

Ten Ideas Shaping Work

*Reflections on a
Decade of Research
2016–2026*

When we launched WORKTECH Academy in September 2016, our aim was to bring the latest scientific evidence, academic research and trend analysis to a global network of workplace professionals making decisions on the frontline of change.

At the start we didn't anticipate what a tumultuous decade lay ahead — ten years of restless innovation bisected by the global pandemic of 2020, which caused seismic shifts across work and the workplace.

Over that time, we collaborated with Academy clients, partners and members to produce research reports and thought leadership materials on a diverse range of relevant topics. We also published a new trend report every quarter (40 in total) as well as our annual World of Work review of the year ahead.

This tenth anniversary publication draws on a rich and extensive archive to capture ten ideas shaping the future of work that WORKTECH Academy has helped to name, frame, explore or develop. Some of the ideas relate to people, for example Radical Inclusion, The Green Arc and Precision Wellbeing; others are place-based such as Super-Experience and Desk to District.

Advances in technology are reflected in Evolving Intelligence, which looks at the impact of AI, and Self-Adapting Office, which explores smart use of data. Shifts in workplace policy and planning can be seen in such ideas as Culture Warriors, Omni-Channel Working and Hybrid Thinking.

It has been a thrilling ride staying abreast of new developments in the field over the past ten years and making sense of them. We hope you enjoy this compendium and we look forward to collaborating with you in the decade ahead.



Professor Jeremy Myerson
Founder, WORKTECH Academy

01.
Super-
Experience

02.
Desk to District

03.
Evolving
Intelligence

04.
Precision
Wellbeing

05.
Culture Warriors

06.
Self-Adapting
Workplace

07.
Radical Inclusion

08.
Omni-Channel
Working

09.
Hybrid
Thinking

10.
The Green Arc

01. Super- Experience

*A sense of theatre
has remade the workplace
as a magnetic destination.*

Improving the employee experience has grown in influence over the past decade. But the emergence of 'super-experiences' have upped the ante, drawing in employees with spaces of superior quality, originality and impact.

As companies try to build a stronger office culture, the super experience — often combining physical and digital elements — introduces a theatre-like design language, one built around emotion and meaning, not just layout and function.

"Super-experiences should take people out of their comfort zone and subvert social structures of hierarchies."

The Super Experience: Designing for Talent in the Digital Workplace, Mirvac/WORKTECH Academy (2019)

2019:
introducing the
'super experience'

Coined in a report by Mirvac and WORKTECH Academy, 'super experience' details the evolving journey of people in the workplace

2021:
CEXO,
back to office

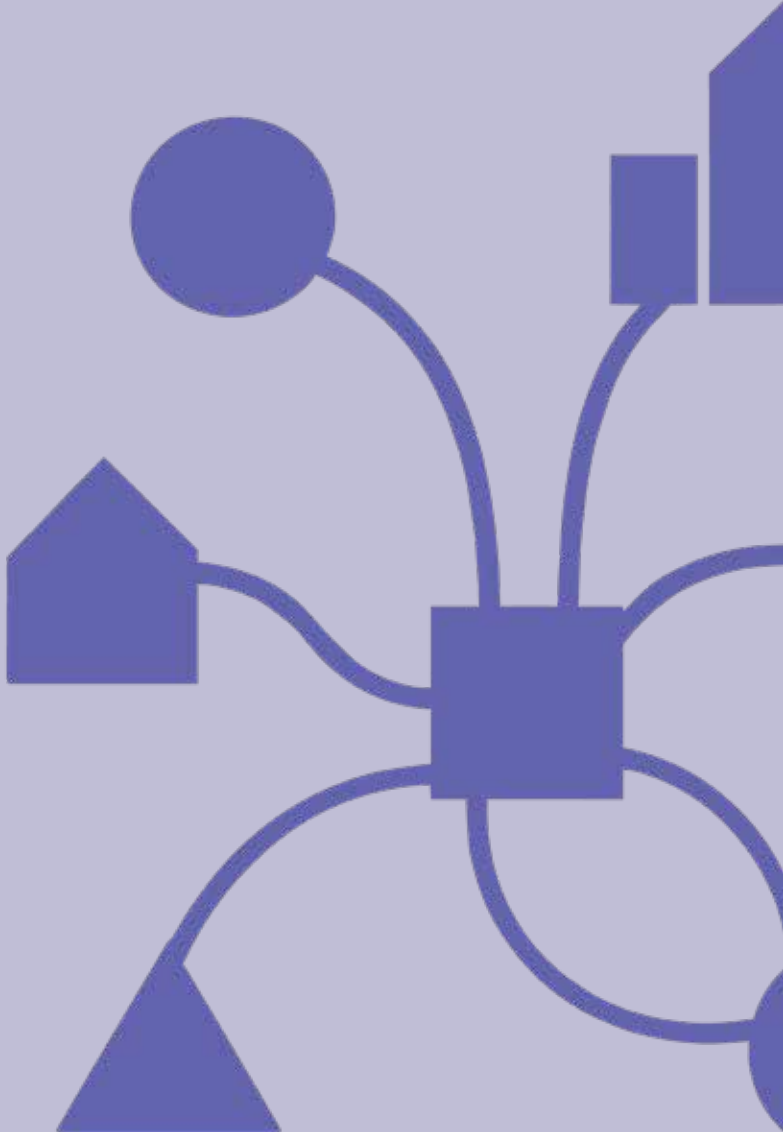
Fresh titles such as Chief Experience Officer (CEXO) begin to appear as firms seek to bring people back to the office after the global pandemic

2023:
a mixed-experience
model

Mirvac takes the concept further with WORKTECH Academy, re-imagining mixed-use developments as mixed-experience destinations

02. Desk to District

*The workplace
has extended
to embrace
an innovation
ecosystem.*



Over the past decade, company innovation has moved from internal corporate labs within the walls of the office, to embracing entire innovation districts. A new offering has emerged, one encompassed in a wide range of public, cultural, research, leisure and transport facilities.

Companies are clustering at a neighbourhood scale in order to access diverse talent and expertise, while open innovation exploits digital connectivity in smart precincts. For younger workers in particular, work does not stop at the desk.

“The industrial district situates the corporate organisation in a diverse community of innovators, researchers, and networks often located within a concentrated cluster of mixed-use amenities and services.

From Desk to District: The Changing of Real Estate for Collaborative Innovation, Lendlease/WORKTECH Academy (2024)

2018:
the future of the
smart precinct

WORKTECH Academy launches its report, The Future of the Smart Precinct alongside Mirvac

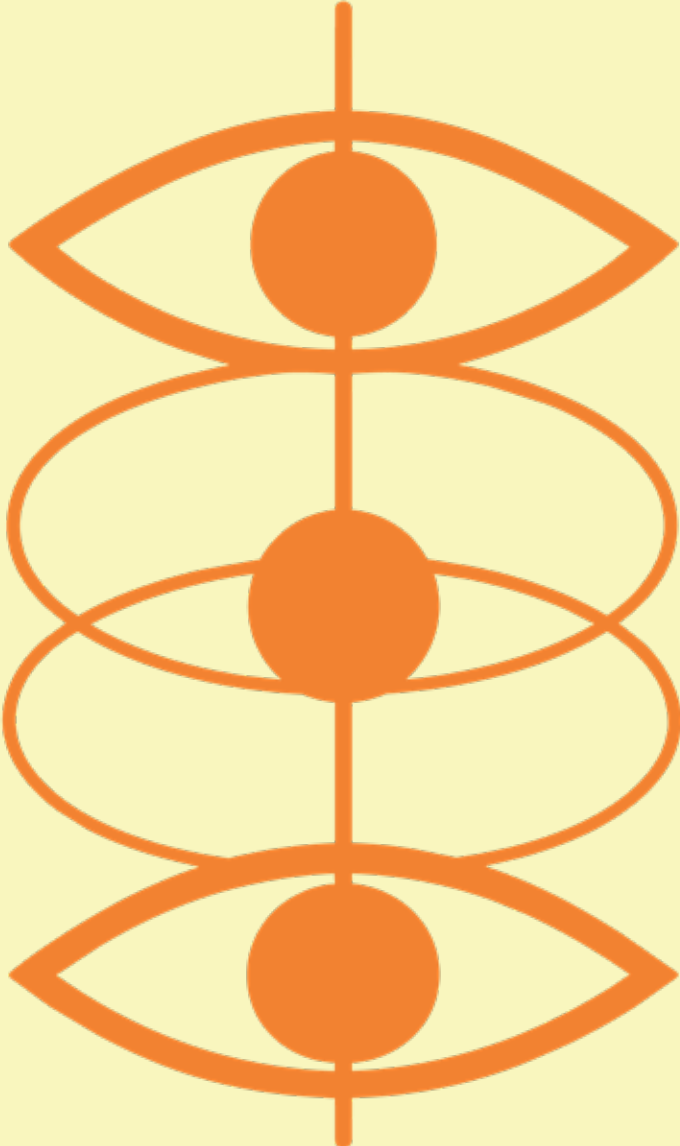
2019:
defining
new models

We define three models in From Desk to District, a report by Lendlease and WORKTECH Academy: the Innovation Lab, the Shared Hub and the Knowledge District

2024:
a ‘workplace
without walls’

Five years on, Lendlease and WORKTECH Academy update From Desk to District, learning that innovation zones are developing the concept of a ‘workplace without walls’

03. Evolving Intelligence



Adoption of AI has become an integral layer in how we work.

AI has moved from a tool at the margins of how we work to a ubiquitous feature embedded inside everyday workflows. Agentic AI now takes on tasks and decisions that were once reserved for people; but this is just the start of a revolution in workplace intelligence.

Technology is fast evolving through the present and future: we already have an embedded layer that senses and personalises experience; we’re not far off a relational partner that co-authors work; and on the horizon we see a cognitive environment where intelligence becomes an invisible and constant presence, one anticipating needs before it’s asked.

“As AI continues to evolve alongside machine learning and more mature data sets, the workplace itself will become more malleable”

Evolving Intelligence: Now, Near and Far Technologies for the Workplace, WORKTECH Academy Trend Report Q3 2025

2019:
‘collaborative intelligence’

Accenture talks about ‘collaborative intelligence’ at WORKTECH San Francisco, reframing AI as a partner rather than a competitor

2022:
generative AI goes mainstream

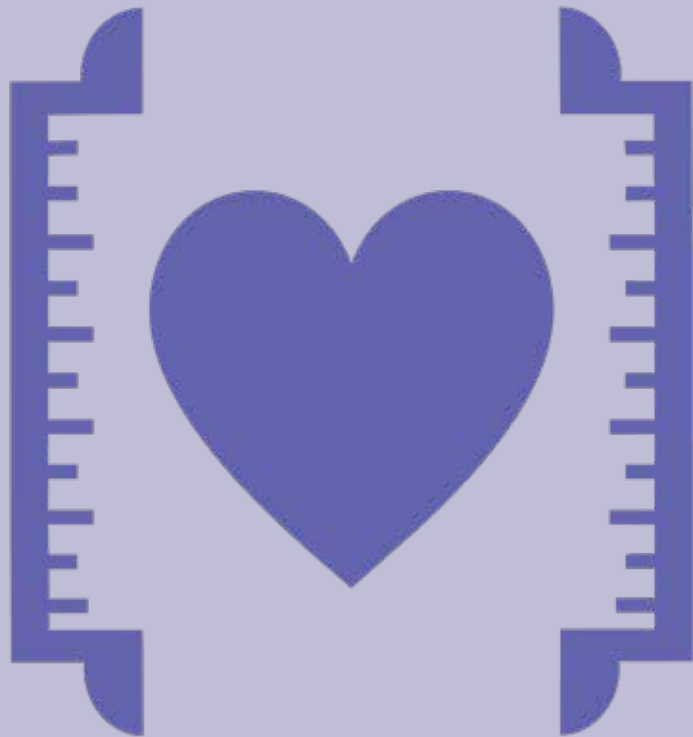
The launch of Chat GPT brings generative AI into the forefront of digital culture

2025:
now, near & far

WORKTECH Academy launch a trend report mapping technology across Now, Near and Far horizons; charting a path from embedded to cognitive intelligence

04. Precision Wellbeing

*Wellness perks
have evolved into
a platform
for performance.*



Traditional corporate wellness programmes have been generic in nature, but that’s now evolving. Wellbeing perks have given way to something more akin to sport science where biomarkers, individualised nutrition, recovery cycles and cognitive-load management are being calibrated to individuals.

As automation absorbs routine tasks, human focus, resilience and judgement become the organisation’s scarcest resource. Wellbeing is being reframed accordingly as a performance capability that can be actively engineered. In this scenario, the workplace itself evolves into a high-performance environment.

“Attention will shift to looking at human potential through the lens of the biological conditions that sustain focus, resilience and long-term capacity at work.”

The World of Work in 2026, WORKTECH Academy

2018:
the ‘everyday
athlete’

Elite athlete Mark Foster speaks at a WORKTECH Wellbeing conference about office employees becoming the ‘everyday athletes’ of their organisations

2020:
personalised
wellness

WORKTECH Academy and Fourfront Group publish The Puzzle of Wellbeing report, as wellness pivots from programmatic to personalised

2026:
‘bioperformance’
coined

WORKTECH Academy’s World of Work 2026 report names ‘bioperformance’ as a defining trend, reframing wellbeing as a precision-led practice

05. Culture Warriors

*Return to office has
divided opinion
and action by large
employers.*



Opposing strategies and cultural divisions have emerged in the debate around hybrid work. Aiming to improve company culture, innovation, learning and productivity, ‘resolute returners’ have set a pace for bringing everyone back to the office on a near full-time basis.

But not everyone agrees. ‘Choice champions’ have made the opposite case for flexibility and work from anywhere. Amid the culture wars of RTO, companies have got serious about designing the workplaces they will need for the future.

‘Resolute Returners have been tough and unwavering in their commitment to getting people back to their desks...’

Company Close-up: How Are Employers Really Handling Hybrid, WORKTECH Academy Trend Report Q4 2024

2020:
our six
typologies

The global pandemic’s lockdown forces companies to fundamentally rethink what their offices are for

2021:
employer strategies
amid Covid-19

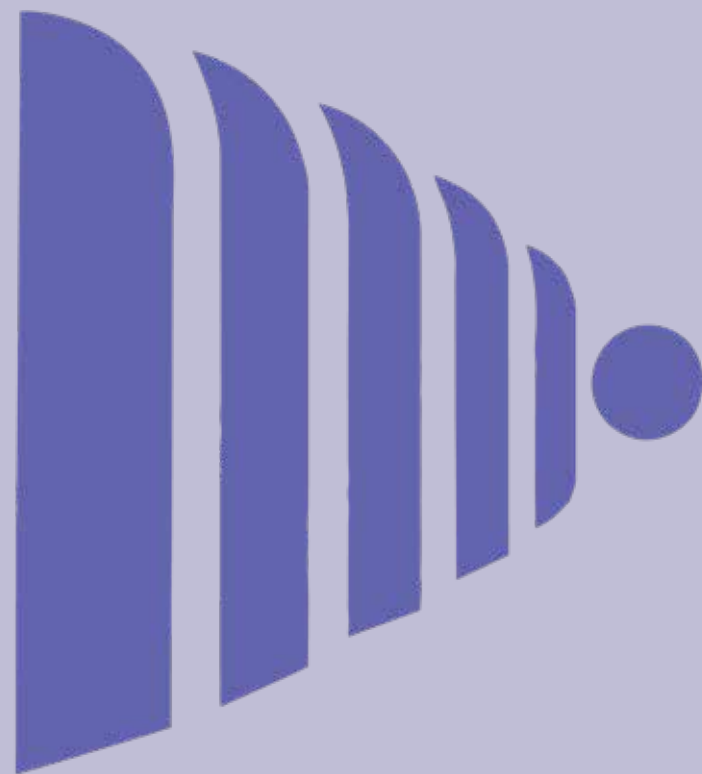
‘Resolute returner’ and ‘choice champion’ are coined by WORKTECH Academy in our trend report examining employer strategies amid Covid-19

2025:
six typologies
& culture warriors

Five years on from the pandemic, WORKTECH Academy report revisits our six typologies, highlighting how different culture warriors have fared

06. Self-Adapting Workplace

*Offices have learnt
to anticipate change
through smart data.*



As hybrid attendance remains unpredictable, the old formulaic link between headcount and space has broken down. However, a new generation of predictive intelligence is closing that gap as organisations collect more substantial data on their workspaces.

The 'self-adapting workplace' converges behavioural, spatial and organisational data so leaders can model demand months ahead, rather than react to it once it lands. The workplace stops being a fixed container for work and becomes an adaptive system that forecasts, prescribes and adjusts — anticipating the needs of the people it serves.

"Workplace data collection and analysis has given organisations a level of visibility into how their spaces are used in a way that simply did not exist before... Decisions previously relied on assumption and anecdotes"

The Self-Adapting Workplace: How Predictive Intelligence Is Shifting The Office Into An Adaptive System, VergeSense/WORKTECH Academy (2026)

2019: the 'predictive workplace'

WORKTECH Academy explores the idea of the 'predictive workplace', as machine learning begins to personalise environments from existing built data

2020: monitoring a new landscape

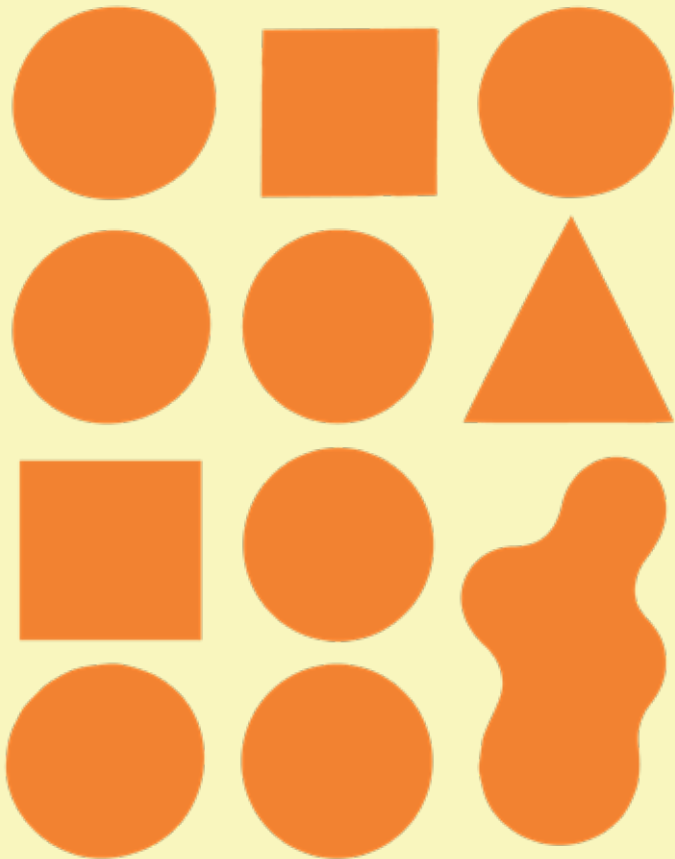
Occupancy sensors are adopted at scale to monitor capacity and density through the global pandemic

2025: predictive spaces

Predictive, self-adapting space planning becomes a defining differentiator for hybrid workplace portfolios, outlined in a report by WORKTECH Academy and Vergesense

07. Radical Inclusion

Inclusive design has expanded our thinking on diversity and belonging.



For many years, the workplace lagged behind other real-estate sectors in its adoption of inclusive design. The public health crisis of Covid-19 concentrated minds on how to accommodate a more diverse range of human needs in a single workspace.

The result has been a concerted drive to design for people’s individual choices across the span of age, ability, gender, ethnicity and neurodiversity, pushing the boundaries of belonging in a movement termed ‘radical inclusion’.

“The radically inclusive workplace places people at its core and addresses the fundamental human needs of belonging, pride and solitude”

Radical Inclusion, Workplace Design Journal, Perkins and Will/22
Bishopsgate/WORKTECH Academy (2021)

2021:
introducing
‘radical inclusion’

The term ‘radical inclusion’ coined by architects Perkins & Will in a paper with 22 Bishopsgate alongside WORKTECH Academy

2023:
the inclusive
workplace experience

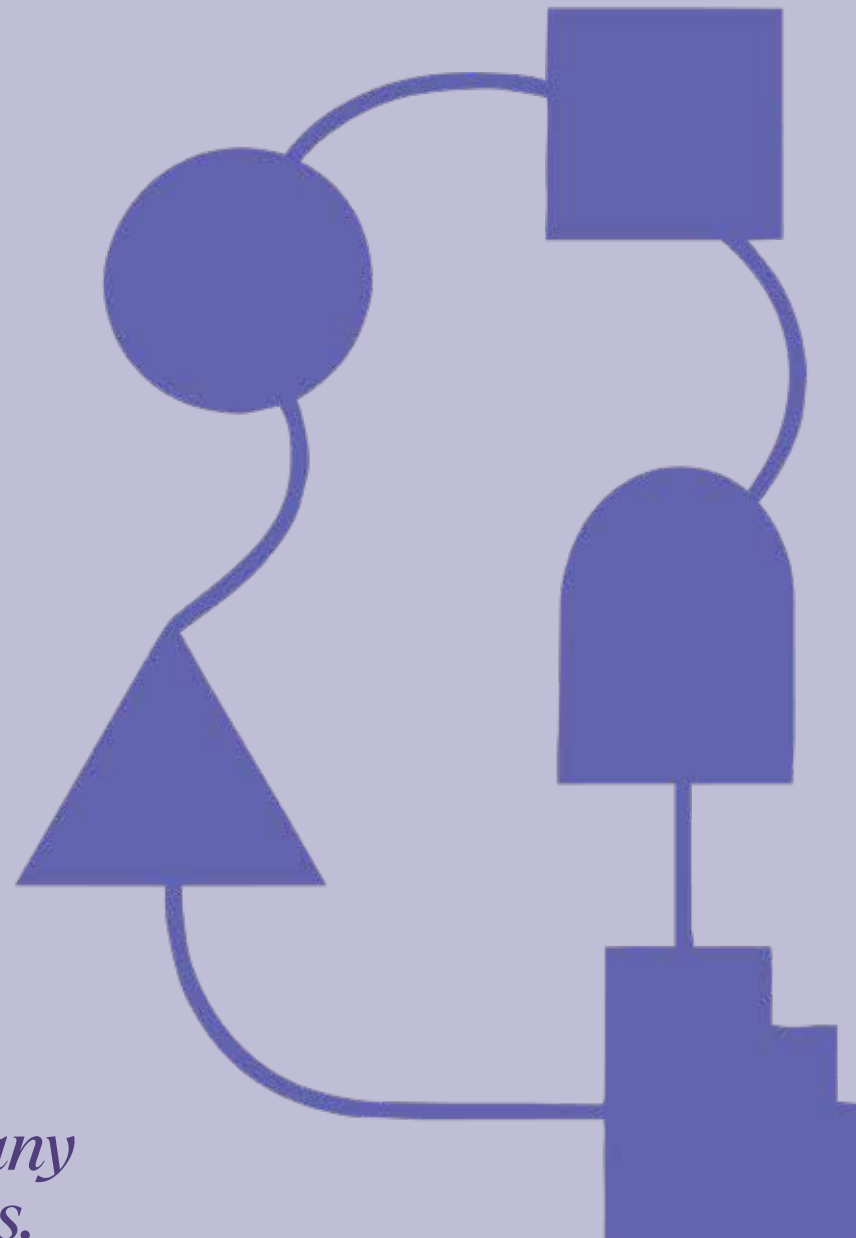
Human-centred design ‘for the extreme, not the mean’ is advanced as Area and WORKTECH Academy publish six building blocks for an inclusive workplace experience

2025:
neuroinclusive
workplaces

Kay Sargent of HOK, author of Designing Neuroinclusive Workplaces, leads an Expert Session for WORKTECH Academy members

08. Omni-Channel Working

*The office has become
one channel among many
in the lives of employees.*



Just as retail learned to stop thinking in terms of single stores and started designing seamless journeys across web, app and shopfront, the workplace is undergoing its own channel shift.

Employees now move fluidly between home, the corporate HQ, local satellites, client sites and third spaces, expecting the same continuity of experience — whether digital or physical — wherever they land. The office channel remains vital, but its role is changing. It is becoming less the default setting for all work, and more a curated destination, purpose-built for a different mode of working, connecting and belonging.

“The scene is now set for an omni-channel approach to working in which employees work, synchronously and asynchronously, across time, space and a range of places”

From Office to Omni-Channel: The Rise of the Omni-Channel Worker in the Digital Age, Mirvac/WORKTECH Academy (2021)

2020:
home, office
or hybrid

Spotify's 'Work from Anywhere' and Atlassian's 'Team Anywhere' let employees choose which channel, home, office or hybrid, they want to work through

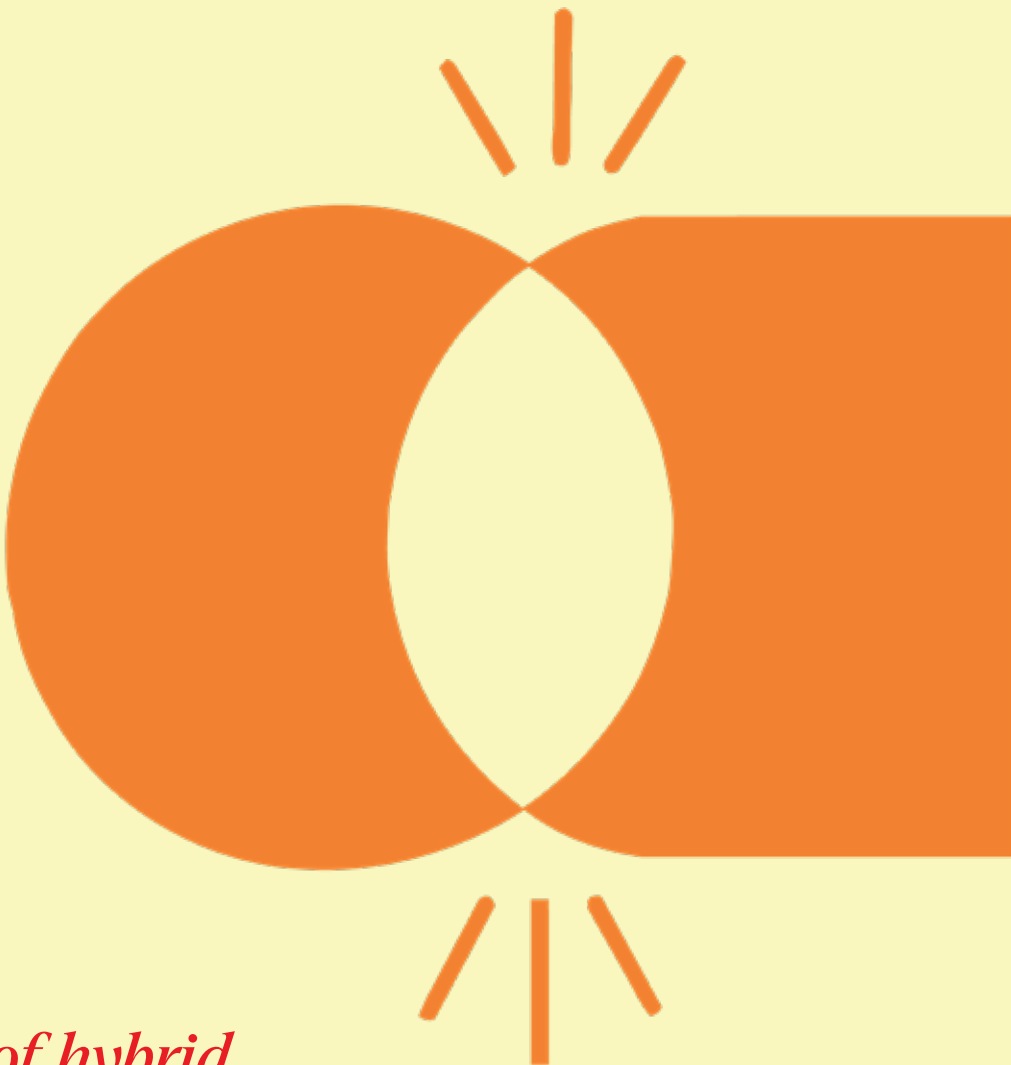
2021:
an 'omni-channel
workplace'

Mirvac and WORKTECH Academy publish Office to Omni-Channel report applying the retail model to define the 'omni-channel workplace'

2026:
hybrid work
patterns

WORKTECH Academy publishes a Cities in the Spotlight Trend Report highlighting hybrid work patterns across eight global cities

09. Hybrid Thinking



The complexities of hybrid work have accelerated use of Design Thinking.

The workplace sector was slow to adopt the principles of Design Thinking (DT), which first emerged after the global financial crash of 2008 as an alternative way to frame and solve business problems.

But amid the growing complexities of hybrid working, companies have begun to adopt its values — such as empathy, co-creation, rapid prototyping, and focusing on human experience. The result is that DT is now being used widely by both real estate teams and technology integrators within workplace strategy.

“Design Thinking allows us to understand the different views of different users, so we are not just designing technology for the sake of technology”

How Design Thinking Can Help Hybrid Work Succeed, ET Group/WORKTECH Academy (2023)

2017:
hybrid
space-making

WORKTECH Academy and European banking group Unicredit use Design Thinking methods to conduct bank branch research entitled Hybrid Space-Making

2022:
WORKTECH &
Royal College of Art

WORKTECH Academy and the Royal College of Art launch a joint DT Executive Education Programme: Creative Strategies for the Future of Work

2023:
design thinking
& hybrid work

WORKTECH Academy and Canada’s ET Group launch How Design Thinking Can Help Hybrid Work Succeed, a collaborative report

10. The Green Arc

*Sustainable efforts
have stretched from
place to people.*



Corporate sustainability has focused strongly on the spaces, materials, energy systems and certifications of the built environment. But as the boundaries of work have extended, green buildings can no longer reflect an organisation's environmental credentials alone.

The arc of sustainability is stretching to follow people wherever they work — shaping commuting choices, home-working habits and everyday behaviour. Sustainability in a hybrid setting thus becomes as much about people as place. 'Changemakers' in the workforce are having an impact in this area; their efforts complementing more conventional green placemaking real estate.

"Employees are working across a spectrum of different locations, which means sustainability efforts are becoming less centralised around place and more focused on people and behaviours"

From Place to People: A sustainable approach for the new world of work, Moneypenny/WORKTECH Academy (2022)

2017: WELL Building Standard

WELL Building Standard gains traction as a certification benchmark with presentations at WORKTECH events

2021: the green agenda

The pandemic reboots the green agenda; biophilic design surges, retrofitting and circular-economy projects become a key focus

2022: behaviour-centric sustainability

WORKTECH Academy and Moneypenny report how sustainability is shifting from office-centric to behaviour-centric as hybrid work moves beyond the building

About WORKTECH Academy

WORKTECH Academy is a leading global research platform and member community exploring how we'll work tomorrow.

We explore innovation in work and the workplace through five key streams: people, place, technology, design and culture. Our global community brings together more than 100 corporate, design and technology organisations, creating a space to share ideas, exchange knowledge and connect with peers shaping the future of work.

Through original research, thought leadership, events and member-led engagement, we provide insight into the latest trends, emerging ideas and best practice across the world of work and workplace.

