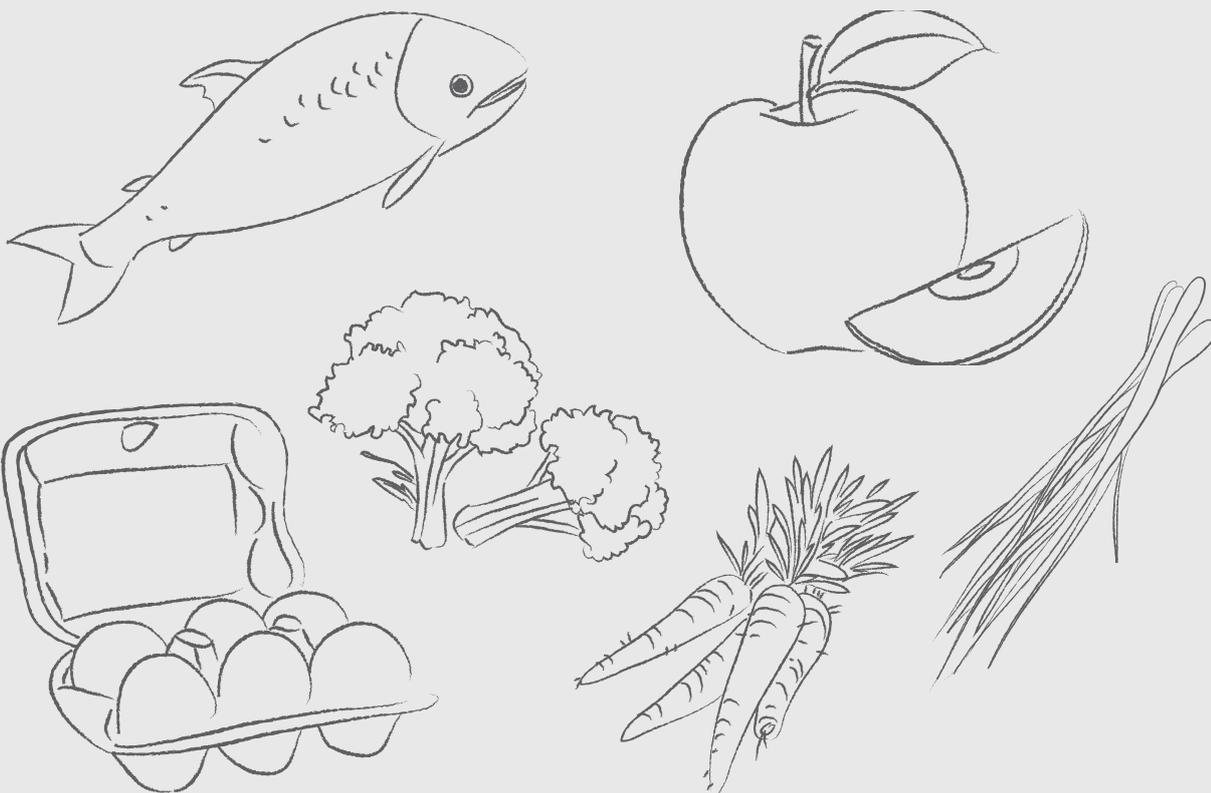
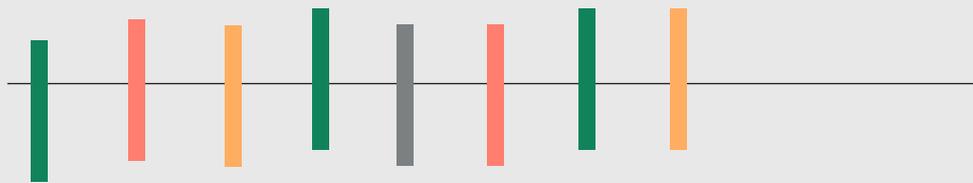
The pandemic outlined new challenges for the foodservice industry – from delivering healthy food safely to customers to ensuring there is a wider range of healthy food options. In a mid-pandemic survey by Aramark, the results identified five of employee's strongest desires about work, among them the desire for immunity-boosting food and beverages. This shows a shift, not only in how employees are consuming food, but what they are

“The desire for immunity-boosting food reflects a shift in consumer behaviour...”

consuming. Food providers need to understand what the demands are to cater for these new behaviours.

Changing consumer behaviours will prompt the food service industry to innovate quickly in 2021 to find a way to adapt. One key area to ensure people have access to food is making it convenient. This year will see more pop-up grocery stores on-site for key workers. Food services providers will take advantage of empty retail spaces and turn them into pop-up food shops to provide essential employees with a safe and convenient way to purchase necessities.

Another innovation in the industry that will grow in 2021 is the use of digital platforms for pre-orders and pick-ups. Many people want to follow social distancing guidelines and limit their physical interaction with



other people, and this includes waiting in queues to order and purchase food. Digital platforms for pre-ordering and picking up food allow employees to limit unwanted physical contact with restaurant workers and other guests, while increasing speed and convenience.

Unsurprisingly, consumers want a wider variety of healthy dining options as health and wellbeing has become a top priority. The commitment to support local businesses has also risen to the top of the agenda as a result of the pandemic. The combination of the two provides an opportunity for farmers and local

produce providers to prepare fresh fruit and vegetable boxes for purchase. Large food service providers can use their diverse distribution network to ensure this food is accessible to everyone.

As we all continue to navigate our uncertain world in 2021, food services providers have a unique opportunity to work alongside local businesses to meet their workers' dining needs as they adapt for the future.

Source: Innovations for expanding workers' access to food during and after Covid-19, (2020), Aramark

LEARNING FROM RETAIL

Scene-shifting stores and more

Innovations in the retail sector have a habit of finding their way quickly into the workplace, so what can we learn from key shopper trends for 2021? By Jeremy Myerson of WORKTECH Academy.

For years, the retail sector has been acting like a barometer of things to come for the workplace industry. It has piloted consumer technologies, spatial formats and service models that sooner or later find their way into the office market. As bricks-and-mortar retailers have struggled in the face of online retailing, they have experimented with an omni-channel approach to reaching customers that holds many lessons for workplaces increasingly devoid of workers.

So what does 2021 hold for retailing – and what might these trends mean for fast followers in the workplace sector? According to a new report from retail designers Quinine, there are plenty of bright ideas coming down the pipe. A few are internally focused on getting retail organisations into better shape, for example reassigning roles among in-store staff and prioritising training and learning. But most are aimed at customers.

The Quinine report, *Retail Insights 2021*, predicts the emergence of more agile store formats to connect with customers, providing the ability to change scenes quickly. Retailers will think more in terms of time, not place, so we can expect to see more temporary pop-ups and semi-permanent structures. The ‘store as a set’ will gain ground with more experiential

events, theatrical techniques and ‘live-streaming’ from inside the retail outlet.

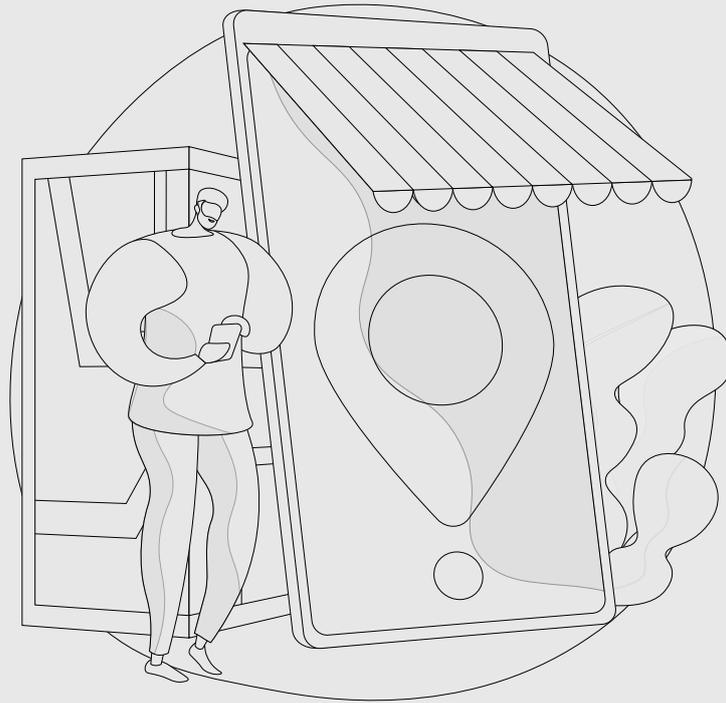
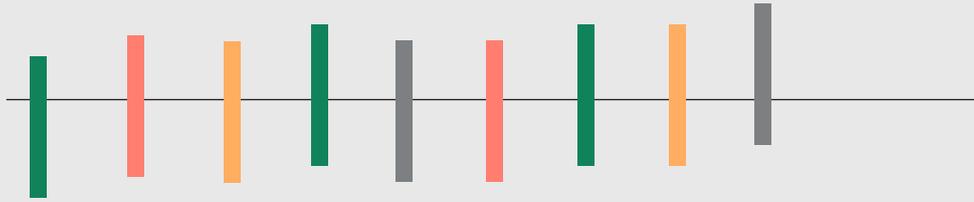
Where retailers lead, office designers won’t be far behind. Now that daily attendance at the office is no longer sacrosanct and workers have more options of where to work, the workplace will need to appeal more as a destination of choice. So, expect more experiential design and stage setting. The ‘office as a set’ could also live-stream key events such as CEO town hall meetings or project set-ups into employees’ homes.

“The ‘office as a set’ could live-stream key events into employees’ homes ...”

Retailers are looking to make things easier for customers in 2021, especially in terms of location. There will be growth in local retail, providing community-based convenience, and even a rise in ‘retail on the move’ – mobile stores interacting with people.

While an ‘office on wheels’ seems impractical in the coming year, there are parallels with workspace where companies are looking at hub-and-spoke models to allow people to work locally to their homes. Edge-city and suburban flexible spaces are set to spring up to enable workers to escape long and exhausting commutes to city centres.

Retailers are also looking to be helpful in other ways. They will invest more in a ‘we’re here to help’ culture, offering in-



store technical and maintenance support to build customer loyalty and trust. They will also look at providing more in-store health and wellness facilities for punters, from treadmills to meditation pods. On a parallel track, workplaces are having similar ideas with IT genius bars and new amenities for wellbeing.

Retailers will up the ante on activating social causes in 2021 according to the Quinine report, communicating philanthropic values through the in-store experience. They will also do more on the sustainability front in terms of having an ethical supply chain. It doesn't take much imagination to suggest the same themes emerging inside organisations. Just as retail will continue to pivot to an

app-centric experience and collect copious amounts of in-store data on behaviour and movement, so our workplaces will do the same.

There is one retail trend we haven't seen yet in the office, which revolves around inclusion and diversity. More operators will create calmer and quieter stores at key times, lowering light and sound levels and restricting customer flow to meet the needs of neurodiverse customers. That's one innovation our workplaces should certainly emulate in 2021.

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Bringing the buzz back to real estate

THE WORLD OF WORK IN 2021

In the search for shared experiences, workplace designers can draw inspiration from temporary urban events such as festivals, markets and pop-ups, says Imogen Privett of WORKTECH Academy.

A sense of collective experience rooted in place was in short supply for most of us in 2020. The coronavirus crisis brought our need for shared experiences and engagement with others into sharp relief. As we look towards a post-pandemic future, creating places that support rich, collective experiences and interactions will be a central pillar in real estate strategy.

It is becoming clear that the pre-pandemic real estate industry may have gone too far in prioritising places over people. Over the coming year, our understanding of the relationship between the experiences and places that we value is likely to be

‘Temporary events provide a model for managing unpredictability and social experience...’

sharper than ever before. How buildings and spaces are designed to value human experience will be an important part of the equation as we enter a new era.

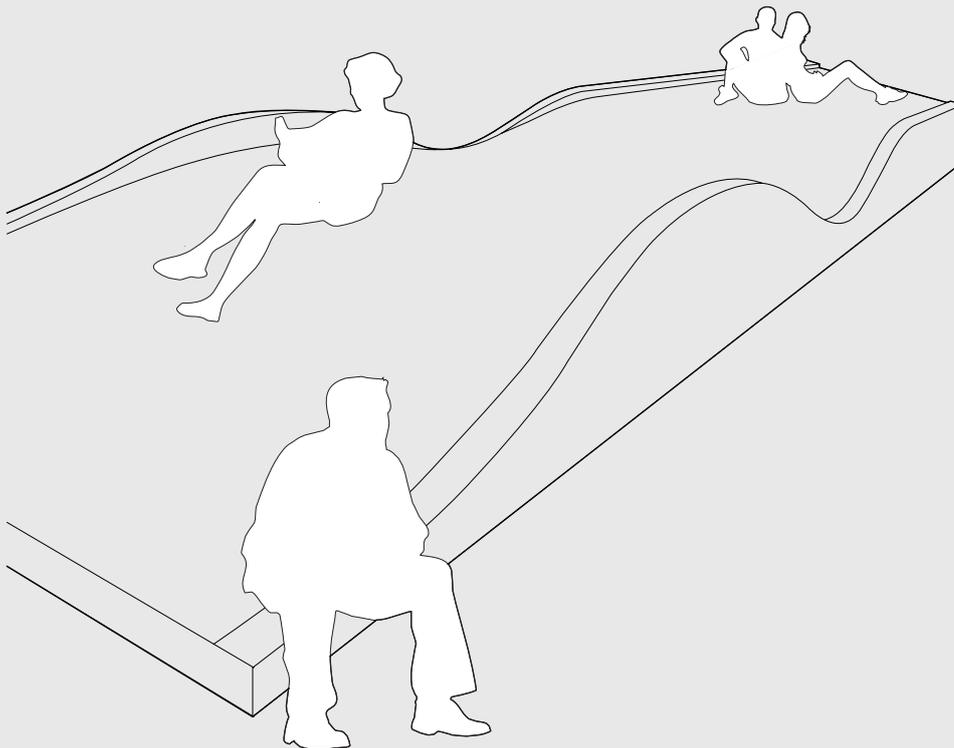
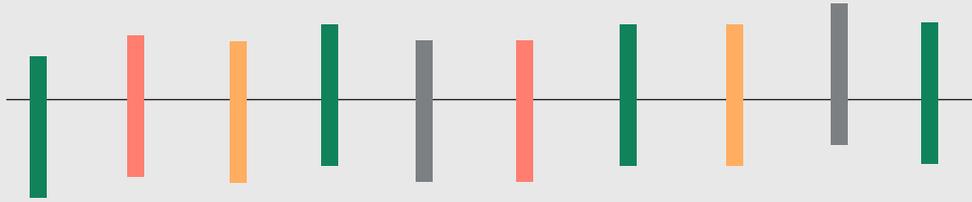
So, in 2021, could we learn from the

richness and spontaneity of temporary urban events such as festivals, markets, pop-ups and other transient city happenings? Pre-pandemic, these kinds of events were becoming ever more attractive because they met social, economic and cultural needs in the city in ways that more traditional approaches to urban design and planning were less well equipped to do.

In a post-pandemic world, the creation of strongly experiential and distinctive places that draw people in – using adaptable, inexpensive, and temporary components – may provide just the balance of flexibility and variety that we need. It is little surprise that experts are now studying the design and organisation of temporary urban events as the model of informing the management of change, unpredictability and – crucially – social experience in the workplace.

The human need for movement, spontaneity, interaction, variety, and other experiences hardwired into us as hunter-gatherers is only possible when we have access to multiple places and settings. As Diane Hoskins, Co-Chief Executive Officer of Gensler, told the World Economic Forum: ‘During confinement, living in a “mono-place” satisfied health and safety requirements, but the costs in terms of quality of life have been severe.

‘We need a “multi-place” life to be fully human, and real estate is critical to meeting that need. In the post-pandemic recovery, choice — the potential to provide different experiences — will be the driver, not prior patterns. This realisation could reshape the way we design our workplaces, hotels, retail, schools, and cities.’



Mixed-use developments and a growing focus on placemaking and community have increased over the past two decades and this trend seems set to accelerate. Overall, research has indicated that places are successful when they provide a broad set of experiences beyond a simple transaction, task or service. This poses some interesting challenges for workplace design.

With many organisations now looking to reduce their overall real estate footprint in the light of a hybrid work future – and allow for future unpredictability – it becomes more difficult to justify large expanses of space being built out for a

specific use. Great experiences thrive on novelty and variety. Creating a built environment that motivates us to leave our homes will require a design approach focused on what drives behaviour, promotes human interaction and optimises effectiveness. Which brings us back to the flexibility and popularity of temporary urban events, inexpensive and agile in their construction, and with a kind of transient magic that we all crave after endless months of lockdown.

Sources: Jeremy Myerson and Imogen Privett, *Life of Work: What Office Design Can Learn from the World Around Us* (2014); Diane Hoskins, Gensler Research & Insight, *Real Estate Must Offer Human Experiences As We Escape Virtual Lockdown Living* (2020)

About WORKTECH Academy

WORKTECH Academy is the leading global platform and member network exploring how we'll work tomorrow. We look at innovation in the world of work and workplace through five key streams: people, place, technology, design and culture. We engage with our strong network of over 4,000 individual members and more than 50 corporate, design and technology organisations around the world to deliver content on the latest trends, research and best practice in work and workplace.

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Organisations can join WORKTECH Academy network as Community or Corporate Members on an annual or three-yearly subscription. Membership to the WORKTECH Academy network guarantees unrestricted access to world-class knowledge, research and insight into the latest trends and global exposure within the workplace industry.

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