

Issue 67

Exploring workplace
research, insights and
trends

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Boosting Workplace
Wellbeing

How four leading organizations do it

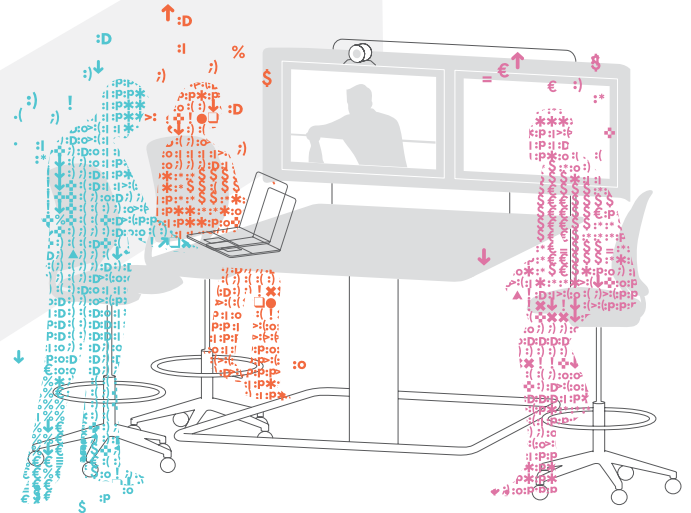
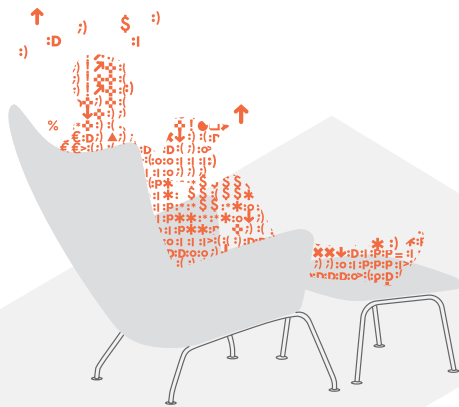
Sharing Desks,
Sharing Germs

How antimicrobial technologies
are helping to reduce germs in
the workplace

Q&A with Nic Marks

Why happy employees are more
productive and innovative

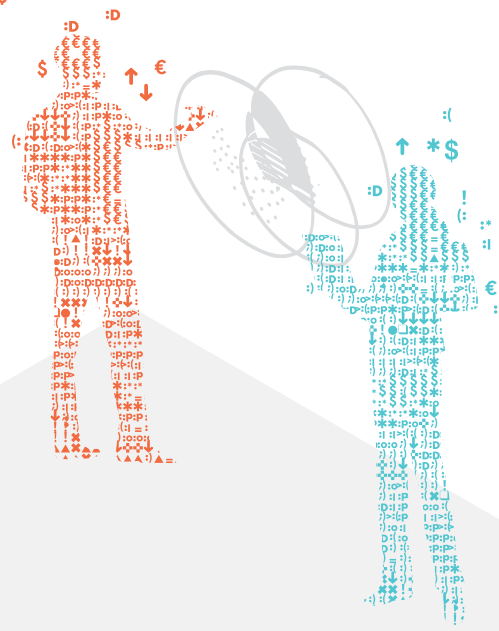
360°



WELLBEING

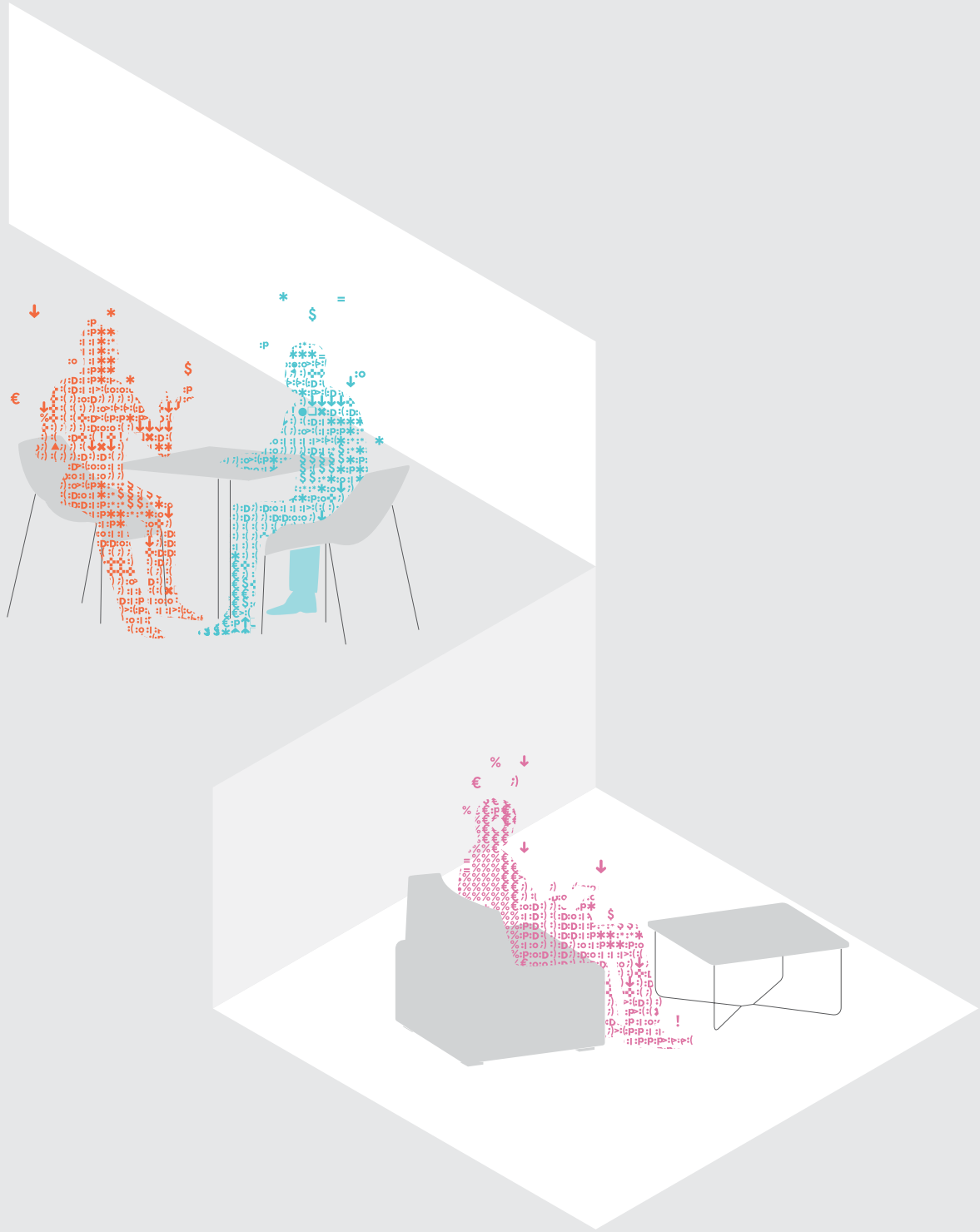
A BOTTOM LINE ISSUE

How Feeling Good at Work
Drives Business Performance



Worker wellbeing is a hot topic and extends beyond measures of personal satisfaction or fulfillment. It's critical to an organization's ability to innovate and thrive.

In this issue, we share new Steelcase research and insights about the factors that create wellbeing, and how work-places can be intentionally designed to nurture it to drive improved business performance.



At the time of publication of this issue of 360 our CEO of 19 years will be in the final quarter of his career.

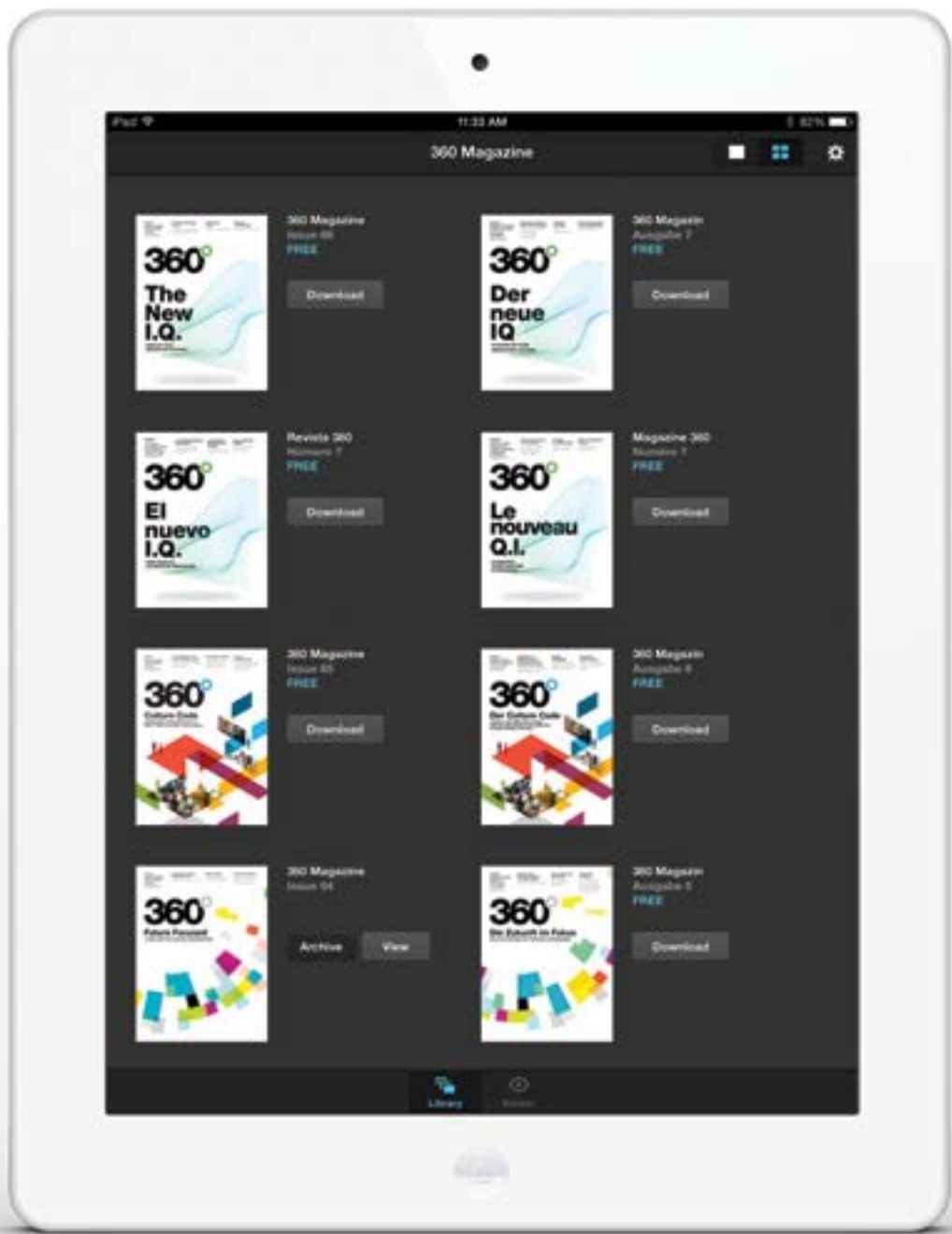
He has steered us through great times and through tough times; through challenging moments and significant milestones. He has taught us to think critically, and to believe that it's possible to be both lean and creative.

He has shown us how to thrive in the “now”, while designing for the “far”. And he demonstrates every day that the wellbeing of people is at the very center of everything we do.

He is a teacher, a leader, a visionary. He has given us the confidence to believe in who we are and what we do.

THANK YOU, JIM HACKETT

You have led us to our future. We dedicate this issue to you.



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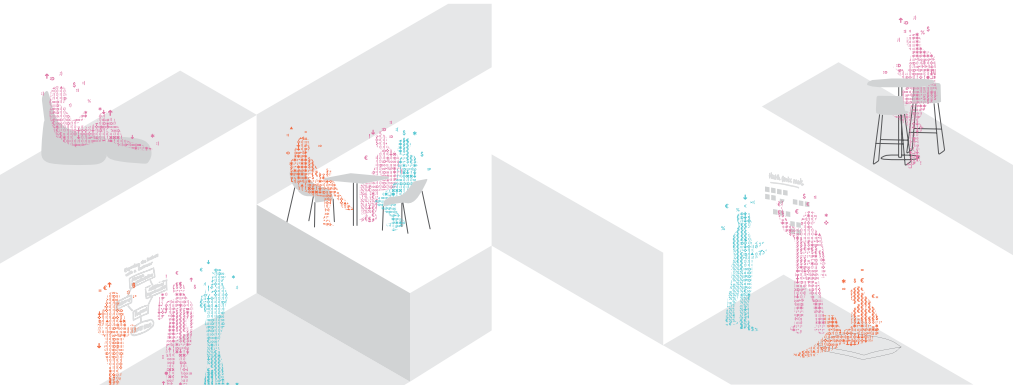


Departments

- 04 Perspectives
- 06 Trends 360
- 76 Sustainability Spotlight
- 118 Learning Curve
- 140 Leadership Moment
- 142 A Global View

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Contents



10 How feeling good at work drives business performance

CEOs value employees who are collaborative, communicative, creative and flexible. But only recently are leaders realizing that fostering these skills requires a new strategy: a rigorous focus on employees’ wellbeing. New Steelcase research and insights show how the workplace can help organizations attain employee wellbeing and business results they desire.



70 Sharing Desks, Sharing Germs

Worksurfaces lead a nasty, secret life: They harbor germs that can cause people to get sick. Now that mobile workers are sharing desks, antimicrobials may mean they don’t have to share germs, too.



59 Boosting Workplace Wellbeing

How four leading organizations achieve wellbeing at work.

54 Q&A with Nic Marks

The developer of the influential Happy Planet Index is delighted to explain why happier employees are more productive and innovative.

81 Exam Rooms that Empower People

Healthcare is rapidly changing. There are good reasons for exam spaces to change, too, connecting patients and clinicians in new ways.

91 Bold Strokes Are Just the Beginning

How seemingly small choices—from fabrics and colors to furniture that’s intuitive and adaptive— boost wellbeing.

96 ASU studies movement in the workplace

Understanding the impact of a workplace environment that supports movement and alternative postures.

107 The New Academic Hub

Reinventing the college library for the 21st century.

120 Bringing fun to the office

Some ideas from turnstone to ramp up smiles in your workplace.

127 Wellbeing Down Under

A virtual roundtable interview in Australia offers insights on wellbeing applicable worldwide.

133 Live well, work well

Ten tips from Coalesse.

Perspectives

Meet some of the people who contributed information and ideas to this issue.



BEATRIZ ARANTES, KEVIN BUTLER AND NICOLAS DE BENOIST
Steelcase Inc.

As a globally distributed team, Beatriz Arantes, Kevin Butler and Nicolas de Benoist bring a holistic perspective to the interconnected aspects of wellbeing: physical, cognitive and psychological.

A Steelcase WorkSpace Futures researcher based in Paris, Arantes specializes in the psychology of human emotions and behaviors and how they relate to work and work environments. She holds degrees in psychology as well as Portuguese and Brazilian studies from Brown University, studied clinical and organizational psychology at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina in Brazil, and earned a master’s degree in applied environmental psychology from Université René Descartes, France.

Butler, based in Chicago, is a board-certified professional ergonomist. A graduate of Arizona State University, he earned a master’s degree in industrial engineering from Ohio State University. As a Steelcase workplace consultant, his primary focus is benchmarking and sharing ergonomics best practices with customers and designers. He also has extensive experience as an ergonomics practitioner, assisting organizations in designing and implementing their ergonomics and wellness programs.

Recently relocated from Paris to Steelcase Global Headquarters in Grand Rapids, de Benoist is senior design researcher in the WorkSpace Futures group, helping to define strategies, products and services. As a design-thinking practitioner, he is passionate about understanding how people interact with each other and the space and technologies around them, including collaboration that happens across distances and cultures. He earned a master’s degree in industrial design at ENSCI /les Ateliers, the French national school for industrial creativity in Paris, and also studied industrial design and branding at California College of the Arts.



NILA LEISEROWITZ AND SARAH BADER
Gensler

Among people throughout the world, there’s a growing focus on staying well, and this shift has broad implications for environments of all types, say Nila R. Leiserowitz and Sarah Bader, principals in Gensler’s Chicago office. For the past three years their project work has focused on Gensler’s specialized health and wellness practice areas, delivering projects worldwide—from hospitals to retail spaces to work settings—that are proactively designed for wellness.

Leiserowitz, ASID, IIDA, a regional managing principal of Gensler in Chicago since 2010, has more than 30 years of experience in interior design and workplace performance strategy. Before joining Gensler in 1995, she was vice president and interiors leader at Perkins + Will in Chicago. She has a degree in interior design from the University of Minnesota and owned a design firm in Minneapolis at the start of her career.

Bader, IIDA, has more than 20 years of experience focused on project management and consultant coordination in healthcare, institutional, educational and corporate facilities. She was a project architect and interior designer with Lohan Associates before joining Gensler in 2000. She has undergraduate degrees in finance, economics and interior design, and a master’s degree in architecture from the University of Chicago.



VICTORIA REDSHAW
Trend Forecaster, Scarlet Opus Ltd.

Where design trends are headed, what commercial and residential interiors will look like in the future—these are Victoria Redshaw’s stock in trade and the reason why she and her firm, Scarlet Opus Ltd., are in high demand. Headquartered in the U.K., the firm advises retailers, designers and manufacturers around the world. “We forecast by looking at what’s happening now and what’s planned two to three years out: architectural projects, art exhibitions, events and all sorts of other issues, searching for common denominators. It’s essentially a social science informed by intuition with a designer’s intelligence and experience built in.” Redshaw is a frequent spokesperson, speaker and teacher. She blogs about the future at [scarletopus.com](#)



MATTHEW BUMAN, PH.D.
Arizona State University

As an assistant professor in the School of Nutrition and Health Promotion at Arizona State University, Dr. Buman is researching how people’s day-to-day habits and behaviors at work may collectively impact their health and quality of life. He’s particularly interested in the relationship between physical activity, sedentary behavior and sleep, and their combined impacts on cardiometabolic health. With an educational background in exercise, sport and psychology, he addresses the issue of promoting physical activity from a perspective that combines individual, interpersonal and environmental influences.

A graduate of the University of Utah, he earned a master’s degree at Springfield College, and a graduate certificate in public health and a Ph.D. in sport and exercise psychology from the University of Florida.

THE ECONOMICS OF WELLBEING

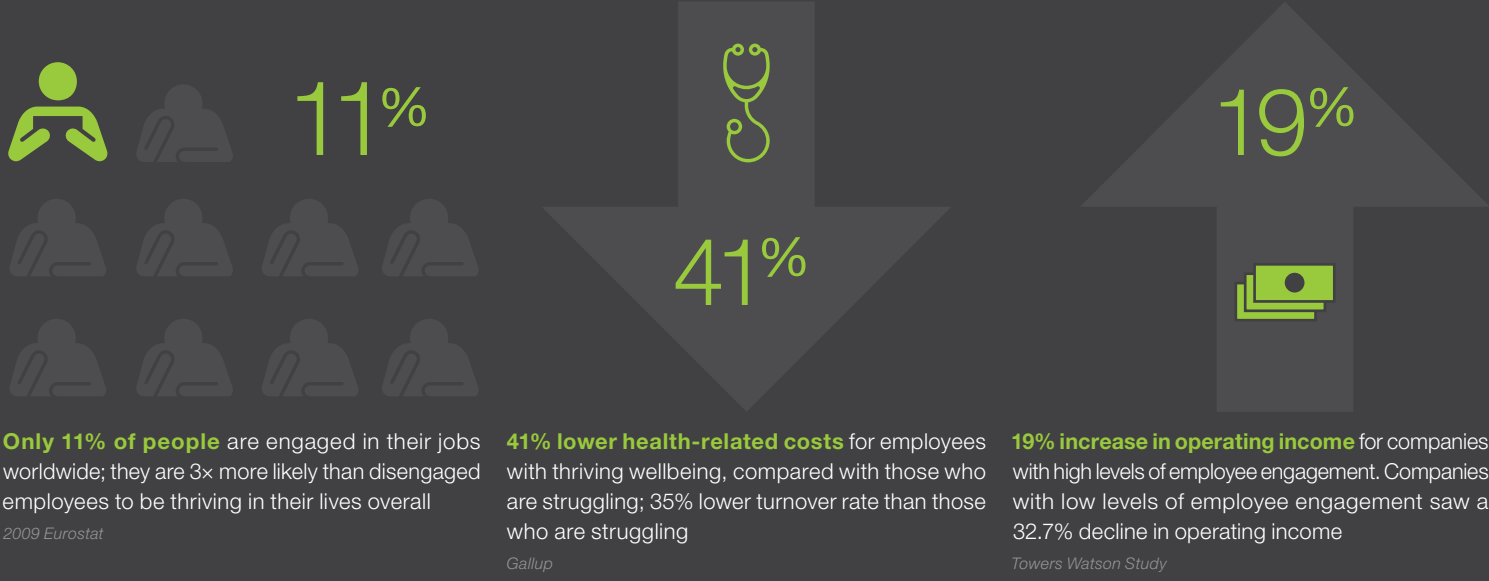
As data is collected and analyzed, an alarming trend becomes clear: people's health and sense of wellbeing is in decline throughout the world. As a global issue, this poses significant risks for employers. Poor health and wellbeing among workers negatively affects individual performance and organizational productivity. For employers that provide healthcare benefits, it also results in escalating cost burdens.

More than ever before, worker wellbeing is good business, providing an advantage for organizations intent on competing successfully. The return is high for forward-thinking organizations that invest in the physical, cognitive and psychological wellbeing of their people by thinking about it holistically and incorporating it as part of their business strategy. The result is highly engaged employees.

TODAY PEOPLE SPEND MORE TIME WORKING THAN ANYTHING ELSE, EVEN SLEEPING:



OVERALL WELLBEING MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO THE BOTTOM LINE



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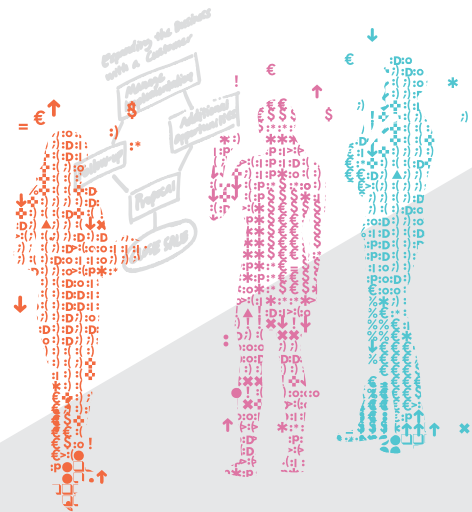
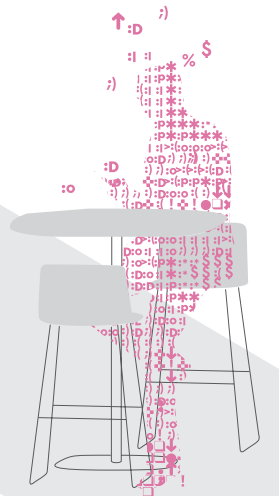
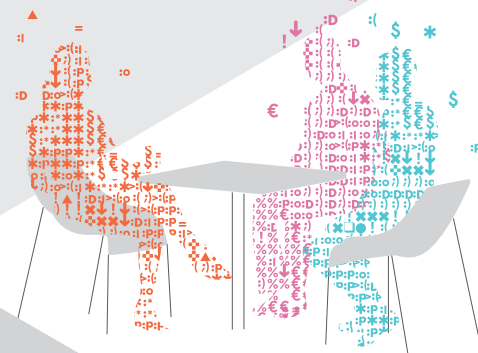
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11	Introduction
14	Building a Culture of Wellbeing by Jim Hackett, CEO, Steelcase Inc.
15	A Holistic View: Body, Mind, Environment
19	Does Your Work Environment Undermine Wellbeing?
21	Six Dimensions of Wellbeing in the Workplace
35	Thought Starters: Application Concepts
51	Gensler: Designing for Wellbeing

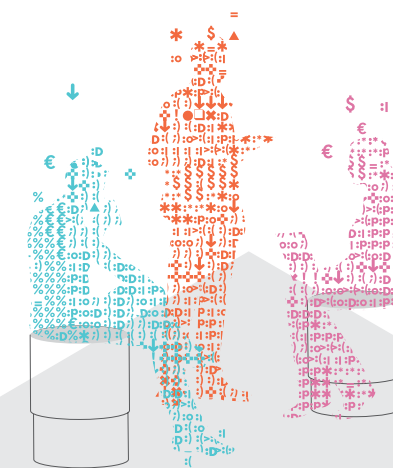
WELLBEING

A BOTTOM LINE ISSUE

How Feeling Good At Work
Drives Business Performance

When IBM asked CEOs around the world to identify the most important leadership traits needed today, their answer was resounding: collaborative, communicative, creative and flexible. CEOs are seeking “employees with the ability to constantly reinvent themselves. These employees are comfortable with change; they learn as they go, often from others’ experiences,” notes the study. Driving the need for these skills is the complexity of problems that organizations face today, and the demand for innovation that is no longer the turf of elite, top brands. Innovation is critical to drive bottom line results.

But here’s the new dilemma that CEOs face: collaboration, communication, creativity and flexibility are a set of behaviors that require leadership skills, metrics and mindsets that are different from what many business leaders have learned in the past. For decades, business schools churned out young leaders who were well trained in areas such as logistics, supply chain management, analysis and the like. Only recently are organizations recognizing that those business fundamentals aren’t enough on their own. They also need to create an environment and culture in which the necessary new behaviors can thrive.



Fostering creativity and innovation requires a new strategy that might take some business leaders by surprise—a rigorous focus on organizational and employee wellbeing.

“The most successful organizations are now turning their attention to employee wellbeing as a way to gain emotional, financial and competitive advantage,” notes Tom Rath, Gallup’s leader of workplace research and co-author of the bestselling book “Wellbeing.”

Rath and other leading thinkers on the topic point out that employee wellbeing is a distinctly different notion than “wellness,” which focuses narrowly on physical health and is currently the primary area where businesses turn their attention. In the United States, wellness programs have been driven by the need to control health care costs commonly borne by the employer. In other countries around the world, businesses and governments are also seeking to control the rising economic costs of physical and mental illness in the workforce.

An Assault on Wellbeing

Organizations have strong reasons to be pre-occupied with physical wellness, given its clear connection to costs. Worldwide, rates of heart and lung disease, diabetes and obesity are rising sharply. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) found Mexico has a 32.8% adult obesity rate, surpassing the U.S. at 31.8%. There are now about 1.5 billion overweight people in the world, and at least 25% of them are in China, according to the Duke University Global Health Institute. In Mexico, Type 2 diabetes is the leading cause of adult deaths, says a 2011 study by the World Economic Forum and Harvard School of Public Health.

At the same time that declining physical health poses a growing risk for employers, the ubiquity of technologies is driving people to multitask like never before, leading to cognitive overload. According to author, researcher and Harvard educator Shawn Achor, our senses receive 11M bits of information every second, but the conscious brain can effectively process only 40 bits of information. Switching from one task to another makes it difficult to tune out distractions and can cause mental blocks that reduce a person’s productive time by as much as 40%, according to research reported by the American Psychological Association.

In addition to cognitive costs, stress is a strong contributor to the explosion of “developed nation” diseases throughout the world. Rapid changes in the work people do, the tools and the technology they use have made work more complex, demanding and stressful. “How fast” and “how much” have taken on new dimensions, and work easily blends into life away from the workplace. These factors are all powerful catalysts for employee burnout and other signs of ill-being, making wellbeing a form of risk management.

“The most successful organizations are now turning their attention to employee wellbeing as a way to gain emotional, financial and competitive advantage.”

Tom Rath

In the United Kingdom, research by the Centre for Mental Health puts the costs of mental health-related presenteeism (at work physically but unproductive mentally) at £15 billion per year—almost twice the cost of absence. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work cites stress as a factor in at least half of all lost working days. Stress in the workplace is now emerging in the developing world, too, according to a 2011 report in Le Monde newspaper: “Countries from Asia and the southern hemisphere are now carefully—and officially—looking at the psycho-social problems and economic consequences linked to work-induced stress.”

To understand the positive drivers of wellbeing, Steelcase WorkSpace Futures researchers in Europe, North America and Asia recently delved deeply into the topic, exploring the role of the physical workplace in shaping employee behavior to foster wellbeing. After synthesizing years of Steelcase primary research and investigating globally diverse notions of wellbeing, the team came to a distinct conclusion: Wellbeing is systemic and holistic, integrating many dimensions, including the physical, cognitive and psychological needs of people. The team went on to conclude that the places where people come together to work can be designed to have a positive impact on a variety of dimensions of worker wellbeing.

“Bad health outcomes can lead to poor business outcomes in regard to absenteeism, presenteeism, accidents and increased costs, so there’s been significant focus on prevention,” says Beatriz Arantes, a Steelcase researcher who co-led a recent exploration of worker wellbeing. At the same time, Arantes says, there’s a growing awareness that being focused on wellbeing as a defensive measure has limited impact as a business strategy.

“Physical wellness is a critically important area of concern,” notes Nicholas de Benoist, who collaborated with Arantes and others in Steelcase’s exploration. “But focusing on just physical wellness can actually be detrimental to people’s overall wellbeing. At an organizational level, a myopic attention to physical wellness only misses the bigger business opportunity: Employee wellbeing is a critical pathway to achieving the creativity and innovation that organizations require to be successful today.”

And progressive employers are getting the message. “Today we’re seeing a surge of interest in wellbeing with some organizations in a more proactive sense,” notes Arantes. “Companies are interested in driving greater innovation. They’re betting they can reap positive results with a more creative, engaged and innovative workforce. In a knowledge-based, global economy, investing in wellbeing is completely in the interest of doing business.”

The Bottom Line

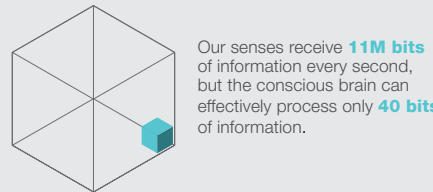
Lost Time



Source: U.K. Centre for Mental Health

Bottom line
Disengaged employees cost the organization almost twice as much as absent employees.

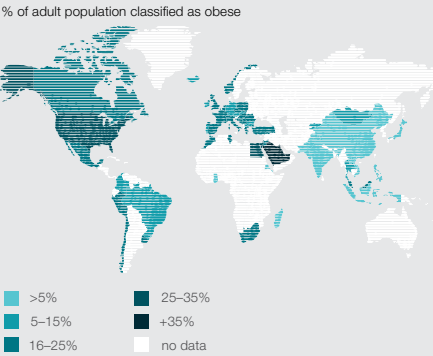
Cognitive Overload



Source: The Happiness Advantage, Shawn Achor

Bottom line
Mental blocks to creativity result in less innovation, prohibiting organizational competitiveness and growth.

Global Obesity



Source: World Health Organization

Bottom line
As the obesity epidemic grows, healthcare costs are soaring.

Building a Culture of Wellbeing

A few months before his upcoming retirement at the end of February 2014, 360 asked Steelcase CEO Jim Hackett to share his perspective on wellbeing and what it means for business leaders and organizations today.



Jim Hackett
CEO, Steelcase, Inc.

I was fortunate that, fairly early in my career, I became candid with myself about the connection between having physical health and my ability to do my job well. Based on some good advice from my brother, who is a doctor, I realized that I needed to manage my health as intentionally as I managed my work. I also gained insight that health isn't just physical. Our bodies are a complex system of processes that have a circular way of affecting each other.

I realized back then that wellbeing is about achieving harmony between your physical, emotional and cognitive self, and so I set some goals and became very intentional about achieving that balance.

When I became CEO of Steelcase, I had a strong inkling that what was true for me personally was also true in a larger context: that the wellbeing of individuals and the wellbeing of the organization they work for are inseparable. The better off employees are in terms of their personal wellbeing, the better off the company can be - in terms of fiscal fitness, agility and capabilities for innovation and growth.

By personal wellbeing, I mean the “whole” person at work—mind, body and soul—and I realized that the physical workplace could be a powerful agent in providing an environment in which people can thrive, which would in turn allow us to build the kind of resilient and agile organization we wanted to be.

Since then, work has become even more complex and intense for nearly everyone. Stress-induced issues - the extreme opposite of wellbeing—is a risk factor that leaders can and must proactively manage, within themselves and within their organizations. People who are overly stressed, overworked and anxiety-plagued can't frame challenges in an optimistic way and move things forward. In contrast, people who feel supported are unbound in what they can accomplish and in the deep personal satisfaction that they gain from their work.

Our research over the past decade has shown us that if a workplace provides all the bandwidth—all the technology connections, tools and resources that people need for their tasks and projects—it can reduce friction and amplify human capabilities. It can eliminate the restraints, irritants and work-arounds that slow people down and cause stress unnecessarily. As we continue to research and learn, these things become identifiable and solvable. This

is what drove our decision to launch a new research project focused specifically on worker and workplace wellbeing. We wanted to look closely at what the building blocks are and how the workplace can be a source of wellbeing day-to-day. And we continue to learn about the power of place in providing an environment that serves to provide the harmony that I described earlier.

I have been fortunate in my career to have some great leaders as my mentors. One of the many insights I gained from Bob Pew, who was our CEO for decades before me, was that humans need enrichment, at work as well as away from work. If you're going to make an investment in a facility, make sure it's designed with an understanding of what really matters to people - their psychological as well as physical needs. That's stayed with me, and it's fundamental to who we are at Steelcase and what we do.

A bond is formed when a person joins a company. A workplace designed with employee wellbeing in mind can be a source of pride as well as a source of inspiration to achieve the purpose that drives the organizations reason for being. It can be a place that makes people feel good about being part of the enterprise; a place that they want to show family and friends, a place that is a visual representation of what their company stands for.

It's been my experience as CEO of Steelcase for the past 19 years, that work is inherently a social endeavor, and that when you understand the purpose and emotional health of great companies is centered around people, you can take performance to a much higher level.

Creating places that provide for the wellbeing of people at work is critical for success. It's that simple. And that powerful.

Jim Hackett

A HOLISTIC VIEW:

BODY MIND ENVIRONMENT

When businesses turn their attention to the assault on their employees' wellbeing, it's not surprising they often begin with physical health and ergonomics. In addition to the focus on employee health factors such as obesity, smoking cessation and exercise, many organizations are also focused on workplace ergonomics to prevent injury.

The ascent of ergonomics in the 1980s resulted in deep understandings of biomechanics and the importance of providing posture support for workers. In the 1980s when the focus was on maintaining a static, neutral posture for office workers using desktop computers, Steelcase breakthrough research established the importance of dynamic support that mimicked the movement of the spine and set a new industry standard for ergonomic seating.

Steelcase researchers went on to study the importance of movement, and began encouraging workers to intersperse standing and walking with sitting throughout the day. Recent studies performed by Marc T. Hamilton (2007), Pedersen (2009) and Stephens (2010) have shed new light on the relationship between long periods of sedentary behavior and pervasive health problems such as weight gain, metabolic syndrome and diabetes. Prolonged static sitting is now known to be physically demanding in its own way — disrupting metabolic functions and weakening the body's defenses. Even working out in a gym after sitting all day won't reverse its negative effects.

Meanwhile, technology devices are tempting people to sit even longer in chairs that were designed before tablets and other handhelds came into the office mainstream. This is leading to new work postures, some of which are leading to more pain.

“As a result of our work, we define wellbeing as sustaining a healthy physical and mental state over time, in a supportive material and social environment.”

The Mind/Body Connection

“Ergonomic issues should always be top of mind for employers,” says Kevin Butler, a senior ergonomist at Steelcase. “Upper-extremity issues, especially pain in the neck and shoulders, are becoming more common all the time as a result of people constantly peering down at their handheld devices.”

Butler points out the need for workplaces to be designed for a palette of postures – a variety of work settings where people can choose to sit, stand, walk, perch or even squirm. But Butler warns that not all postures are created equal.

“Some postures are inherently bad for the body and should not be encouraged,” he notes. “I’ve seen workplaces that are designed to be fun, creative and have a great vibe, but sometimes they have terrible ergonomics. That’s not a solution that’s good for individuals or organizations.”

People need a range of choices and ergonomic supports. It’s important they have an environment they can move around in since movement throughout the day is important; and when they’re seated it’s equally as important that the chair they sit in supports them in the ways they work today.

Researchers and designers at Gensler, a leading global architecture, design, planning and consulting firm, agree: Wellbeing is multifaceted. Unfortunately, many employers still make sizeable investments in physical wellbeing and then consider the problem solved, says Nila R. Leiserowitz, FASID, IIDA, Gensler’s regional managing principal in Chicago who spearheads the firm’s global endeavors in the health and wellness sector. “People think that if they have fitness centers, they’ve taken care of all the aspects of wellbeing. But that’s just one piece of what you need to consider. It’s not just a fitness center or a chair you can adjust. It’s not just about looking at your physical space. Wellbeing cuts across your culture, your HR strategies and the environment. It’s a symbiotic ecosystem.”

As organizations face increasingly complex problems, they are recognizing that wellbeing is multifaceted and seeing a link between body and mind. Today scientists are studying the interdependence of our physical and mental states, and how our senses impact cognition.

Researchers are finding that our sense of touch — whether a surface is hard or soft, rough or smooth, for example — can impact how we perceive an unrelated interpersonal interaction. Another factor that significantly impacts cognitive wellbeing is noise. It can have undesirable physiological, psychological and behavioral effects, according to Julian Treasure, chairman of a United Kingdom-based consultancy, The Sound Agency. Background noise in the workplace has been found to increase employees’ stress hormone levels and undermine short-term memory, reading comprehension and willingness to engage with others, he says.

In workplaces, irritating noise can come from all kinds of sources: air conditioning, obnoxious ring-tones, traffic, nearby construction, “pink noise” sound-masking and – especially – from other people’s voices.

“Cognitively, there is plenty of research now that shows that in loud offices in particular the most destructive sound of all is other people’s conversations,” says Treasure.

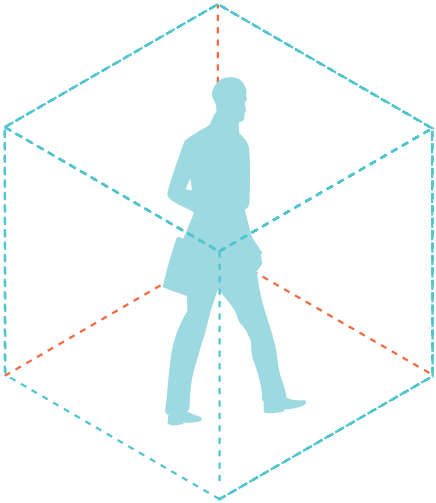
Noisy environments tend to only get worse over time, because people start speaking louder as it

gets noisier around them (the Lombard effect). As a result of too much noise in the workplace, health and productivity can suffer— the latter by as much as 66%, according to one study that Treasure cites.

At the same time, he says, open-plan environments can be very good for many types of work. “It’s one way of working, but it’s not the only way. We need to give people spaces that match what they need to do.” And, conversely, the sounds of silence in the workplace can be too much of a good thing. Pin-drop-quiet places are intimidating, he says, because you can clearly hear every sound in them.

The solution, says Treasure, is a variety of workplace environments, each designed with consciousness of sound for the task and the people using the spaces. Work environments need to be designed not just for appearance, but for experience in all the senses.

In a time where the term “cognitive overload” has gone mainstream, researchers at The University of California and other institutions are studying how cognitive processes are linked to the body’s interaction with its surroundings. Their work shows how people do better when they can offload cognitive work onto the environment because of limits on attention or memory. At its most basic level, physical environments equipped with whiteboards make it easier for people to offload information by giving them a place to make their work visible. Going further, researchers at Steelcase are exploring how technology-enabled architectural elements and furniture allow the physical environment to take on routine tasks, such as anticipating when to turn on equipment. Being able to offload some functions onto the environment can free up brain capacity to tackle complex problems.



Positive Social + Physical Environment = Engagement

Feeling Good at Work

Gallup’s global wellbeing study explored a powerful body/mind connection: engagement. Being disengaged, they found, is a leading indicator for a subsequent diagnosis of depression, as well as an increase in total cholesterol and triglyceride levels. Perhaps even more alarming for businesses is that Gallup found more than two-thirds of workers around the world are simply waiting for the workday to come to an end; they become increasingly happier the closer they get to leaving work. So not only are disengaged workers not as productive, they’re likely to cost an organization more because of the physical and mental health issues associated with stress. Everyday stressors can create negative emotions that put humans in a constant state of being on guard, conditioned for a “fight or flight” response. Ultimately, cortisol and other hormones that are released during stress tire and deteriorate the body and mind.

“Western culture typically views the mind, the body and the environment separately, but science is showing that they are intricately linked, as Eastern cultures have long known,” says Arantes. “This means that wellbeing is more than ‘wellness,’ which is just concerned with physical health. Wellbeing is also not the same thing as happiness, which is a transitory emotion that comes and goes. As a result of our work, we define wellbeing as sustaining a healthy physical and mental state over time, in a supportive material and social environment.”

“Western culture typically views the mind, the body and the environment separately, but science is showing that they are intricately linked, as Eastern cultures have long known.”

The biological drive of emotions

Given the vast amount of attention that has been given to physical dimensions of wellbeing, Steelcase researchers decided instead to focus their attention on the aspect of wellbeing at work that many organizations feel uncomfortable talking about – emotion. How people feel has a significant impact on both their health and their work.

“In the simplest sense, work is action—doing something. Emotions prime our bodies and minds for action,” says Arantes. “The link between the mind and the body is emotion. Humans are biological organisms that evolved in nature. Our survival has depended on our ability to interpret situations around us as safe or dangerous, and then react appropriately. Sensing danger prepares the body to either run or fight. On the other hand, if we are in a safe, supportive environment, our bodies relax and our minds start to wonder about other things.”

An important emphasis, she says, is “how biologically driven this is, because our survival as a species has depended on taking appropriate actions that are triggered by our emotions. We’re constantly evolving organisms that need to be constantly repaired. And when we’re in a negative state of mind, we can’t repair ourselves. While negative emotions are a normal part of life, it’s important that they are appropriate in duration and overbalanced with positive emotions. When people are in environments that support positive emotions, they’re free to be productive, collaborative and creative.”

Shifting to creative work

As people’s work changes, their needs change. And as needs change, work environments also need to change to remain supportive. The evolution of offices as places primarily for process work to places for creative work has profound implications for wellbeing. Creative work is all about making connections, being open to new ideas, taking risks and experimenting. These behaviors are impossible in a stressed state of mind. For creative work to thrive, the workplace needs to be a supportive and positive environment. For creative work, the workplace matters more than ever, and it needs to do more than ever.

“Companies like Zappos and Google have been capitalizing by taking a more emotional approach to wellbeing and promoting their organizations as fun, creative workplaces,” says Arantes. “They are reaping the benefits in their results and also realizing positive employee morale is an added recruitment incentive.”

Most companies, however, still rely mostly on hunches or trial-and-error approaches to workplace wellbeing. A gap in wellbeing research has been information on the impact of the work environment beyond ergonomics, air quality and other obvious factors. Lacking has been a coherent set of insights into the factors that are important for wellbeing and a plan of action for how organizations can give those factors substance in their spaces. The Steelcase team’s objective was to help fill that gap.

“The premise of our research has been that we don’t want to just understand wellbeing; we want to improve it,” explains de Benoist. ●

“When people are in environments that support positive emotions, they’re free to be productive, collaborative and creative.”



Does Your Work Environment Undermine Wellbeing?

At a recent roundtable conversation on the topic of about the future of work, PopTech curator Andrew Zoli asked a packed room of people where they do their best work. The answer: not at work. People described great cafés, home offices and libraries that helped them to feel energized, focused and engaged. Only one person in the group praised her company’s recently re-designed office as a place where she felt a sense of purpose and vitality.

This conversation echoes many other discussions that are taking place online and in a variety of forums where people are passionately debating what the best work environment is for actually getting work done. Authors Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hanson recent book “Remote” suggests people don’t need offices at all.

Business leaders disagree. While working remotely is a viable option for some workers, business leaders understand that it’s important for employees to feel connected to each other and with the purpose of their organization. Coming together in the workplace is what allows them to do that. The key is to create workplaces that are designed to be destinations that people want to be in because it helps them do their best work.

Steelcase’s ongoing research sheds light on what workers need to be creative and productive, and identifies some of the most frequent workplace culprits.

Leading organizations can make a significant impact – or hinder – their employees’ wellbeing by focusing attention on the physical environment. With a little effort, people can actually leave work feeling as well, or even better, than when they came in.

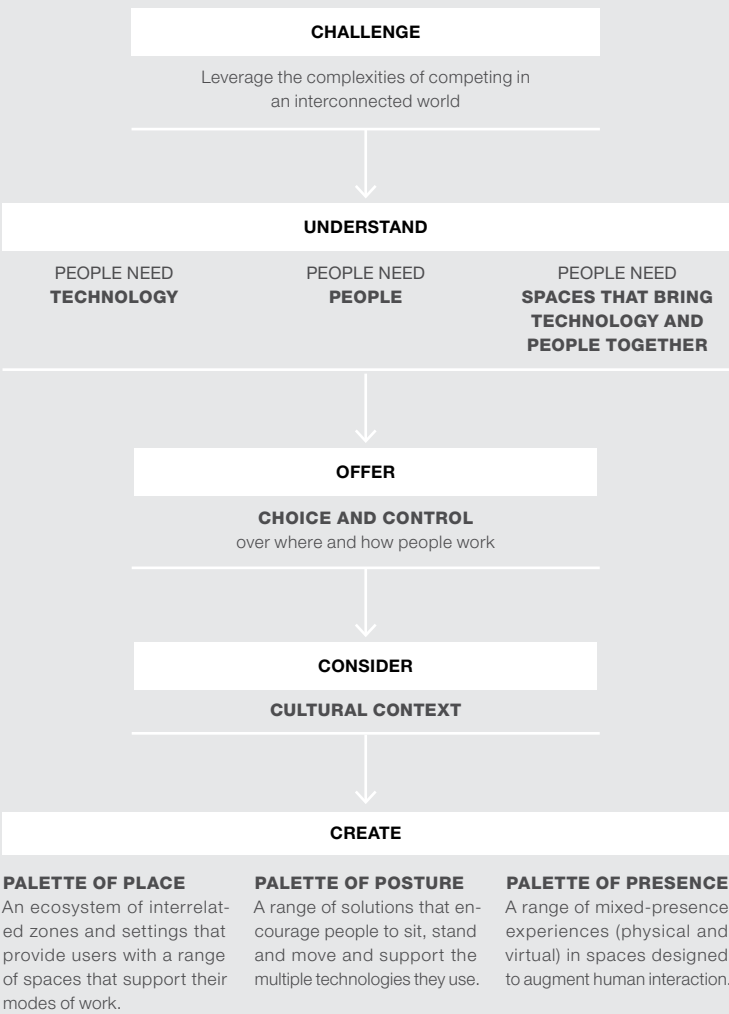
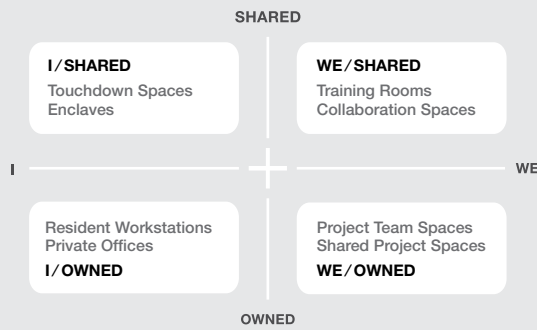


* Steelcase Workplace Survey of over 37,000 North American workers

An Interconnected Workplace

Choice + Control

This framework provides a methodology for creating and assessing a workplace designed for an interconnected world. It recognizes that people need to do both individual “I” work and group “We” work. It also breaks the paradigm that all individual spaces should be assigned or “owned” or that all group spaces should be shared, and instead offers the choice to work in a range of spaces that best supports the work that is being done. The range of spaces in an interconnected workplace need to support focused work, collaboration, socializing and learning, and consider the physical, cognitive and psychological needs of people.



SIX DIMENSIONS OF WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

The Steelcase team’s research synthesis identified six dimensions of wellbeing that can be impacted by the design of the physical environment. The foundational concept that links all six dimensions is what Steelcase refers to as an “interconnected workplace,” and which offers employees choice and control over where and how they work.

“To foster wellbeing, employees need to have a variety of work settings that they can choose from,” notes de Benoist. “Traditionally workplaces have been designed for efficiency, and sometimes take a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. But that doesn’t offer employees the ability to choose the right kind of setting for the work they need to do. When they have choices, employees have a sense of control that helps them feel more empowered, engaged and less stressed.”

Three key ways to offering this level of choice and control are:

Palette of Place

An ecosystem of interrelated zones and settings that provide users with a range of spaces that support their various modes of work.

Palette of Posture

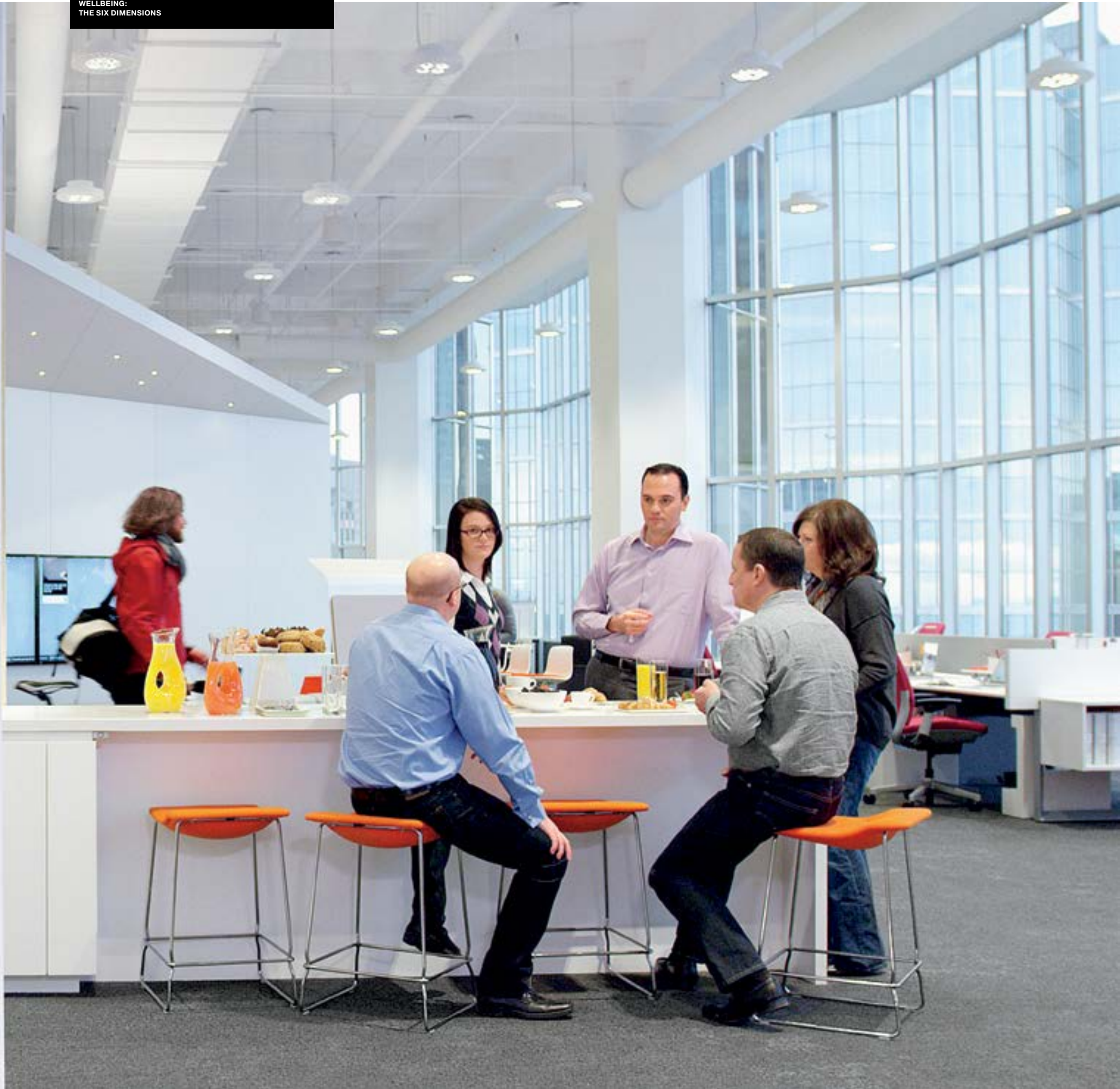
A range of solutions that encourage people to sit, stand and move while supporting the multiple technologies they use.

Palette of Presence

A range of mixed-presence experiences (physical and virtual) in workplace destinations designed to augment human interaction.

Combined in workplace design, these principles lay the groundwork for addressing the six key dimensions of worker wellbeing identified by Steelcase researchers.

- 1 Optimism** Fostering Creativity and Innovation
- 2 Mindfulness** Fully Engaged
- 3 Authenticity** Really Yourself
- 4 Belonging** Connecting to Others
- 5 Meaning** A Sense of Purpose
- 6 Vitality** Get-up-and-go



1 Optimism

FOSTERING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

Optimism is more than just expecting positive outcomes in various domains of life. It is about being on a quest for discovery, eager to try new approaches versus being overly risk adverse. It means interpreting and remembering events in a positive light, as well as creating enjoyment in the present and seeing possibilities for the future.

Researchers at the University of California recently found that part of our optimism, self-esteem and sense of mastery (the ability to affect a positive change in life) is genetic. But, they also noted that genes are not destiny and that activities, relationships and environment can have almost as much impact in the equation. Emotions can play a significant role in our tendencies toward optimism. Fear breeds pessimism.

Optimism is critical to the type of work that organizations need today: creativity and innovation. It influences a wide range of behaviors such as seeing the big picture, exploring ideas, being open to others, taking more risks and facing difficult tasks. It also makes people open to change. Understood in this way, optimism has important implications for an organization's agility and resiliency. Because of this, optimistic employees tend to be more productive employees in today's economy.

“Optimism may be the most important job skill in the 21st century,” notes de Benoist. “Organizations are faced with so much volatility and stress that the people who can rise above fears and anxiety are the ones who can help build a culture that is better able to thrive in our world.”

This setting offers inspiring views and promotes movement through the environment, encouraging users to select the right place for them to work at any given time. The informal social setting supports connections and provides nourishment.

Cultivating optimism in the workplace

Empowering workplaces support continuous experimentation and show the legacy of the brand and organization in positive ways to reinforce progress and possibility. “Workers need to feel a sense of individual influence and control over their environment, versus feeling quashed by standardization and rigidity,” advises de Benoist.

Design Considerations:

- 1 Allow choice and control over where and how people work.
- 2 Create spaces that allow personalization and individual customization, instead of tightly enforced workplace standards.
- 3 Offer settings and affordances that help employees feel supported in their work.
- 4 Design for transparency, so people can see and be seen, and build trust.

For application ideas designed to support physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing in the workplace see the Wellbeing Thought Starters (pg 35 –50).



2 Mindfulness

FULLY ENGAGED

Mindfulness means balancing the intense pace of life with being fully present in the moment. Today technology presents many opportunities for multitasking, which allows people to be physically present in a meeting, for example, but mentally lost in email.

The focus on mindfulness in business has grown exponentially as organizations recognize that rapid changes in technology, the marketplace and the global playing field have caused volatility, uncertainty, chaos and ambiguity. These realities create stressful conditions for people in organizations and call for a new style of leadership.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, noted psychologist and author of the seminal book “Flow,” relates the notion of flow with his study of happiness and creativity. It’s the antithesis to multitasking and a direct result of mindfulness—i.e., being fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement and enjoyment in what you’re doing.

“Mindfulness is a fusion of the mind and body when you lose the notion of time,” says de Benoist. “And it’s not just something you can achieve alone. People can work together in mindfulness, too, performing like a jazz group, all mindful in the moment of now.”

Cultivating mindfulness in the workplace

“Workers need physical spaces that help them manage the cognitive overload of their daily lives and be fully present in the moment,” notes de Benoist.

Design Considerations:

- 1 Create spaces that help people connect with others one-on-one and eye-to-eye, and not just through their technology devices.
- 2 Design areas that allow workers to control their sensory stimulation and choose if they want to amp it up or down.
- 3 Offer places that are calming, through the materials, textures, colors, lighting and views.
- 4 Create areas where people can connect with others without distractions or interference.

For application ideas designed to support physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing in the workplace see the Wellbeing Thought Starters (pg 35–50).

This owned space allows for both individual focused work as well as 1:1 connections. Users can make work visible using vertical surfaces, connect with remote team members via telepresence technology or work alone.



3 Authenticity

REALLY YOURSELF

In workplaces of the past as popularized by Dilbertville and “Mad Men,” allowing yourself to be vulnerable or show emotion at work was considered unacceptable. With “fight or flight” emotions in high gear, many workers are still accustomed to defending themselves by keeping up a pretense of perfection and expected behaviors, which leads to frustration, resentment and unhealthy behaviors.

Wellbeing, in contrast, is cultivated by personal expressiveness — the freedom to be who you are, at work as well as away from work.

Gallup poll data from more than a decade of surveying people has revealed that the most important factor in wellbeing on the job is to have a best friend at work. Relationships anchor people’s commitment to the larger organization. Having close friends and positive interactions can’t happen without trust, which requires authenticity. “Even in Eastern cultures with their legacy of collectiveness versus individualism, the authenticity of self and being able to express that at work is become more important to wellbeing,” says Arantes.

Cultivating authenticity in the workplace

“Workers need spaces where they can feel a part of the organization’s culture, while feeling encouraged to express their own ideas and values,” notes Arantes. “Leaders set standards and a tone of authenticity, while customizable work environments and social settings can reinforce the message.”

Design Considerations:

- 1 Create spaces that help people feel comfortable to express themselves and share their ideas.
- 2 Incorporate informal, non-constricting environments with a home-like feel.
- 3 Design areas that help people connect their personal values to the brand values.

For application ideas designed to support physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing in the workplace see the Wellbeing Thought Starters (pg 35–50).

This lounge allows coworkers to connect informally—whether it’s for socializing or to share ideas. The home-like environment allows people to be themselves.



4 Belonging

CONNECTED TO OTHERS

A meaningful life means feeling connected to other people. Social connections at work are sustaining, and feeling useful to others is a powerful way to generate positive emotions.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow positioned belonging at the third level of his famous hierarchy of universal human needs, preempted only by basic physiological needs (food, water, sleep, etc.) and safety/security needs. Numerous studies and experiments have led to the belief that humans are genetically wired to need one another, and Gallup data provides empirical evidence that having close friends and positive interactions at work significantly increases engagement with the organization.

Relationships anchor people's commitment to an organization, its brand and its purpose. Without meaningful connections to people, organizations can seem anonymous. Because of this, mobility, alternative work strategies and telepresence across geographies must be intentionally crafted so that employees don't lose their sense of belonging.

"Mobility can be positive because you're giving people flexibility, and videoconferencing is fast becoming a fact of everyday work, especially for global teams. But it's important to ensure that people have meaningful connections to others and understand that, wherever they are, they are valued in the organization. Employees need to know they are integral participants in something larger than themselves and others in the organization care about them," says Arantes.

Cultivating belonging in the workplace

"As work becomes increasingly mobile and global, creating a sense of belonging is a bigger challenge than ever, but certainly not less important," says Arantes. "Leading organizations make sure their workplaces provide reasons for people to choose to work there by making it easy to collaborate with co-workers and connect to technologies. They put effort into creating an equal sense of community and belonging for mobile and distributed employees, as well as those physically present."

Design Considerations:

- 1 Create entrances that are welcoming with visible hosting for people who don't work there routinely.
- 2 Provide ample and well-equipped spaces for mobile and resident workers to work individually or in teams.
- 3 Offer videoconferencing configurations that allow remote participants to see content in the room and on the walls, and to hear everyone equally.
- 4 Design informal areas for socialization, in person as well as virtually.

For application ideas designed to support physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing in the workplace see the Wellbeing Thought Starters (pg 35–50).

Mobile workers can easily connect with their peers and feel a sense of belonging. The bench supports a range of user needs, from focused work to collaboration to touch-down tasks.



5 Meaning

A SENSE OF PURPOSE

People need to use their strengths, understand their impact and see how they contribute to organizational goals. Edward Diener, nicknamed “Dr. Happiness” and a senior scientist for the Gallup Organization, distinguished that the so-called “calling orientation,” in which people are passionate about what they do, is intrinsically the most rewarding.

A sense of purpose helps build a resilient enterprise based on trust and collaboration. It infuses “yes power” throughout an organization, says de Benoist.

“Beliefs are the rituals of the everyday that a community shares,” he notes. “In the best cases, a person’s sense of meaning in life and the purpose of the company are compatible and augment each other. When people around us believe the same things as we do and work toward similar things in the same space, it creates a sense of harmony in context.”

“Brand isn’t just for the client,” says Arantes. “The brand is also for the people inside the company to have a meaningful understanding of what the brand stands for and be mindful of it in their everyday work.

“Without shared understanding of what you want to accomplish, it’s hard to get people aligned on what their goals are and how to get there. People need meaning in order to know that their work is not going to waste. It’s possible for even a large body of people to move quickly if they’re aligned on the same goal and meaning.”

Cultivating meaning in the workplace

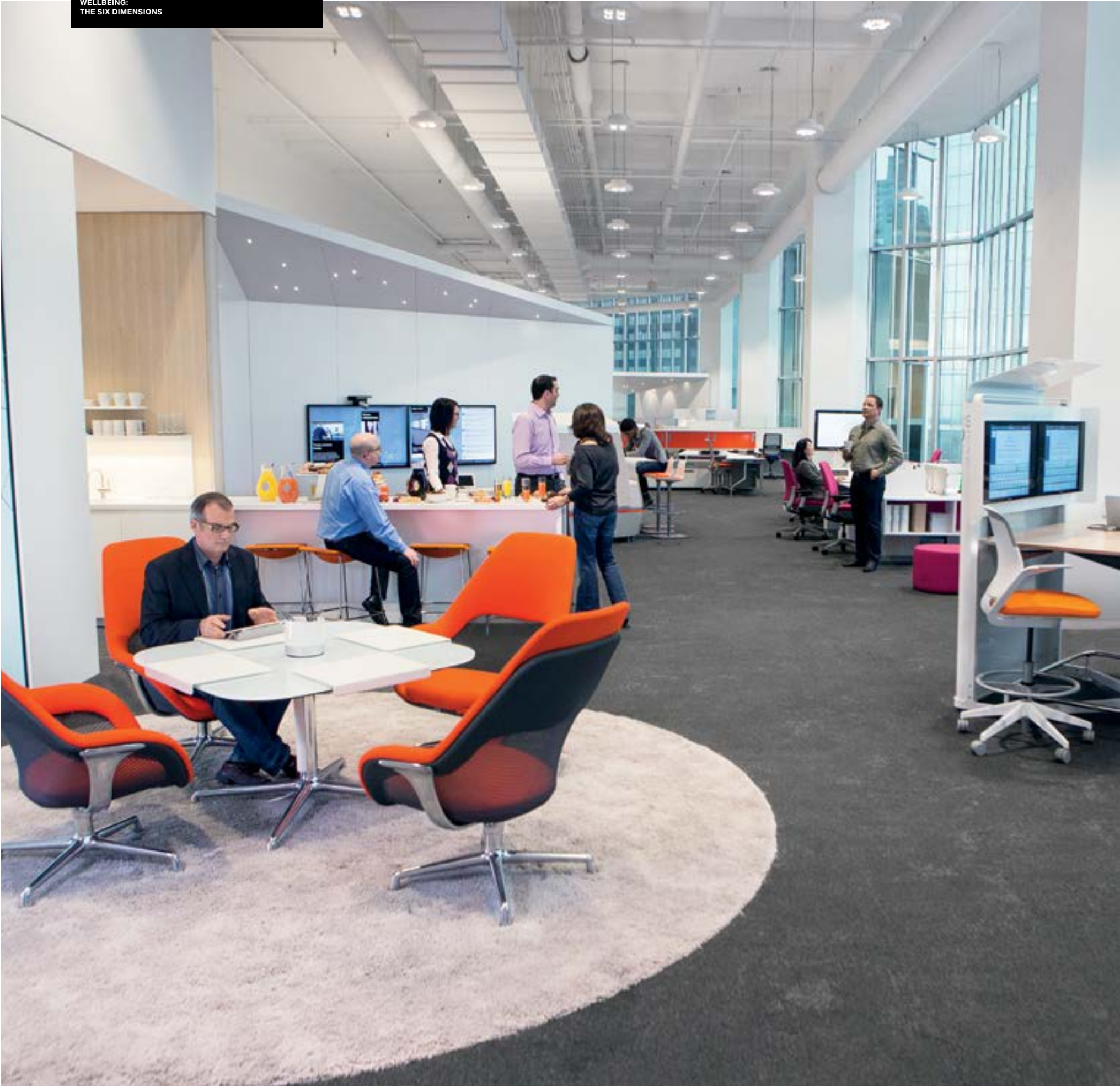
“How we spend our time, doing the right things in the right way, can powerfully impact wellbeing,” says de Benoist. “Spaces that are intentionally designed to help people accomplish meaningful goals can make a tremendous difference in individual performance and overall organizational results.”

Design Considerations:

- 1 Include spaces beyond the lobby that reinforce the brand, purpose, history and culture of the company.
- 2 Leverage vertical real estate to make thinking and progress visible.
- 3 Use technology to display real-time information.
- 4 Create an ecosystem of spaces that give people choices and empower them to work productively alone or together.

For application ideas designed to support physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing in the workplace see the Wellbeing Thought Starters (pg 35–50).

This immersive team space gives members a place to share and display ideas, thoughts and ongoing work. The space provides both analog and digital tools for collaboration and information-sharing.



6 Vitality

GET UP AND GO

Scientists continue to make breakthrough discoveries about how the mind and body function as an interrelated system. Brain chemistry expert Dr. Candace Pert, a neuroscientist at the U.S. National Institute of Health, wrote in her 1997 book, “Molecules of Emotion,” that receptors and peptides run every system in the human body, creating what she termed a “bodymind’s intelligence.”

Continuing to explore the science of vitality, recent medical studies published in respected journals such as the European Association for the Study of Diabetes and mass media such as The New York Times, have raised awareness of the negative effects of prolonged sitting. Dr. James A. Levine of the Mayo Clinic, a leading researcher in the field of inactivity studies, has noted an explosion of research in this area “because the health care cost implications are so enormous.”

The risks are mental as well as physical, since muscle inactivity produces a series of harmful metabolic effects including a slowdown of the flow of nutrients to the brain, affecting alertness.

Clearly, engaging the body in movement is essential for supporting physical and mental vigor at work. Movement is the body language of ideas,” says de Benoist. “Taking different postures stimulates the mind, and healthy environments encourage people to move, eat well and exercise as healthy practices.”

In addition, sensory experiences in work environments are important, too. Using our senses and nervous system, we interact constantly within the context of spatial environments, processing touch, light and sound and other stimuli that influence mental and physical states. Because stimuli have direct and often immediately perceptible positive or negative consequences, as humans we naturally want choice and control of our environments, seeking out the places that “feel good” to us.

“When you get to the workplace, you need the tools and environments that are going to support you, whether it’s to work alone or have a collaborative session or eat a meal in a pleasant place or go outdoors,” says Arantes. “Providing a palette of place that supports frequent movement is fundamental for sustaining vitality.”

Cultivating vitality in the workplace

How we experience a place affects our actions. Investments in the workplace can completely change employees’ attitudes and behaviors, creating a new spatial vibe that boosts people’s motivation and performance within a relatively short time.

Design Considerations:

- 1 Design areas that give people choices for controlling the level of sensory stimulation around them.
- 2 Provide easily adjustable furniture to fit a range of sizes, needs and preferences and to promote movement throughout the day.
- 3 Include cafés with healthy food choices and displays.
- 4 Bring nature in with daylight, views, ventilation, patios, etc.
- 5 Support active, healthy lifestyles with centrally located stairways, outdoor walking paths, bicycle racks, etc.

For application ideas designed to support physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing in the workplace see the Wellbeing Thought Starters (pg 35–50).

This environment provides a variety of settings giving workers the freedom to choose where and how they work. The open social setting builds trust and provides opportunities to connect with others.

WELLBEING THOUGHT STARTERS

APPLICATION CONCEPTS

Informed by insights from our research, we've developed some settings that can be a catalyst for intentionally designing work environments that support the physical, cognitive and emotional needs of people at work.

Amplifying people's performance

IBM's CEO Study notes that the move toward a more collaborative, communicative, creative, flexible, and ultimately more innovative organization is not something they are delegating to HR. They see the challenge as so critical to their business performance that they plan to engage the entire C-suite and personally lead this shift.

To impact this goal, leaders at all levels of the organization will gain greater traction if they incorporate a focus on wellbeing into their strategy. Employers make a significant investment in people and expect a positive ROI over time. For those who understand that their employees' wellbeing is imperative for bottom line success, the potential return is high. Conversely, it's shortsighted and risky to shortchange people's potential with inadequate, unsupportive or uninspiring work environments that undermine their wellbeing.

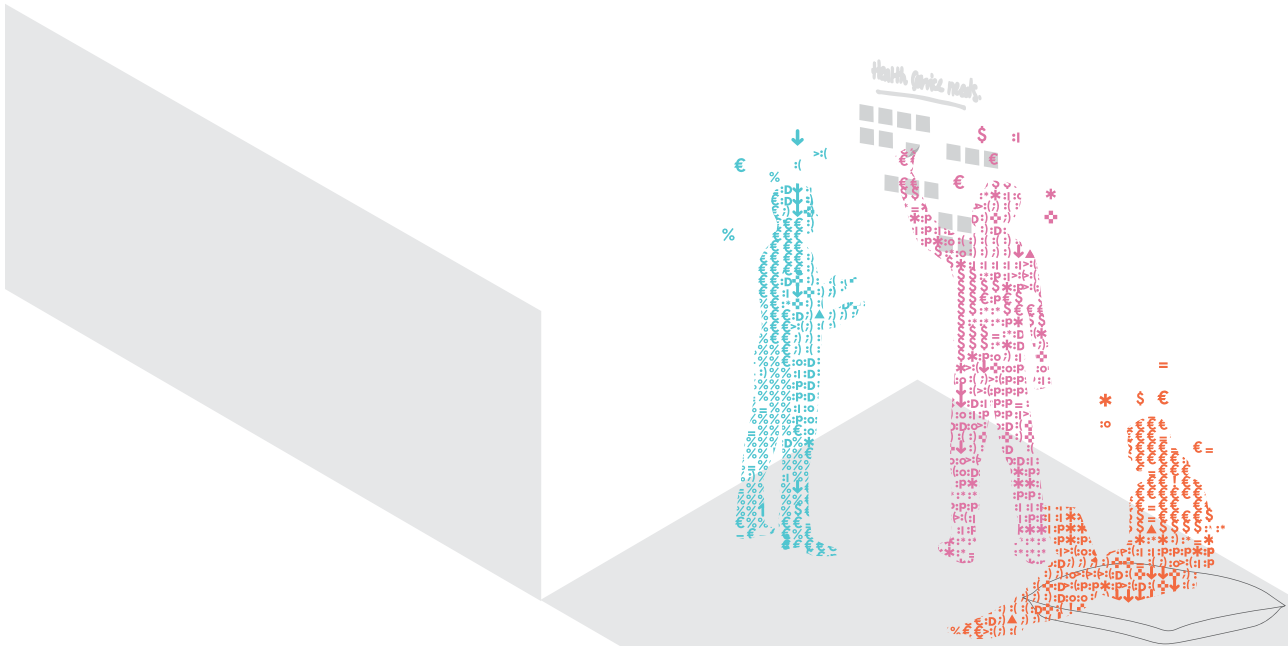
"Businesses understand that they need people more than ever to get innovative work out the door. It's really about getting people to blossom," says Arantes. "In the past leaders may not have recognized the impact employee wellbeing could make. That's changing, there's a different mindset."

Wellbeing is a competitive advantage in today's business world. To achieve it, workers need mental and physical health, nurtured by a supportive environment that gives them the emotional capacity to interpret and experience events in a way that leads to productive, positive actions. The best places help people engage deeply in what they do by giving them what they need for wellbeing at work.

The results can be self-perpetuating: a systemic sense of wellbeing that easily becomes positively contagious, amplifying the performance of individuals, teams and the entire enterprise.

Wellbeing is a competitive advantage in today's business world.

To achieve it, workers need mental and physical health, nurtured by a supportive environment that gives them the emotional capacity to interpret and experience events in a way that leads to productive, positive actions.



PLANNING FOR THE DIMENSIONS OF WELLBEING

Attaining wellbeing at work is about creating and sustaining a healthy physical and mental state over time in a supportive physical and social environment. No single space can do this alone.

OPTIMISM

Provide spaces that can be easily modified by individuals and teams to encourage experimentation, spark imagination and creativity, and expand possibilities.

MINDFULNESS

Create environments that support focus and minimize distractions for all tasks by providing a diverse range of settings that facilitate individual concentration, 1:1 connections, collaboration and team focus.

AUTHENTICITY

Allow individuals and teams to express their personalities through space by empowering them to select environments that best suit their preferred work styles. Encourage employees to display personal items in workstations and on their computers, tablets and smartphones.

BELONGING

Provide spaces that encourage personal and professional connections. Ensure that spaces designed for users to connect with one another are intuitive and easily accessible for both co-located and distributed teams. Embed elements such as a media wall in the space to reinforce the importance of connections and the organization's commitment to employees.

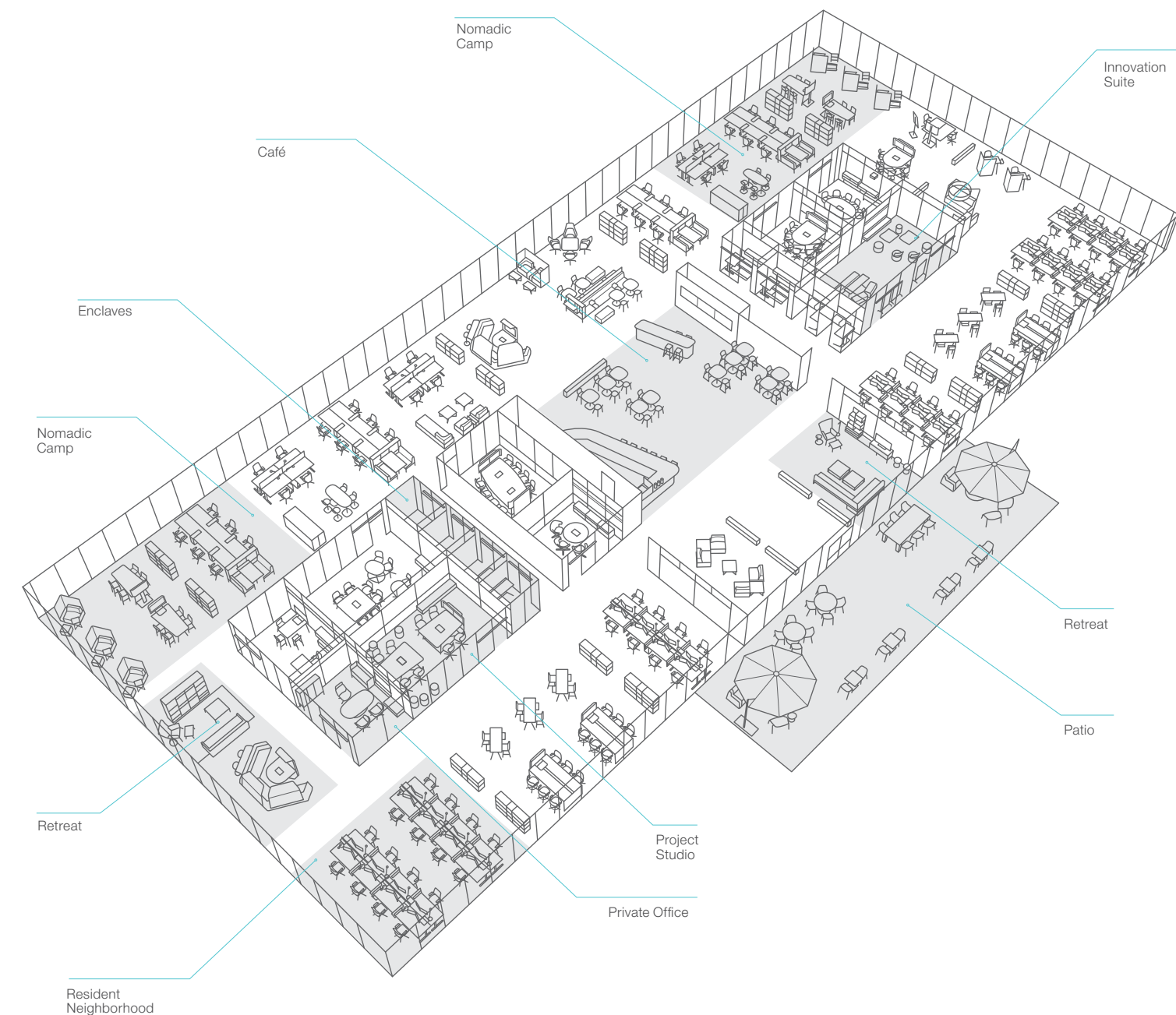
MEANING

Accommodate both co-located and geographically disparate teams by creating a palette of places and presences — i.e., settings for both physical and virtual collaboration. Provide social spaces to reinforce the importance of fun and social interactions and the company's commitment to encourage these behaviors.

VITALITY

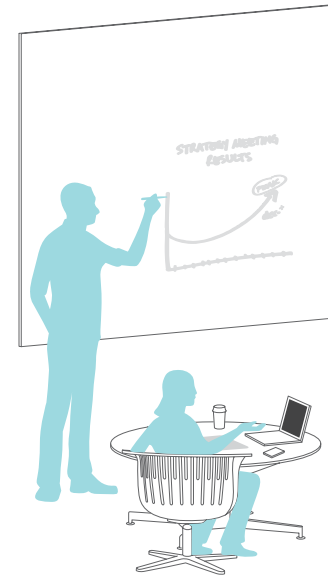
Design spaces that encourage movement. Create a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces that offer posture choices (sitting, standing, perching, lounging) and encourage walking to create physical and emotional energy, stimulate the mind, improve alertness and improve focus.

WELLBEING DIMENSIONS APPLIED

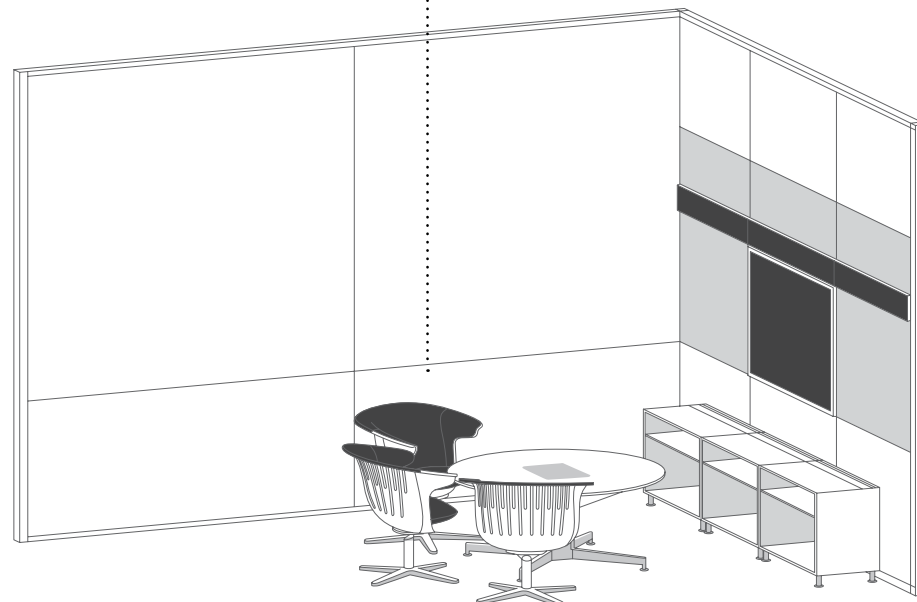


PROJECT STUDIOS

An immersive, shared space that supports project teams and small groups in analog and digital collaboration, content sharing and idea generation. Well-appointed to meet user needs around tools, hospitality, amplification and posture options.



Walls are leveraged as planes for analog and digital collaboration. Chairs swivel so workers can switch eye contact quickly between each other and multiple information displays.



APPLICATION COMPONENTS

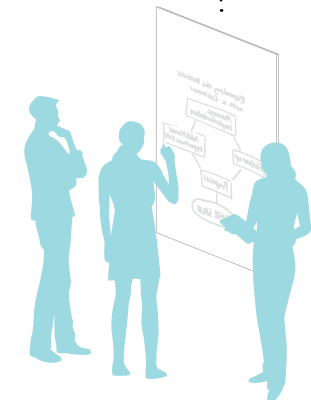
V.I.A.™ Architectural Walls
i2i® Seating
c:scape® Desking Solutions
media:scape® Collaboration Solutions



Well-situated high-definition telepresence and furniture amplifies the conditions for innovation by augmenting the quality and quantity of interactions for both physical and virtual participants.



Moveable seating provides informality and postural change.



Using walls as vertical planes for displaying information increases mental capacity for dealing with complex issues.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

V.I.A.™ Architectural Walls
media:scape® Collaboration Solutions
Cobi® Seating
Exponents™ Storage

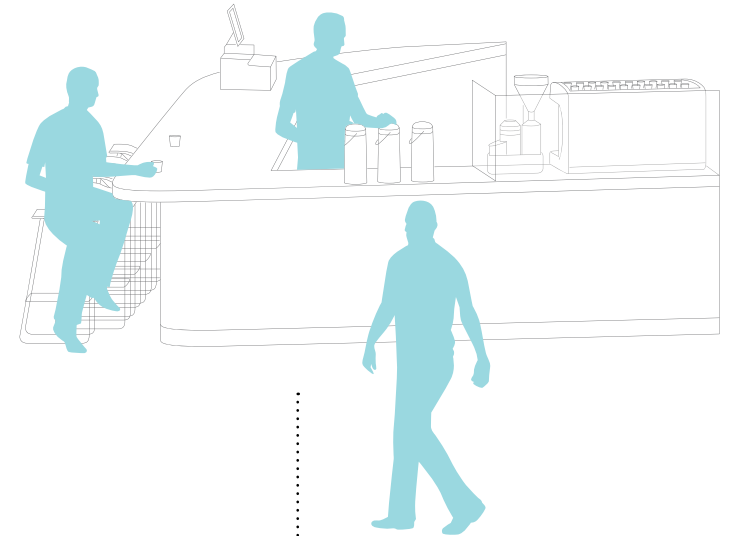
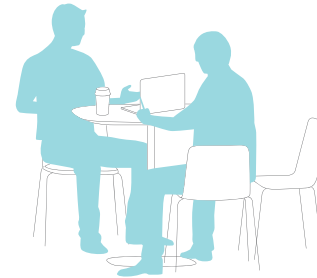
*not all products available in all countries

CAFÉ

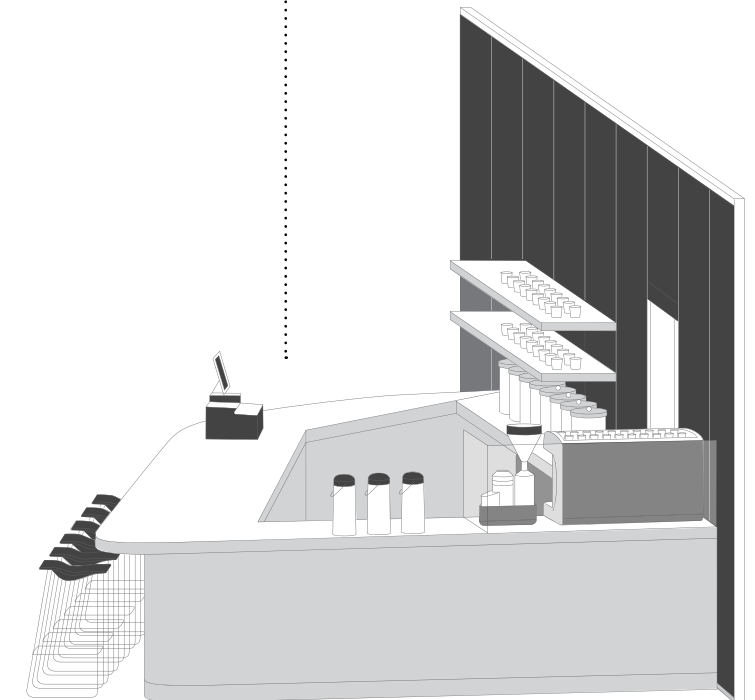
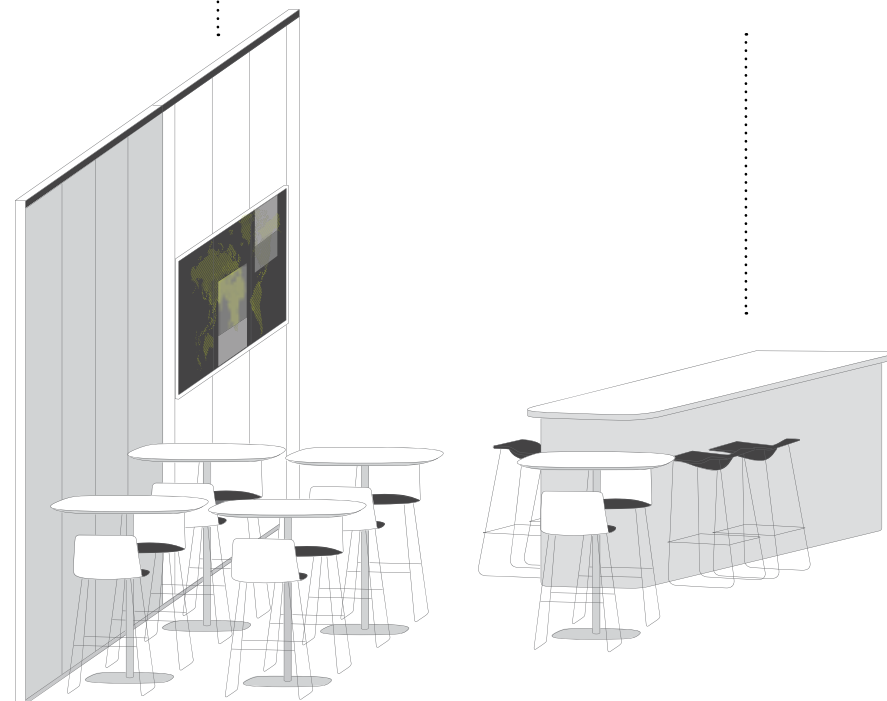
An informal and social setting to support connections, built trust and provide nourishment. Provides opportunities to connect socially and hosts mobile workers graciously to facilitate a sense of belonging, promote healthy professional relationships and bridge presence disparities.



There is a variety of settings for socializing or meeting informally.



At the coffee bar, it's easy to see and be seen, meet up and chat up.



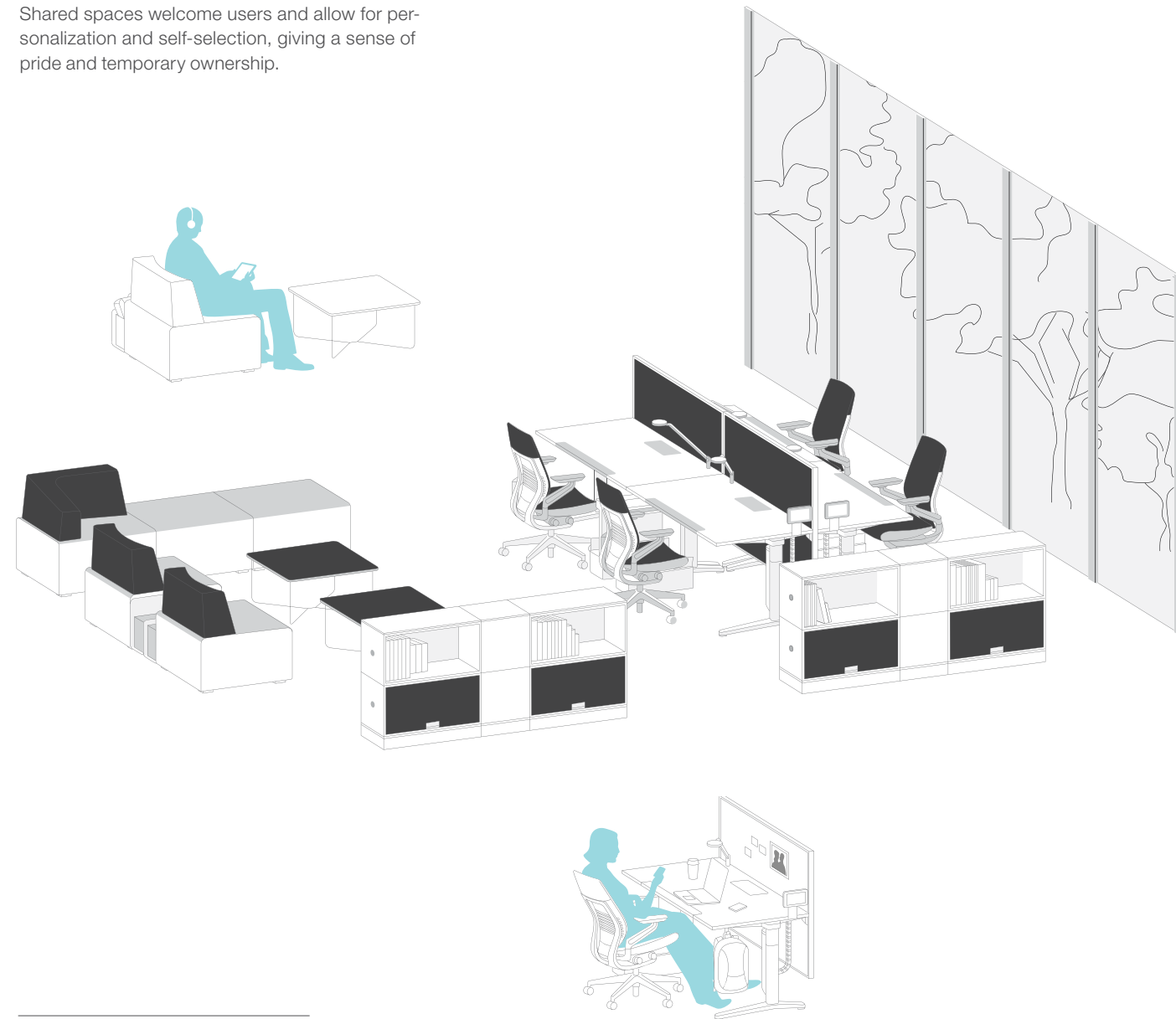
APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Enea Lottu™ Tables and Seating
Last Minute™ Seating

*not all products available in all countries

NOMADIC CAMP

An area for mobile users with a variety of settings that welcome and accommodate focus and collaboration. A palette of place and posture options provides solutions for mobile and geographically disparate users to feel a sense of belonging, community and connection to the brand and culture. Shared spaces welcome users and allow for personalization and self-selection, giving a sense of pride and temporary ownership.

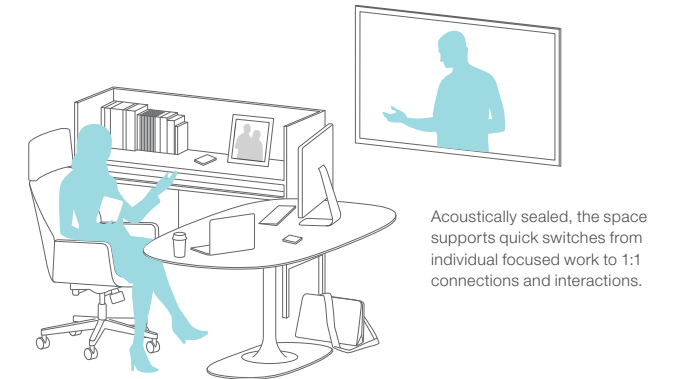


APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Ology Desks
Gesture™ Seating
Soto™ Worktools
B-Free Lounge Seating and Tables
Flexbox Storage

PRIVATE OFFICE

An owned space that provides the ability to express one's self and display personal items and professional artifacts. Users are empowered to utilize the space in the best way to support their individual needs through amplification, making work visible on the walls or providing solitude for focus.



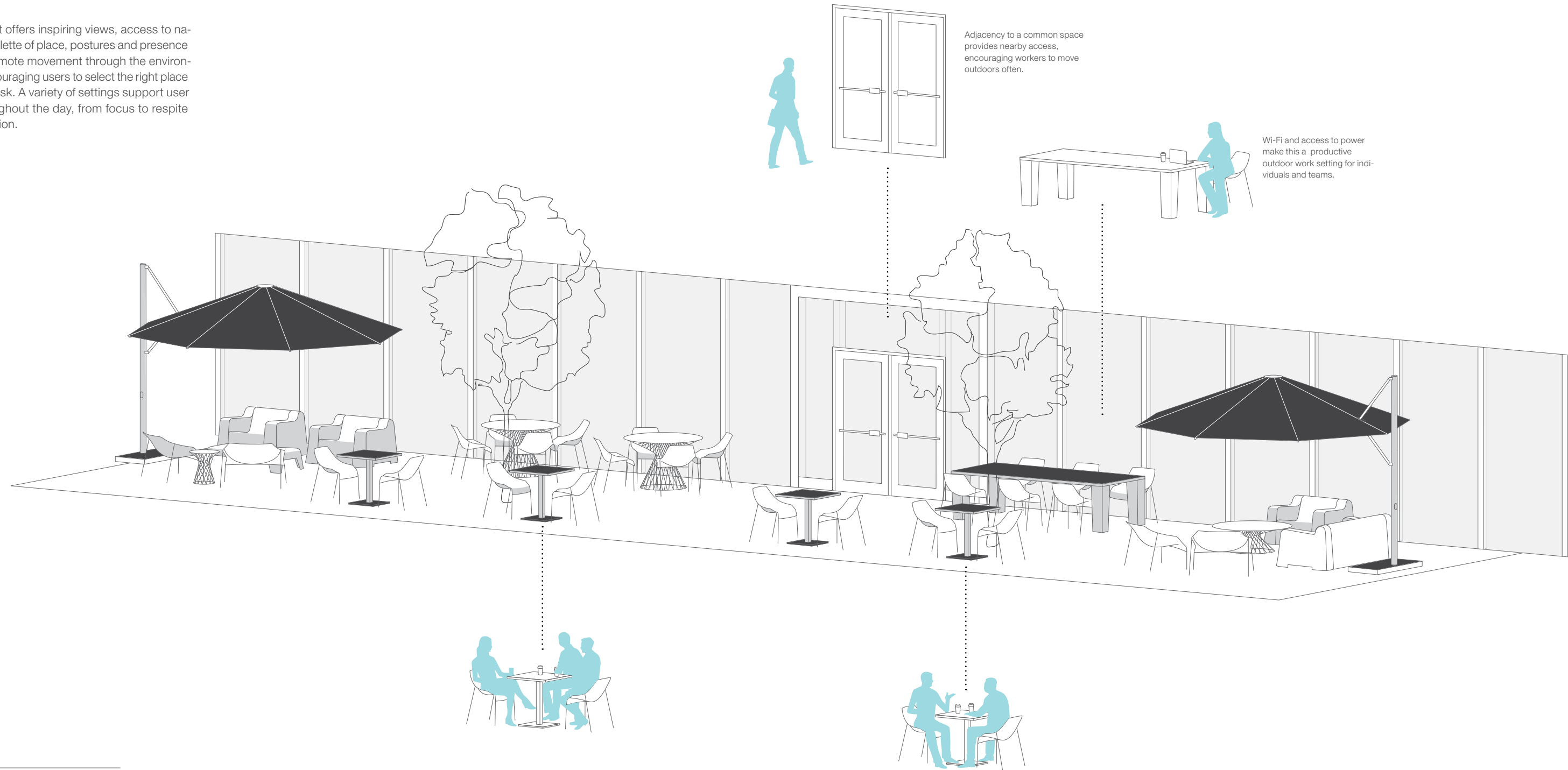
APPLICATION COMPONENTS

V.J.A.™ Architectural Walls
Denizen™ Tables and Storage
Bob™ Seating
Bindu™ Seating

*not all products available in all countries

PATIO

A setting that offers inspiring views, access to nature and a palette of place, postures and presence options. Promote movement through the environment by encouraging users to select the right place for a given task. A variety of settings support user needs throughout the day, from focus to respite to collaboration.



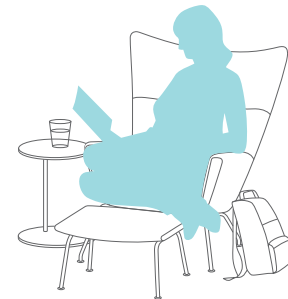
APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Emu Shade Seating
Emu Heaven™ Seating and Tables
Emu Ivy™ Seating

*not all products available in all countries

RETREAT

An informal place that enables people to be alone with others nearby or have informal interactions within the hum of surrounding activity. Provides great views to the outdoors and displays of organizational artifacts.



Those who aren't comfortable in a high-sensory environment can come here to dial down the stimulation around them.



APPLICATION COMPONENTS

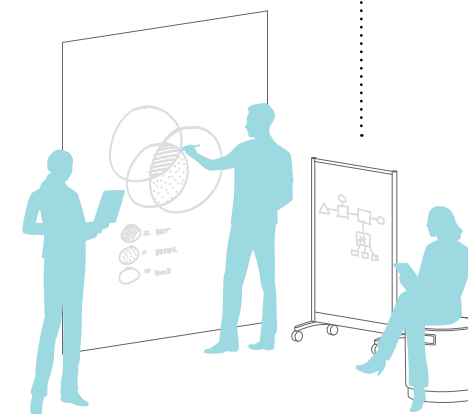
Milbrae™ Lounge Seating and Tables
Wing™ Lounge Seating
Await™ Lounge Seating
Currency® Workwall™ Storage

INNOVATION SUITE

A space to fine-tune imagination, spark creativity and foster critical thinking. Inspire, engage and support evolving innovation processes and serve as a symbolic and tangible expression of a company's commitment to a culture of innovation.



Unrestricted environments breed "What if?" thinking.



With walls as workspaces, big ideas can progress to reality.

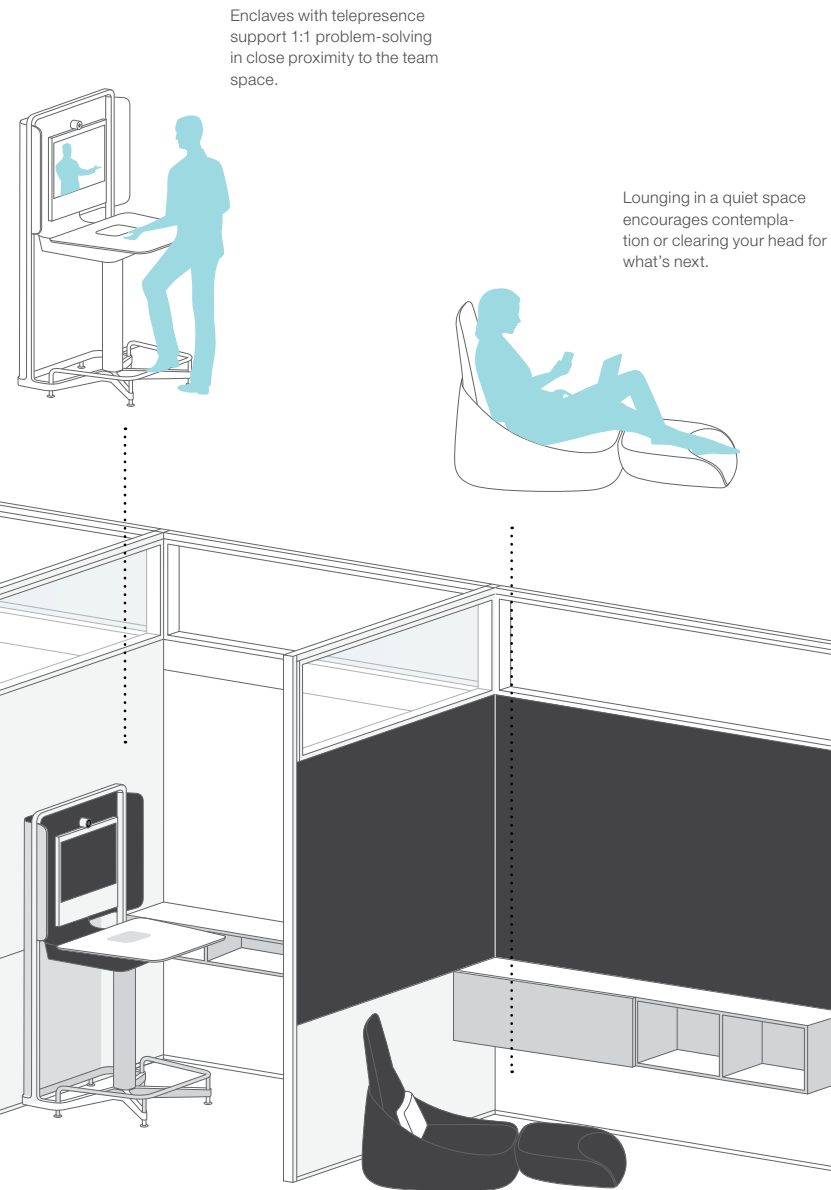
APPLICATION COMPONENTS

V.I.A.™ Architectural Walls
Buoy™ Seating
Await™ Seating
EE6® Storage
turnstone® Whiteboards
Topo® Mobile Seating

*not all products available in all countries

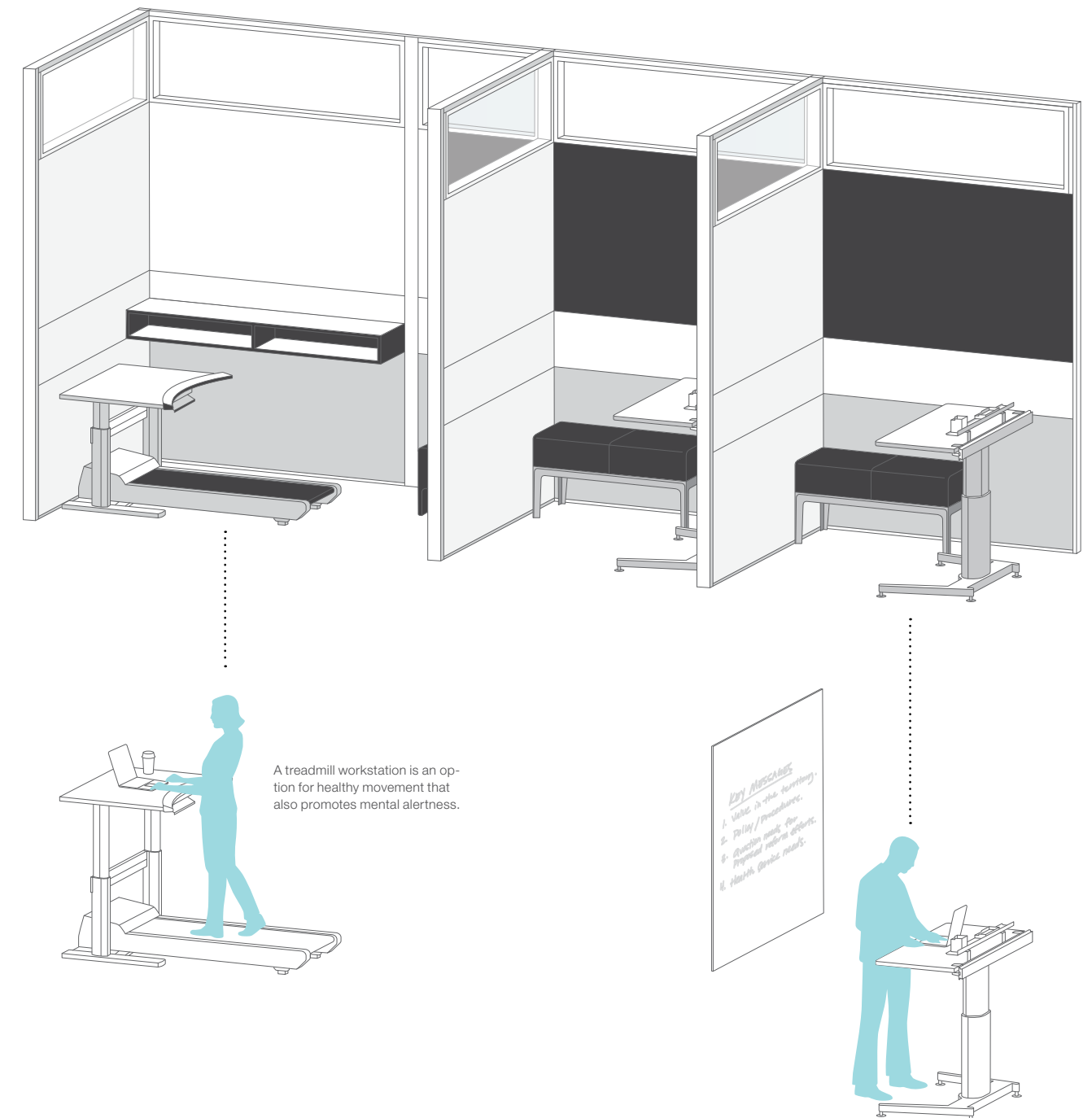
ENCLAVES

Small, private spaces that provide respite, focus and rejuvenation. Easily accessible with good visual signaling.



APPLICATION COMPONENTS

V.I.A.™ Architectural Walls
Hosu Seating
media:scape® kiosk Collaboration Solutions
EE6® Storage



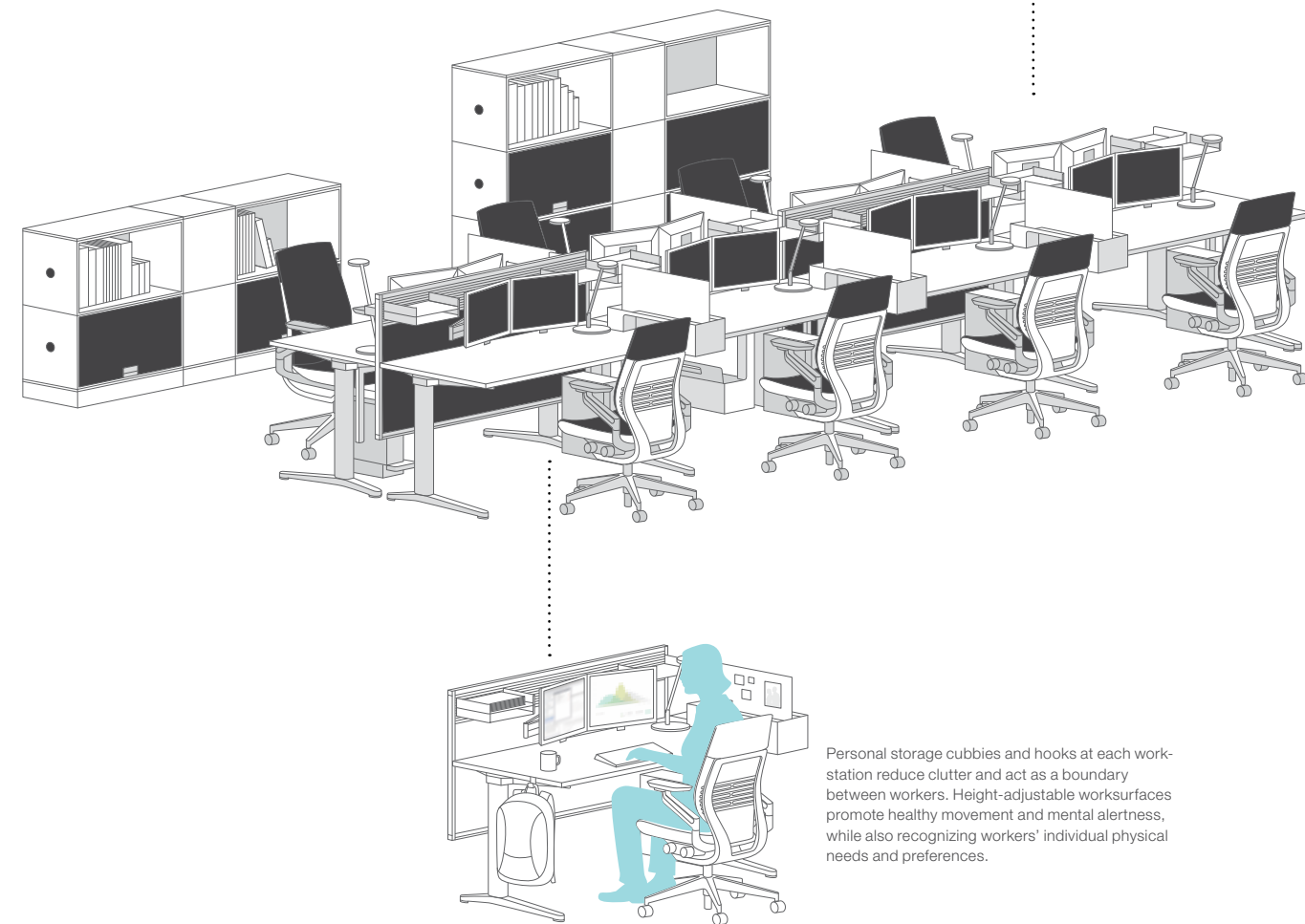
APPLICATION COMPONENTS

V.I.A.™ Architectural Walls
Regard™ Bench
Airtouch® Tables
Walkstation™
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Gensler: Designing for Wellbeing



Nila Leiserowitz
Principal, Gensler



Sarah Bader
Principal, Gensler

Most people spend most of their waking hours at work, so what better place to focus on improving health and wellbeing?

Designers Nila R. Leiserowitz and Sarah Bader believe that the office may offer the single greatest opportunity to positively impact people's health. Both are principals and firm-wide health and wellness practice area leaders with Gensler, the renowned global architecture, design, planning and consulting firm.

In response to expanding health consciousness and a growing interest in wellness, Gensler created a practice area of design professionals who are exclusively focused on health and wellbeing environments — from urban planning to buildings to interior design. Among corporate clients, they see growing interest in fostering wellbeing in the workplace.

“For many years, there was a lot of focus around sustainability and the work environment, to the point that it became a big issue in talent recruitment. Now we're starting to see that people who are considering an organization want to understand that there's a commitment to their wellbeing. To hire good knowledge workers, there is always competition for the brightest and best, whether the economy is good or bad. So you want to send a strong message about your culture and how people are going to be able to succeed within your company,” says Leiserowitz.

Wellbeing has a direct relationship to productivity, says Bader, IIDA, also based in Gensler's Chicago office. “People used to think of wellbeing as just about wellness and physical health. But now we realize that there's this mental piece, too. Wellbeing supports good thinking. And that's what employers hire people to do — they're not hiring you just to be present, they want you thinking clearly and fully engaged.”

People are more engaged in their health than ever before, and a consumerization of the healthcare industry is well underway, which has direct impact on wellbeing at work, says Leiserowitz. “You are now an engaged consumer of your own health and you have choice in how you're going to spend the capital that is your health. It's exciting to see companies more aware and have this desire for people to stay healthy.”

“It's definitely going to be a more important aspect in this century,” adds Bader.

It's key to create experiences in environments that help people feel good about being where they are, and research confirms that the plenty of room for improvement in today's workplaces. The Gensler 2013 U.S. Workplace Survey results show that only one in every four U.S. workers has an optimal work environment, and worker effectiveness has fallen since 2006. “Enabling choice with the right alignment of tools, policies and spaces is an opportunity for companies to create a climate in which autonomous, engaged employees can make meaningful decisions to maximize their individual performance,” the report states.

“We chose our professions as architects and designers so we can create experiences,” says Leiserowitz. “Space is so powerful. It's one of the most powerful experiences that people take for granted. That's why I think it's fantastic that, more and more, we're focusing on wellbeing as a problem of space. Good spaces create good experiences. Spaces are fundamental for wellbeing.”



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Q&A

Q&A With
Nic Marks
Founder of the Centre
for Wellbeing

Companies that want a competitive edge should start by fostering happier employees, says Nic Marks, founder of the Centre for Wellbeing, an independent think tank at the New Economics Foundation (NEF) in London. Happier employees, according to Marks, are more productive and more innovative—and he’s got the stats to back it up. He also developed the influential Happy Planet Index, a global measure of human wellbeing and environmental impact published by the Centre.

Marks is director of Happiness Works, a U.K.-based company that helps executives measure and improve workplace happiness. A pioneer in the statistical analysis of happiness and wellbeing, he’s also worked as a psychotherapist and organizational change consultant.



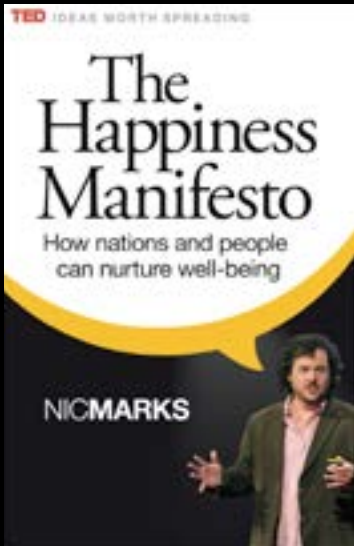
Do business people take the subject of happiness seriously?

When you start playing with a word like happiness, you are being provocative. It can sound light and fluffy, which is why we use measurement to ground it, make it more pragmatic. It’s the pragmatists of the world that we have to appeal to and make the case to them why happiness at work is really important. It’s easier to connect with enthusiasts and innovators, but the challenge is to connect with people who you’ve got to make the case to.

What information goes into creating the Happy Planet Index?

It measures the human experience: the quality measured by how well people’s lives are going and how long they live. Then there’s the ecological footprint, which measures how many resources we’re using to get to good lives. The happiness indicator—how happy they are—is taken from Gallup surveys and the world poll.

The ecological footprint in some ways is the most controversial especially in trying to measure the pressure we put upon the planet. It’s complex to measure everything a consumer uses and touches in their lives and how much of the planet’s resources that uses, but it definitely differentiates in realistic ways between nations.



Costa Rica is one of the happiest countries, according to the HPI. Why?

In terms of straight happiness, Costa Rica did come out on top in the world Gallup poll. The whole of Latin America does better than you might expect, given the economic inequalities there, the poverty, etc. Why does it do better? They have much stronger social networks, much more vibrancy to life and communities that really work well. Family is structurally stronger there, too.

People in that region generally are very vibrant despite difficult circumstances, such as rising crime levels and rising inequality. People in Costa Rica actually live longer than the people in the U.S., a startling fact itself. It also uses a third or a quarter of the resources of what Western European and North American countries do.

How do companies foster happiness and wellbeing?

They do it very explicitly. At Zappos, founder Tony Hsieh built the business model around it. He believed that to create happy customers you had to create happy employees. Zappos has been a very value-based organization for a long time. New organizations, less than 10 to 15 years old, often take this approach from the beginning.

It's more difficult to turn around organizations with a different focus. How do you prove to these organizations that they would become better if they took a different approach? CEOs who are open to learning a new way to do things find it a very interesting business model to adopt. There's so much unfulfilled human potential within organizations, and you're unlikely to release that potential with a command and control approach.

Is there a "Happy Company index" companies can use to make this business case?

That's the focus of our new business, Happiness Works, which addresses how you create positive change. We're designing tools that are measurement tools, but they lean into how to create positive change. They give the whole organization a score, as well as each team and individual. It then breaks those scores into the component parts so they can think about what drivers of happiness are working or not working for them.

What are the drivers of happiness?

For individuals there are five of them, what we call the five ways to wellbeing, which were developed by the New Economics Foundation from evidence gathered in the U.K. government's Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing. They're a set of evidence-based actions which promote people's wellbeing: connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give. They're simple things individuals can do in their everyday lives.

Then there's the organizational system and how well it's managed, the physical environment and culture of the organization, what the organization is doing in a larger sense. Those are big things. Then there's what people do at work, where one could say the psycho/social needs start coming in. How much people can express themselves, how much they feel a sense of control, a sense of progressing, the strength of relationships. So being yourself, being autonomous, doing things you're good at and learning new things, getting on with people. Those are the four day-to-day things that translate into positive or negative experiences for people in the organization.


How much of a connection is there between wellbeing and innovation?

There's a lot of research, much of it from psychologist Barbra Fredrickson at the University of North Carolina, on the difference between the way people work if they're in a good mood or a bad mood. It's a huge body of work over 20 years, and I'm summarizing quickly, but basically she finds that people in good moods see the big picture much better. When you're in a bad mood you tend to narrow down to what's wrong. It's the only picture you see. But when you're in a good mood you can make connections and see things better, see relationships more in detail. You are more creative in that you will both be able to do more tasks, and do them better, in a certain amount of time.

There's this urban myth that creativity is a painful experience and great art is done by people who are tortured. There obviously are great artists that are tortured, but what's also true is that they weren't painting or creating when they were depressed. They were painting after those experiences. In a normal organization with normal populations, people in good moods are much more creative than people in bad moods.

Organizations need individually creative people but they also need systems that will support turning creativity into useful innovation. It's not enough to just make people happier, you also have to be open to challenges to the established way of doing things. By adapting internal systems, you can help your people turn that creativity into something the organization can profit from.


How can the physical environment promote happiness and wellbeing?

There are a lot of competing theories about how the physical environment of the workplace affects performance and morale. I would suggest that organizations create spaces that not only support people's direct work needs but also their happiness. So design for "collisions" where people bump into each other, create quiet spaces for reflection time, outdoor tracks for exercise and walking meetings as well as community spaces for gatherings and learning together. I think there is much opportunity to be both useful and playful with office design. 


“There’s this urban myth that creativity is a painful experience and great art is done by people who are tortured.”

Understanding the HAPPY PLANET INDEX

The HPI measures the extent to which countries deliver long, happy, sustainable lives for the people that live in them, by using data on life expectancy, experienced wellbeing and ecological footprint for 151 different countries.



=

experienced wellbeing 

 life expectancy

ecological footprint

Experienced wellbeing is a number from 0 to 10, based on responses from each country. Life expectancy is in years. Ecological footprint (the amount of land required to sustain a country's per-capita consumption patterns) is measured in global hectares.

[Learn more at www.happyplanetindex.org](http://www.happyplanetindex.org)



WORK PLACES THAT BOOST WELLBEING

Leading organizations know that improved employee wellbeing not only helps people to be healthier and lowers healthcare costs, it also helps them to be more productive, creative and innovative, and less likely to leave for a competitor. As businesses amp up their focus on wellbeing, many are seeking ways to understand if they are making progress toward their goals, and looking to other organizations for benchmarking, as well as inspiration.

“THE MOST IMPORTANT THING EXECUTIVES CAN DO IS SEND A VERY CLEAR MESSAGE TO THEIR EMPLOYEES THAT THEY CARE ABOUT EACH PERSON'S OVERALL WELLBEING”

Governments are starting to measure wellbeing, since it's viewed as proof of the success of public policy. The European Social Survey, for example, tracks social attitudes and behaviors across 30 countries. In recent years, countries on every continent, from Mexico to Chile, Japan, Bhutan and the United Kingdom, have begun studying or have adopted national measures of wellbeing.

Think tanks and statisticians have helped define the value of wellbeing by measuring the results of wellbeing efforts. One of the hottest is the Happy Planet Index, a global index of human wellbeing and environmental impact that's based on 10 years of research. "People who are happier at work are more productive—they are more engaged, more creative, have better concentration," says Nic Marks, who's spent more than

a decade studying the economics of wellbeing. (See page 54 for the 360 interview with Marks.)

As a corporate strategy, wellbeing efforts are most visible in work environments specifically designed to boost wellbeing. A starting point is to put wellbeing in an organizational context.

The value of wellbeing

Workplace wellbeing has transcended its old description as simple ergonomics: how your chair fits, proper keyboard adjustment, etc. As work has become more mobile and collaboration-based, and pressures us to use practically every waking moment working, the Steelcase researchers define wellbeing as sustaining a healthy physical and mental state over time, in a supportive material and social environment. This holistic view embraces six important dimensions: being fully engaged at our work, authenticity in our business lives, a sense of optimism, being connected with others, physical and intellectual vitality, and a true sense of purpose at work.



At ING in Brussels no one has an assigned workstation. Employees can choose to work at an array of workspaces, depending on the type of work they need to do.

Business leaders are learning how this holistic view of wellbeing contributes toward organizational success, thanks to researchers such as Gallup's Tom Rath and Jim Harter, Ph.D. They have measured the differences between a thriving life (fully realized factors of wellbeing) and one spent suffering (the lowest wellbeing scores) and their impact on the bottom line.

People with thriving wellbeing have 41% lower health-related costs compared with those who are struggling (at the midpoint). They also have a 35% lower turnover rate.

In bottom line terms, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures the average sick day costs a company about \$348 in lost productivity. Even adjusting for sick time on non-work days and the work that may get done on sick days, the cost is still around \$200 per sick day. People with higher levels of wellbeing get sick less often, so they cost the company less.

Among the most "suffering" employees, those with lowest wellbeing scores, the cost of lost productivity from sick days is \$28,800 per year. For those at the midpoint, or "struggling," the annual cost is \$6,618. But for "thriving" employees, with the highest levels of wellbeing, the cost of lost productivity is just \$840 a year.

How companies support employee wellbeing varies. In a recent study by Steelcase and CoreNet Global, at least two-thirds of respondents across industries say their company offers information, coaching and/or services on work/life balance, physical activity, stress management, nutrition and ergonomics. Many companies provide incentives to employees to use the programs, including gifts and recognition, lower insurance rates, time off from work and other measures.

"The most important thing executives can do is send a very clear message to their employees that they care about each person's overall wellbeing and that they want to be a part of helping it improve over time," says Rath.

More and more company leaders are considering the influence of the workplace and how it can be a major influence on employee wellbeing—and how it can boost both wellbeing and the bottom line.

CHINA: WELLBEING LEADER?

Each day at noon a bell rings to announce lunch, like a factory buzzer notes the shift change. But when this bell sounds at the headquarters of Tencent, one of the largest internet companies in the world it doesn't signal the typical office worker's race to get food, eat and get back to work, but a full two-hour break for lunch, rest, and even an afternoon nap for these workers in Shenzhen, China.

"Employees can choose to sleep, go out for a walk, read the news, work at their desk, whatever they want. Some employees bring in cots and gather in a corner of the office for a nap. Many of them say if they don't get their nap they feel tired later in the day and less productive," says Wenli Wang, one of Steelcase's WorkSpace Futures researchers in China.

It's just one way Tencent is emphasizing employee wellbeing, an increasingly important organizational strategy in China. "Wellbeing is trending here because of issues with air pollution, traffic and other problems. People are very aware of their environment, the quality of their space. Young professionals are choosing to leave larger cities for smaller ones with a better quality of life, so companies are using wellbeing strategies as a way to attract and keep their employees," says Wang.

Afternoon siestas are a cultural tradition in places such as Spain and Latin America, "but it's not the workplace phenomenon as it is here in China," says Wang. She's observed the practice in many Chinese companies; multinationals tend to follow the corporation's home country workstyles. At technology giant Lenovo, office workers in the Beijing headquarters hear music played every three hours as a reminder to get up and move around. Small companies often get the entire staff outside for exercise as a way to boost both team spirit and wellbeing.

Tencent's headquarters in Shenzhen use the prevailing winds to ventilate the atria, feature a glass facade to bathe the interior with natural light, and include basketball courts and swimming pools for employees.

It's a very tight market for skilled knowledge workers, says Wang. "Engineers, product developers, financial professionals and other skilled, experienced professionals who know how to innovate are in short supply. Companies are using wellbeing as a way to recruit and keep them."



All employees work in the open plan and have access to natural light at Quadrangle Architects, Toronto. A variety of enclosed spaces (both small and large) are available when teams need to meet or individuals need a more private space to work.

More Choices

The most obvious differentiator of a workplace designed for wellbeing: providing a range of different spaces to support the different kinds of work performed in the course of the day. A mix of open and enclosed areas, "I" spaces and "We" spaces, access to natural light and colleagues combine to give people choices and empower them to find the spaces and tools appropriate to the work at hand, which in turn lowers stress levels and increases vitality and connectedness with others.

Research supports this approach. One study by Ohio State University tracked stress levels of white collar workers who split into two groups: some were randomly assigned to an old office building with low ceilings and grumbling air conditioners, while the rest worked in a newly renovated office with skylights and an open office layout. Over a period of 17 months, the people working in the older building showed more stress, even when they weren't at work. The difference was enough to be a potential risk factor for heart disease.

A good example of an office with a palette of available workspaces: the new offices of Quadrangle Architects Ltd, Toronto, Ontario. The first impression on entering their 16,000 square-foot floor in a downtown highrise is one of light: an open office with few interior walls or columns, windows all around and a large central atrium. Natural light is augmented by a lighting system that senses motion and daylight levels, then adjusts lighting accordingly to provide high-quality light while conserving energy. Everyone has access to daylight and colleagues since all staff, from principals to interns, work in the open plan. A variety of enclosed spaces for small and large groups is available around the office as well.

Redefining privacy

At Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (BIPI), Ridgefield Conn., executives received encouragement from their corporate headquarters in Germany to open up the office and provide workspace options. “Our corporate CFO from Germany was visiting and he pointed to a floor full of cubicles with 72-inch high panels,” says John Hardiman, executive director, U.S. regional infrastructure, engineering and site services for BIPI. “He said, ‘I don’t get this. Why do we put people in these boxes? You’re going to change that, right?’”

“He wanted an energized environment, to see people talking to one another, not those high, dark panels. That was one of the guiding principles that we embraced when we moved forward with the project,” says Hardiman.

The new BIPI work environment includes individual and shared open workspaces. Now people can choose from benching workstations, soft seating areas, lounges, pantries, focus rooms and group workspaces. This strategy not only fosters essential collaboration but also nurtures connections to others, an important contributor to psychological

wellbeing: A global study by Gallup showed that six hours of social interaction each day increases wellbeing and minimizes stress.

The new BIPI workplace was also influenced by comments from new hires. “We had feedback that the workplace lent itself to a more individual

approach because you were in your own little box, and we didn’t really provide any kind of space, other than the cafeteria, where collaboration was encouraged. Younger people we’re recruiting are used to working around tables and just chatting to each other as they work. Being put in a box they found particularly confining.”

Privacy remains important in the workplace for confidential discussions, quiet phone calls and the times when we just need to focus quietly, alone. A palette of open and private spaces solves for people’s need for both collaboration and concentration, with individual users making their choices as required by the work at hand.



The new work environment at Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals features benching workstations, soft seating areas, lounges, pantries, focus rooms and larger group spaces, fostering essential collaboration and nurturing connections to others.

Inspired by the college campus

For workers at the new headquarters for Repsol, in Madrid, Spain, the oil and gas company’s four buildings surround a central courtyard for group or individual work, dining, relaxation and reflection.

Architect Rafael de La-Hoz says it’s a “horizontal headquarters concept” that predates university campuses, “from families with Roman courtyards to medieval cloisters. People prefer to walk rather than climb. It’s much nicer to stroll through a garden than to climb the stairs.” Green areas occupy fully one-third of the total surface area at the headquarters.

On the outside of the four-story buildings, a metal frame structure and glazed facades create light and airy interior workspace. “We need this luminosity, because it is happiness and life,” says La-Hoz.

Nearly half of Repsol’s workspaces are open plan (furniture is limited in height to 1.2 meters) and located next to facades. Employees enjoy outside views and plenty of natural light. Closed offices and conference rooms are located in the

inner areas of each floor. Informal spaces and corridors make up nearly a quarter of interior spaces, including two cafeterias, open conference areas and media:scape collaboration settings. Repsol extended its wide open spaces

strategy to accessibility: It’s easy to make a 360-degree circuit of the buildings without passing through a single door.

This work environment is designed “to bring people together,” says de La-Hoz. It provides variety in both work postures and sensory stimulation, contributes to employees’ physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing.

"THIS WORK ENVIRONMENT IS DESIGNED TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER."



Repsol's new corporate headquarters campus in Madrid, Spain features a central courtyard where employees can work, dine, relax and reflect.

Better work/life balance begins in the workplace

Moving to a new location complicates life for employees. Commuting to the new site, traffic, travel time, access to important services (Where’s the dry cleaner around here?) all affect work/life balance and overall wellbeing.

It’s the company’s job to help employees maintain an equilibrium, says Robert De Colfmaker, facilities manager at insurance company ING Belgium. “We must go beyond the basics, making sure the workplace is ergonomically responsible, of course. But we also respond to other employee needs because you spend a large chunk of your life at the office and it that has a big impact on your work/life balance.”

Since ING planned to move from the capital, Brussels, to the suburbs, workers’ commutes would be affected. “We studied every employee’s to get to work—subway, car, bus, etc., and how long it took. Then we extrapolated those figures to the new location. For those arriving by train or bus, we provide shuttles in the morning and afternoon between the station and the office. We offer folding bikes and places for employees to store them at the office.”

Control over where and how you work allows people to better manage their time and reduces stress. At ING, no one has an assigned workspace, including the CEO, so employees choose each day from an array of workspaces based on the activity they have planned. There are open and enclosed meeting spaces, seated and stand-up meeting spaces both formal and informal, as well as media:scape collaboration spaces for connecting with distributed workers. Various workstations are available for focused individual work, and there’s also a library, dedicated to working in silence. Control over where and how they work helps people manage their time and responsibilities: big factors in work/life balance.

It’s more than an altruistic pursuit. “Ultimately, our approach will be a decisive factor in attracting future staff. It’s a competitive marketplace for talent, and people want to work for us precisely because of that balance and our corporate culture,” says De Colfmaker.

Measuring benefits of wellbeing

How much does a wellbeing-focused workplace contribute to company performance? Leaders at each company described here are convinced the workplace is producing positive results for their organization.

Repsol's first general survey, conducted less than four months after move-in, gave the new work environment a score of 7.6, on a scale of one to ten.

At BIPI, a post-occupancy survey six months after move-in showed an increase in productivity of 15-20%. "Productivity is difficult to measure, but we have measurements of perceived productivity, which is the end user's feeling that they are getting more work done in the same amount of time," says Michael Carneglia, associate director, engineering and site services.

"A LARGE CHUNK OF YOUR LIFE IS AT THE OFFICE AND IT HAS A BIG IMPACT ON YOUR WORK/LIFE BALANCE."

"When we show new recruits our new offices, let them know how we work here, it helps us get over that last hurdle to get them to come to work for us," says ING's De Colfmaker.

Quadrangle Architects conducted a survey six months after move-in that showed positive responses from the majority of employees. For example, 83% are satisfied with the new workplace, and 95% say it enables them to be productive and to make effective and informed decisions. "We've seen a significant increase in productivity since we moved in," says Susan Ruptash, principal.

There's no question that improved employee wellbeing boosts productivity and creativity, reduces stress and cuts healthcare costs, and helps connect people to their colleagues and the organization. The only question is, how much does it cost a company that isn't working to increase employee wellbeing? ●



ING's new facility features a library where people can find a quiet place to work as well as meeting spaces in the open plan that enable connection and collaboration.



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Sharing Desks, Sharing Germs

We've all been there, and it's sickening—sitting in an airplane, theater or meeting next to someone who is coughing and sneezing. Germs are a fact of life, but most of us would rather avoid close contact with people who are ill. It's much easier to stay away from sick people, however, than to stay away from their germs.

37%
of the workforce
is expected to be
mobile by 2015

workers' hands come
in contact with
10
million
bacteria a day

Desktops are among the worst germ traps. Crumbs that accumulate on desks are a perfect environment for bacteria and fungi to thrive

80%
of infections can be
transmitted by touch

25,000
germs per square inch
on cell phones

“The transition from assigned ‘I spaces’ to shared ‘we spaces’ globally has created opportunity for the intelligent, strategic use of antimicrobials in support of wellbeing.”

Germs are loiterers. They can live and thrive on all kinds of surfaces, including—and especially—desks in the workplace. Desktops are among the worst germ traps, says University of Arizona germ guru Dr. Charles Gerba. According to his research, office workers’ hands come in contact with 10 million bacteria a day. Crumbs that accumulate on desks are a perfect environment for bacteria and fungi to thrive, agrees Dr. Ron Cutler, a microbiologist at Queen Mary University of London.

This is especially concerning because more people than ever report that they go to work despite being sick—up to 72%, according to a recent Lancaster University/Elise Insurance study—and 80% of infections can be transmitted by touch, states the WebMD website.

Of course, not all bacteria are harmful. In fact, most aren’t. Humans host about 100 trillion species every day, and many are essential for keeping us alive and healthy. Scientists at places such as the BioFrontiers Institute at the University of Colorado in Boulder are now researching human-associated microbiota in depth, hoping to learn more about their role in human health.

At the same time, some bacteria are known to be pathogens that produce illness. It’s also a fact that, as knowledge work becomes more collaborative and mobile, many office environments are evolving to become mostly shared “we” spaces versus individually assigned work settings. Because more workers than ever are moving through shared workstations, research suggests an increasing need to reduce harmful germs.

By 2015, 37.2% of the workforce is expected to be mobile, according to the International Data Corporation. “When we’re sharing desks, we’re sharing germs,” says Michael Taylor, a Steelcase WorkSpace Futures researcher who has been investigating germs in shared environments during the past several years. “While hand washing and surface cleanings are valid approaches to minimizing germs in the workplace, we also know that typically these actions and behaviors don’t happen with enough frequency to be effective. As a result, in shared spaces where people come and go—such as shared workspaces for mobile workers, classrooms, waiting rooms and cafés—we are leaving our mark behind in the form of germs and bacteria.”

Observations as well as research data confirm this unpleasant reality, Taylor adds. For example, he cites a 2012 study of Americans’ hand-washing habits conducted by KRC Research, which revealed that 39% don’t wash their hands after sneezing, coughing or blowing their noses.

The most common way for germs and infections to spread is person-to-person—touching hands, sneezing, coughing, etc. Germs can also be spread by indirect contact—touching an object where germs can linger. “When you touch a doorknob handled by someone ill with the flu or a cold, for example, you can pick up the germs he or she left behind. If you then touch your eyes, mouth or nose before washing your hands, you may become infected,” warns the Mayo Clinic website.

As a result of these realities, antimicrobial agents—i.e., technologies that either kill or slow the growth of microbes—are gaining relevance in the workplace as an option to reduce germs on frequently touched surfaces.

Antimicrobials at work

A range of antimicrobial technologies is available in a variety of consumable and durable products today, from household cleaners and toothpaste to clothing and toys. Antimicrobials are generally thought of as chemicals, but they can include naturally derived compounds and surface textures, as well. They affect microorganisms by inhibiting or altering cell activities, such as protein synthesis and cell membrane functions.

As research accelerates, knowledge on antimicrobials and their impacts is rapidly expanding and changing. Among the array of antimicrobial options, several have potential for work environments.

Metal and metal ions. Silver and copper have a long history as antimicrobials, as evidenced by Greek, Egyptian and Roman accounts as far back as 2200 BC. Both metals were used to store and treat drinking water, and also made into antiseptic salve. The antimicrobial action for both elements is in the ionic form and can act in multiple ways. Widely embraced as a natural and effective antimicrobial, silver is typically applied by adding silver ions, which incorporate chemical additives, to a carrier material, such as clay, which is in turn added to the base material. Copper is used in both the raw metallic form and as oxides added to base materials.

Botanical-based extracts. Many essential oils found in plants possess some level of antimicrobial action. Studies have shown that they attack microbes by making the cell membranes permeable. Bay, cinnamon, clove and thyme have been identified as the most potent types. The use of extracts in consumable products such as cleaners and wipes is well established, and the transition to durable material such as plastics is underway.

“Antimicrobials show promise as another way to proactively create health-conscious work environments.”

Surface topography. Certain surface topographies have been borrowed from nature as nonchemical antimicrobials. One of particular interest is Sharklet®, a surface comprised of millions of microscopic diamonds arranged into a distinct texture based on natural shark skin. Instead of killing microbes, the surface creates an inhospitable environment that inhibits their colonization.

Important considerations

The use of antimicrobials can be challenging from a materials chemistry standpoint. That’s why it’s important to make choices about when, how and where to use antimicrobials, considering these factors:

Application. Selecting and applying an antimicrobial is a balancing act between the base materials, how they are processed and formed, the desired effectiveness and durability of the antimicrobial, and the ultimate product performance. Some technologies are added into the base material, others are applied as post-production sprays or coatings. These application methods, in turn, present lifecycle choices around managing the materials during application, in use and at end-of-life.

Amount. It’s easy to think that the objective of using an antimicrobial is to obliterate everything on a surface. Indiscriminate mass elimination of microbes, however, is unnecessary and even potentially harmful. As Dr. Michael Schmidt, professor and vice chairman of microbiology and immunology at Medical University of South Carolina, explains, the goal of deploying antimicrobial materials into the built environment is to lower the bio-load to a level at which the body can fight it off on its own.

Probability of touch. Some parts of workplace products are touched more frequently than others and this, in turn, creates higher bio-loads, which can increase the possibility of coming in contact with harmful germs. Applying antimicrobials only to the areas of the product that are touched most frequently—versus coating an entire product—is a balanced approach.

Fact-based information. Antimicrobials are regulated by governmental organizations around the world. While different countries have different standards, most require that antimicrobials be registered and control the type of claims that can be made for a specific technology and/or application. Pro and con attitudes toward antimicrobials can be extreme and misperceptions about user behaviors abound, so it’s important to rely on fact-based information versus assumptions or hype when making decisions about their use.

Exploring solutions

Based on insights into the changing nature of work, Steelcase has been exploring antimicrobials for furniture products as an option for employers who want to take extra steps to reduce germs in the workplace. “By reducing germs on surfaces, antimicrobials can create more health-conscious environments,” notes Steve Sanders, Steelcase general manager of the furniture group.

The goal, says Sanders, is to develop a suite of antimicrobial technologies that are safe and effective, providing more options for customers. A new desking system, Ology, will be the first Steelcase product that offers customers the option of antimicrobial surface components. Available in Europe in 2014, the product line will include an antimicrobial option for several frequently-touched surface

components: the worksurface edge and desk pad, height-adjustment controls, and power and data access points. Steelcase has partnered with a leading innovator in antimicrobials, NanoBioMatters, to develop use of its BactiBlock® antimicrobial technology for Ology. The active ingredient is ionic silver. BactiBlock is a molded-in antimicrobial.

To further address user needs, collaboration is also underway with CleanWell, a botanical-based disinfectant company, and Sharklet Technologies, a biotechnology company exploring surface technologies, including Sharklet. The collaboration with Sharklet Technologies is industry-exclusive.

Proactive prevention

With more workers spending more time in the workplace and moving about throughout the workday, reducing germs is a growing concern. Antimicrobials show promise as another way to proactively create health-conscious work environments in support of improved worker wellbeing. Although antimicrobial materials should not replace or decrease regular cleaning routines or good hygiene practices (e.g. hand washing, coughing into elbows, staying home when sick), they can add another level of potential benefit by reducing germs in the workplace. ●



Steelcase’s new Ology desking system will be the first Steelcase product that offers customers antimicrobial surface components on frequently-touched surfaces. BactiBlock® antimicrobial technology can be applied to: power and data points, worksurface edge and desk pads and intuitive interface height-adjustment controls.

PIVOT POINT:
SUSTAINABILITY
GOES SOCIAL



Angela Nahikian
Director, Global Environmental
Sustainability, Steelcase Inc.

At its heart, sustainability is about people. It's about creating and supporting the economic, environmental and social conditions that allow people and communities to reach their full potential. It's about long-term wellbeing in its purest sense. The inherent connection—and some would say overlap—of sustainability and wellbeing is evident, as is the red thread that runs through both concepts: humans.

The human thread dates back to the landmark 1987 Brundtland Report, which defined sustainability as that which meets the needs of future and current generations within the limits of the planet. This definition presents two lenses—satisfying human needs and respecting environmental limits. So far, the planetary limitations lens has attracted more attention, and significant progress has been made. Now the emphasis is shifting to a different conversation, one that's about meeting human needs and creating a culture of wellbeing. Social sustainability is emerging as the new area of action.

Companies worldwide are embracing this more holistic approach to sustainability, making it an inseparable core objective and aspiration of their enterprise. These progressive thinkers understand that human wellbeing without environmental wellbeing is a crisis, environmental wellbeing without human wellbeing is a non-starter, and economic wellbeing, once considered the only measure of achievement, is now considered the means to reach a more sustainable future.

These forward-thinking organizations realize that when economic, environmental and social sustainability intersect, it's easier to develop new business models, create and execute new internal and external strategies, introduce innovative products and dream up better ideas that contribute to solving the pressing needs of today and the future.

THE EMPHASIS
IN SUSTAINABILITY
IS SHIFTING.
NOW IT'S ABOUT
MEETING HUMAN
NEEDS AND
CREATING A
CULTURE
OF WELLBEING.

AS BIG DATA MATURES, IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO MORE CLOSELY LINK SPECIFIC WELLBEING ACTIONS TO DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT.

During this transition, with this expanded aperture, businesses must take a different tack with social sustainability than with previous environmental strategies. It's time to pivot from minimizing damage to maximizing potential, from doing less harm to seeking more positive impacts. This isn't about preservation—it's about expansion of human promise. It's time to move from a position of risk management to a position of human development.

Businesses have been reluctant to tackle the issue of wellbeing. Skeptics say it's hard to measure and define, and feels too soft for a ROI-based business climate. In an age of privacy concerns, employees feel it may infringe on their personal privacy, and critics point to lingering questions about the business case. Others have made substantial investments in physical wellbeing, such as gym memberships for employees, and consider the problem solved. But the problems persist: Diabetes and obesity are at epidemic proportions, health care costs continue to rise unabated, and we now spend more time working than anything else, including sleeping. With human capital at a premium, isn't it time for businesses to adopt a new mindset?

In today's business climate, and what some are calling a conspicuous absence of wellbeing in the workplace, the economics of wellbeing are finding high-profile champions. Recently, a global coalition of business leaders including Virgin's Sir Richard Branson, Unilever's Paul Polman, India's Ratan Tata and Nobel Prize-winning banker Muhammad Yunus prevailed on the world's companies to "become a primary driver of holistic wellbeing, adding social value through evolving business models, employee welfare, health, citizen engagement and human rights."

Wellbeing is a cultural issue—it cuts across all departments, HR strategies, environments and processes. It's a symbiotic ecosystem within organizations. For progressive companies, wellbeing is now a strategic imperative and competitive differentiator—just as environmental sustainability has become. Our research has shown that a culture of wellbeing:

- Fosters innovation
- Increases productivity
- Encourages creativity
- Sparks collaboration
- Creates and spreads optimism
- Enhances mindfulness
- Cultivates personal authenticity
- Supports physical vigor
- Builds a culture of shared meaning and beliefs
- Cements the connection between work and creating lasting change in the greater world

These are all highly desirable results, but how does one measure wellbeing? Across the globe, corporations, academics and governments are wrestling with the metrics. Just as there was a debate years ago about how to measure the environmental impact of products and actions, the wellbeing measurement debate is being defined now. Some of the most interesting work is being done in the United Kingdom, where the government is creating national wellbeing accounts and conducting biennial studies to gauge national wellbeing. The New Economy Foundation sponsors the Happy Planet Index, a snapshot at the happiest and least happy places on earth (see pg. 57 for more information about the Happy Planet Index). Gallup continues its global efforts to track trends in wellbeing, and several countries, including France, are considering replacing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measures with more holistic wellbeing measures to evaluate their national success.

In the future, as big data matures, it may be possible to more closely link specific wellbeing actions to direct economic impact, but as the father of Total Quality Management, W. Edwards Deming, once said, "Only three percent of what's important can be measured."

In the meantime, the confluence of economic, environmental and social sustainability is beginning to make a mark on progressive businesses and the marketplace. The connection between sustainability and wellbeing is more and more evident, and is redefining success in the decades to come. "The sustainable business of the future, the future bottom line, the future of leadership and future incentives will all be defined by their ability to ecologically and efficiently satisfy our wellbeing needs," stated one visionary author. This is nothing short of an opportunity to reinvent the ways we do business, the ways we act and perform as people, and the ways we interact with the environment. And it all starts with us—as humans—seeking to unlock our promise to solve the entrenched problems we collectively share and create a more sustainable future. ●

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF WELLBEING

Our learning continues as we branch out with wellbeing workshops in multiple North American locations. Together with members of the architectural and design community, business decision-makers, academics and thought leaders, we'll explore the future of wellbeing at work. In each half-day session, we'll collaborate, create and dream up powerful visions for a future that better supports employee physical, social and cognitive wellbeing. Teams will cross-pollinate ideas, examine trends and ultimately create a scenario that represents their vision for the future. These ideas and insights will be synthesized and shared throughout the company so we can structure our future vision with clarity and aligned purpose.



EXAM ROOMS THAT EMPOWER PEOPLE

The quality of people's experiences and the human dimensions of healthcare are more important than ever before. As active participants versus passive patients, today's consumers of care are transforming past norms, driving rapid change across the industry as they seek a person-to-person approach and more control over decisions about their health and wellbeing.

Many are actively “shopping” for the best care by checking hospital and doctor ratings, asking more questions during appointments, expecting more information, and researching cost and treatment options. Others are being prompted by their doctors to take on more accountability for their health through meaningful lifestyle changes that address often-preventable diseases such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension.

As new tools, programs and approaches rapidly evolve, healthcare organizations are grappling with how to incorporate them successfully. At the same time, they shouldn’t overlook an asset that’s highly leverageable and pivotal to success: their spaces.

“When thoughtfully designed and equipped around the needs of patients as well as staff, spaces can help health care organizations manage costs and drive revenue, while improving patient outcomes and increasing their satisfaction,” says Bob Crain, Steelcase vice president of strategic markets, which includes the Nurture healthcare group.

OVERDUE FOR CHANGE

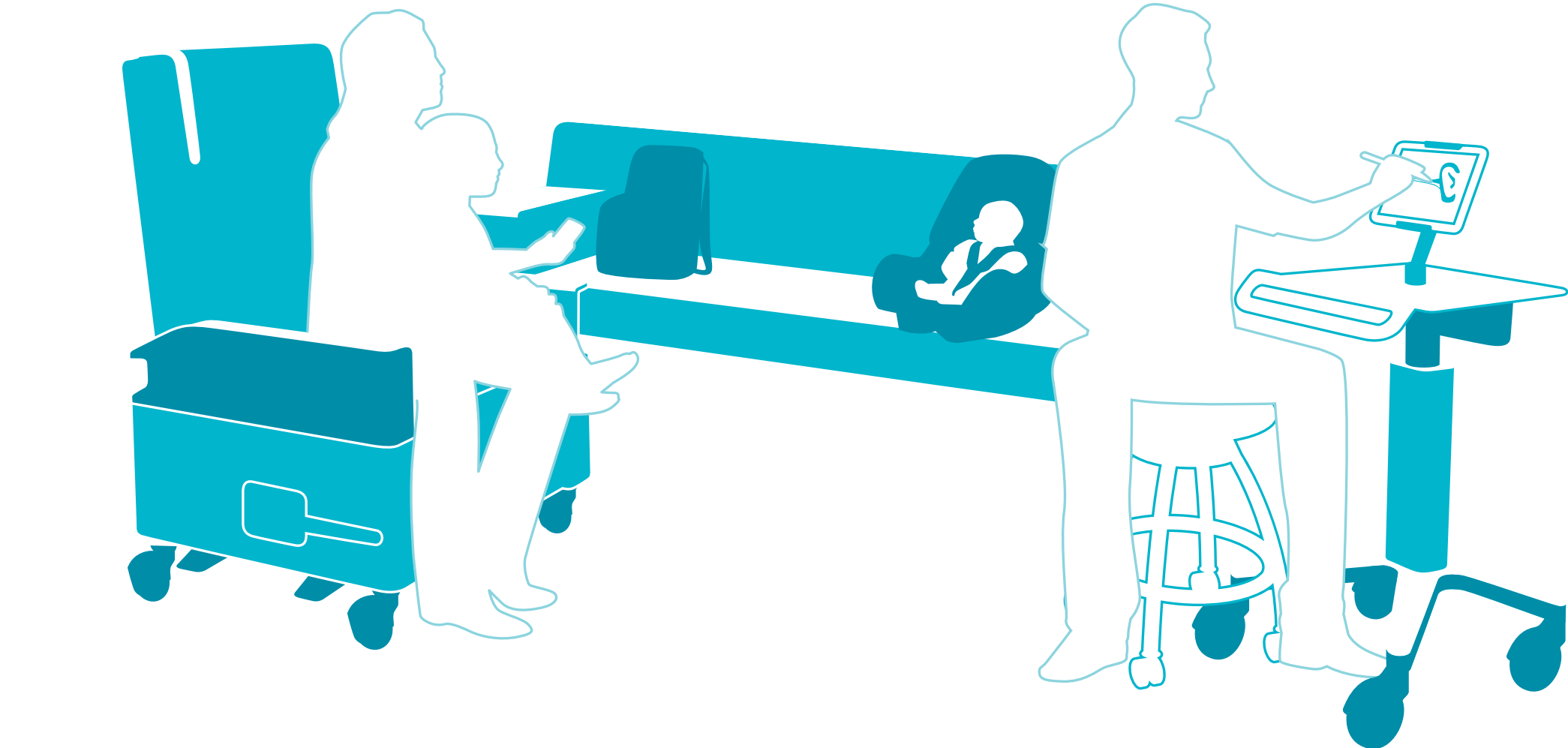
As patient engagement becomes the new clinical paradigm, exam rooms are critically overdue for a makeover. Yesterday’s exam rooms may have sufficed when receiving care was mostly a passive experience, but reimagining them to support today’s user needs can reap tremendous benefits.

“For most people, the exam room is at the center of the healthcare experience,” says Crain. “It’s where the clinical and personal aspects of healthcare closely intersect.”

Unfortunately, however, traditional exam rooms are woefully inadequate to support the stepped-up teaching and learning that are essential for people’s engagement in their health. This is among the significant findings of Nurture researchers who have conducted more than 15,000 hours of observations and inquiry through 18 studies to understand the how healthcare spaces are actually used and to identify ways they can be improved.

The Nurture researchers observed that most exam rooms are intimidating environments that don’t encourage patients to interact with information. Exam tables put patients at a different height than the healthcare provider, making sharing information awkward and impersonal. If a computer is in the room, sightlines to the information on it are typically limited to healthcare providers.

What’s more, fixed, bulky furniture makes most exam rooms crowded. They aren’t designed to accommodate family or other support persons who are often important partners in attaining optimal health and wellbeing. There’s no private place to undress, inadequate storage for belongings, and little to do but wait or read a random magazine before the healthcare provider enters the room.



ANTICIPATING PEOPLE’S NEEDS

“We are finding that exam rooms today are about much more than exams. They need to be equipped for teaching and learning about health status, conditions, treatments and healthy lifestyles,” says Hyun Yoo, a Nurture senior designer. “This means leveraging multiple ways of connecting people to information. It also means designing exam rooms so they accommodate more people than just the healthcare provider and patient. Having family or loved ones in the exam room, physically or virtually, helps to ensure that important information is heard, understood and retained. This increases the chances for engagement and good outcomes.”

Creating a palette of place—within the exam room or in an adjoining room—to support the different activities that occur during exam and consultation assures

that meaningful conversations can take place and new and emerging technologies can be used to heighten understanding.

For healthcare providers, it’s important that exam rooms are efficient, well-equipped spaces that streamline work processes. Easy mobility can be a time-saver. And with smart devices, apps and Web-based information among the new tools healthcare providers use for exams, it’s important that technology devices stay in reach and in sight for everyone in the exam room.

“When the elements of place, technology and people are holistically considered in exam rooms, the result can be more engaging, connected care,” says Yoo.

As part of a strategic framework, exam rooms are essential tools for supporting the transition to consumer engagement in healthcare. When thoughtfully designed around user needs and furnished with innovative products, exam rooms can be efficient and flexible work environments for healthcare providers. They can also be high-functioning, supportive spaces where patients can focus on the important topic of their health and wellbeing.

CREATED FOR BETTER EXAM EXPERIENCES

Research-based insights into people’s wants and needs in exam rooms inspired development of the Nurture Empath™ recliner, an alternative to exam tables that puts everyone on the same level and makes it easier to transition from one procedure to the next.

Whether it’s an exam room in a doctor’s office, an urgent care center, a surgery center or the emergency room, Empath is an empowering alternative to an exam table.

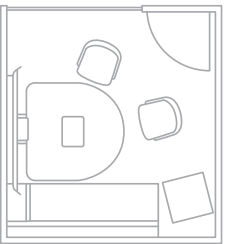
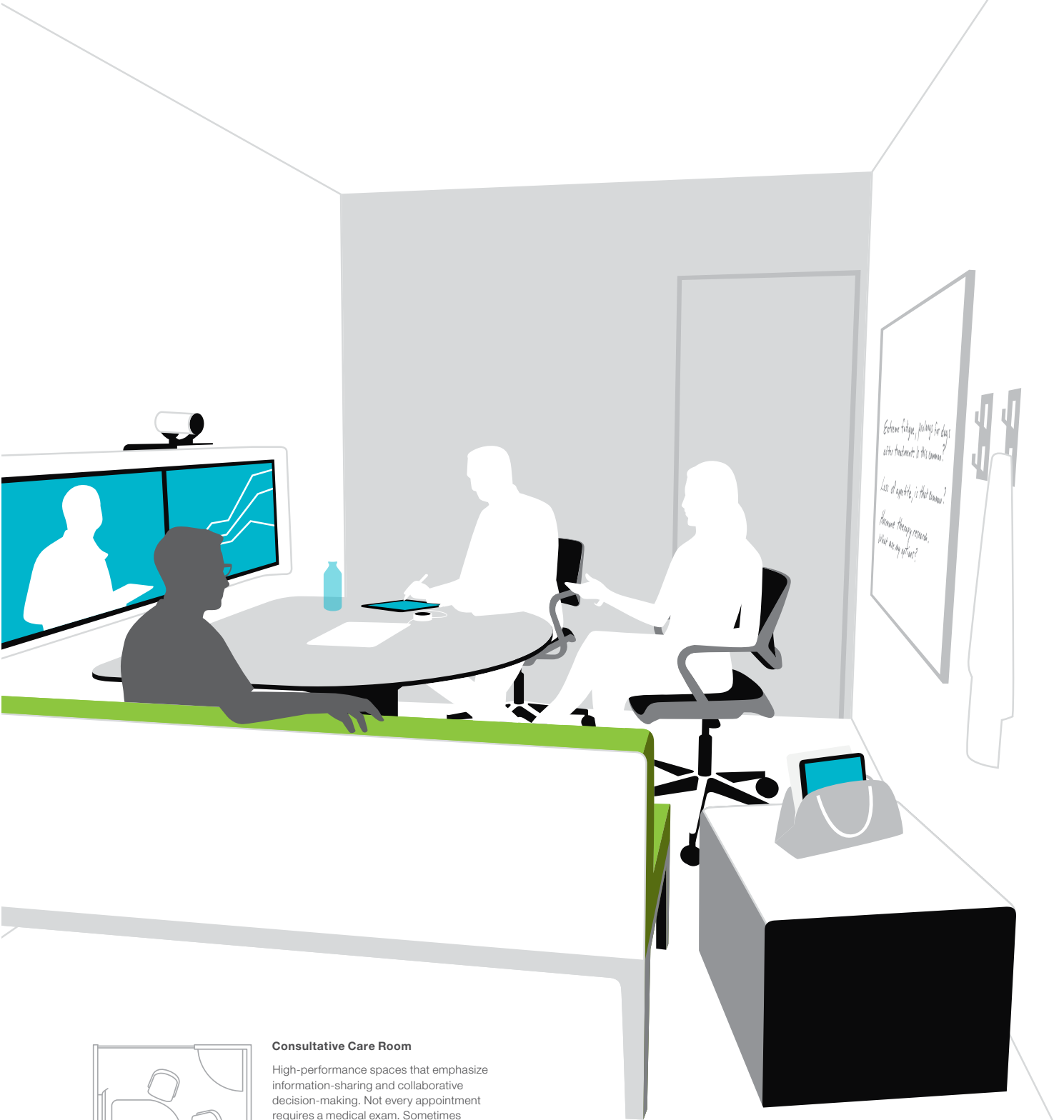
Empath is also well suited to quick care spaces for primary care patients who have simple, straightforward care needs that don’t require a fully outfitted exam room setting.

Whatever the setting, Empath makes it easy for people to connect to each other and to information, helping to humanize the healthcare experience. ●

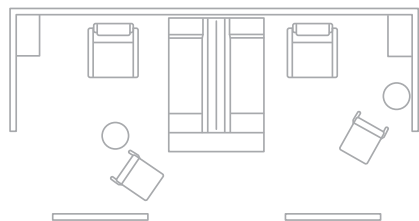
The following exam room settings have been informed by insights from our research to create exam rooms that empower people and allow for better patient engagement and improving patient outcomes.



Multi-Purpose Exam Room
This space encourage patients, families and clinicians to exercise the new roles and relationships of connected health-care experiences. Exams, consulting and administrative tasks—like scheduling a follow-up session—can all be done right here.

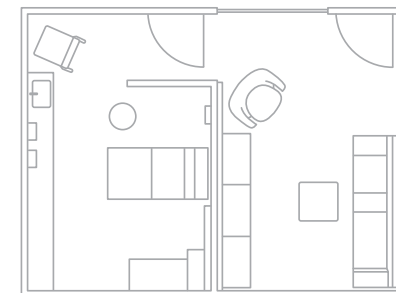


Consultative Care Room
High-performance spaces that emphasize information-sharing and collaborative decision-making. Not every appointment requires a medical exam. Sometimes scheduled time is spent reviewing x-rays, test results, medical data and treatment options.



Quick Care Space

These compact, semi-private exam spaces are a convenient, cost-saving option for primary-care patients who have simple, straightforward needs. Minimal clinical equipment is needed to perform the basic exams that take place here, and patients value the simplicity, ease and comfort.



The Care Suite

Especially for patients with health issues, having a two-room care suite to handle the medical exam and a consultation optimizes the appointment, offering support for examination and consultation, teaching and learning, with each activity taking place in a space that's best equipped to support it.



REIMAGINED EXAMS: SMARTPHONE PHYSICALS

To show how space and technology can work together to improve healthcare experiences, Nurture partnered with Medgadget clinicians to provide Smartphone Physicals at three events: TEDMED 2013 in Washington, D.C., NeoCon 2013 in Chicago, and at the AARP Member Event in Atlanta.

THE TECHNOLOGY

Smartphone Physicals marry a smartphone, apps and accessories to perform non-intrusive physicals that include metrics for weight, blood pressure, oxygen saturation, lung function and other health indicators. In addition to showing how technology can make an exam more accurate, Smartphone Physicals engage patients so they are able to see what the clinician is seeing, says Johns Hopkins medical student and Medgadget editor Shiv Gaglani, a member of the clinical team.

THE EXAM SPACE

The Smartphone Physicals demonstrated how Nurture's research-based applications and products enhanced the clinical team's ability to perform the physicals and improved the experiences of people receiving the exams.

The environments featured Empath™ recliners instead of exam tables, Pocket™ mobile workspaces and Verge™ mobile stools for clinicians, and Regard™ seating with integrated power outlets for people who were waiting. The Smartphone Physical experience wouldn't have been as positive without these innovative products, reports Gaglani.

"This space resolved what can be an awkward process of collecting and inputting patient information into a seamless, engaging process, bringing patient, doctor and technology together."

THE EXPERIENCE

Overall, the Smartphone Physical environments demonstrated the value of supporting person-to-person consulting as an integral part of the exam process, reinforcing a key insight from Nurture research: When healthcare providers and patients view information together, they communicate better and learn more.

As one Smartphone Physical participant, Roz Cama of Cama Design, put it: "You almost don't feel like a patient. You're just having an intelligent conversation with a colleague about something very important—your health."

MADE FOR THE PATIENT. DESIGNED FOR THE CLINICIAN.



One in three clinicians is injured during bed-to-chair transfers. The **Empath® patient recliner** aspires to change that by making this process easier for both patient and clinician. Its patented design and unique performance is the result of over 2,000 hours of design research. Learn more at www.nurture.com/empath.

nurture
by Steelcase



BOLD STROKES ARE ONLY THE STARTING POINT

In workplaces designed for wellbeing, every detail counts. Architecture that connects us with nature and natural light, open offices that facilitate communication with colleagues and other overarching strategies provide the framework for our work environment, but it's in the details where a workplace becomes our work home.

Smaller-scale choices, such as how intuitive our workplace is to use, how well furniture adapts to a diverse workforce, the materials, colors and even the shape of chair cushions have dramatic effects on our wellbeing.

A workplace that nurtures our physical and emotional wellbeing is increasingly important in a world where technology keeps us constantly connected, always on the clock. Our time has become less our own and harder to control. Less time to unplug and decompress means fewer ways to find separation in our professional and personal lives. Stressed out has become the new default work mode.

Investing so much of our lives in work, we look to the work environment to help us find a sense of balance and even solace, and here the details play a vital role.

“The spaces we work in and the products we touch and interact with can lift our mood, make us less stressed, more stimulated. They can inspire, intrigue and fascinate,” says Victoria Redshaw, managing director of Scarlett Opus, a trend forecasting firm based in the U.K. that advises companies around the world.

How form, color, materials and intuitive user interfaces influence wellbeing are a hot topic now, she says, “and set to get much hotter. It will become one of those ‘must’ considerations for interior designers, space planners and architects.” These design elements are directly related to three of the six dimensions for wellbeing identified by Steelcase: authenticity, mindfulness, and vitality.

THE SPACES WE WORK IN AND THE PRODUCTS WE TOUCH AND INTERACT WITH CAN LIFT OUR MOOD, MAKE US LESS STRESSED, MORE STIMULATED. THEY CAN INSPIRE, INTRIGUE AND FASCINATE.

Searching for Authenticity

Workplaces have such a strong affect on wellbeing because we interact with workspaces and tools so closely. Whether it’s a well-thumbed smartphone, favorite chair or quiet place to retreat, we form relationships with these products and places, and transpose these emotions onto the brand and the company responsible for them.

“These design elements help a space or a product resonate with a person. We get the sense that the company understands us, how we live, what we like and need and desire. Companies want to build that desire into the products at all levels, from the surface to the deep functionality,” says Redshaw.

For example, textures and materials can be antidotes to the hard, cold surfaces of the technology we deal with all day long. Real wood components and natural fabrics convey authenticity. They represent “familiar patterns and materials from nature that are reassuring to us. They give us a feeling of being connected and grounded and remind us that everything isn’t digital and virtual,” says Redshaw.

Authenticity also means being able to express ourselves honestly, to nurture relationships with others in positive interactions. A nearby private enclave allows us to have confidential discussions that build relationships, just as the comfort and contours of a side chair evoke a more residential feel and encourage colleagues to sit down and communicate face to face.

“Wellbeing is part of our job as designers, to use materials, color and textures to promote a happier, healthier environment. It’s important that spaces, from our very first impression, are inviting, even transforming,” says Kimberle Frost, a designer and vice president at Designtex, a Steelcase company providing textiles and wall coverings.

Places that Engage

We’re drawn to places based on emotional responses. A coffee shop with the great aromas, cozy tables and a nice vibe is an inviting place for chatting over espresso. But as a workspace, it disappoints. There’s too much noise, too little privacy and chairs are too hard for working comfortably. Collaboration spaces in many companies are intended to duplicate this coffee shop mystique, but similarly fail in the details.

“People spend a lot of time in these spaces working alone or collaborating, yet the furniture often has poor back support, a lack of privacy and little support for personal belongings. It’s hard to be fully engaged in work in these places,” says Constance Kocher, Steelcase marketing manager for the B-Free Lounge, a line of furniture for informal spaces and welcome areas.

The B-Free development team explored how people use soft seating areas and other spaces that support knowledge work. “The feeling of being relaxed, more casual, a place where you can be yourself, are all emotions connected to creativity and a sense of engagement in your work,” says Kocher.

We often want a measure of visual privacy but not to be separated from the rest of the office. Researchers call this being alone together: We share the space with others who know we’re working, yet we feel protected and have a sense of our own personal space.

“People look for connection, collaboration and concentration in these spaces. They want to work alone but still have a chance to connect with other people,” says Bryony Gaschy, Steelcase product designer.

In designing new B-Free components, Gaschy included a privacy screen in a semi-transparent fabric that allows just the right level of privacy. Seating and worksurfaces come in stand-up or seated styles. Even the shape of the lounge seat is telling: Sloping armrests and seat backs and a rounded corner seat are physically more comfortable, while the curved forms are more welcoming to the eye.



In Lagunitas™ lounge seating from the Coalesse brand, users can position the back cushions to support either an upright posture or a more relaxed, reclined posture. Working alone or with others, sitting at a table or reclined for a conversation, users are comfortably supported.

Our tools are always with us, of course, so the sight of a bag drop next to a chair and a bag stand alongside the worksurface, with power outlets for charging digital tools tell users these are places where we can settle, connect as little or as much as we want, and better engage with our work and coworkers.

Materials signal comfort, too. The B-Free screen fabric is warm and soft. Legs are available in wood (a sign of authenticity) and lend a more residential feel.

Soft, sensual materials provide a more engaging ambience to the workplace.

Vitality

A variety of workspaces encourages people to move throughout the business day, and physical movement is essential to vitality. In fact, workers need a palette of workspaces that allows work while standing, sitting or reclining.

For working in a variety of spaces, a simple, elegant solution is Free Stand, a lightweight table with a worksurface for a mobile device. It folds for storage, but it's also light enough that users can move it around to wherever it's needed.

"Many casual spaces lack functional support for working. With Free Stand you have a sturdy table that swivels 360 degrees and adjusts in height from 20 to 27 inches. It lets you work practically anywhere," says Karin Gintz, vice president of marketing for Coalesse.

A healthy mix of shared and owned spaces, or "I" and "We" spaces, enhance workers' ability to change postures and engage with colleagues while seated, standing or in a reclined posture.

Another simple worktool, an adjustable monitor arm, does more than save worksurface real estate. The ability to set a monitor at the precise height and viewing distance reduces eye strain and facilitates more comfortable postures.

Height-adjustable tables and worksurfaces with integrated walking treadmills support varying postures and provide a refreshing change of pace.

Vitality is also heightened by sensory stimulation from natural light and views of the outside, but here, too, smaller choices make a big impact. The colors used in a space help define our reactions and evoke emotional, psychological and physical responses. In general, warm colors evoke energy. Cool colors are calming. Neutral shades are often used in workplaces, with pops of color that add an element of surprise.


Green is often chosen for healthcare environments because of its psychological effects. "Green symbolizes health and growth, so it's often used in hospitals," says Frost of Designtex. But reactions to colors often vary by geography, culture, history and, of course personal preferences. "One person's response to red is anger, another's response is love. Every country has certain color preferences. It's more important to have options so people can use the materials and colors that will evoke positive emotional responses."

Hearing the "Wow"!

How much do these thoughtful details contribute to wellbeing? Frost says Designtex regularly meets with customers to get a collective sense of how people respond to fabrics and products with a particular textile. "In the end, you want products that people look at and touch and use, and say, 'Wow!'"

Such reactions may be indicative of the performance of a work environment. Psychologist Barbara Fredrickson, a professor at the University of North Carolina, has explored the effect of positive emotions on physical and mental health. She finds that positive emotions do more than signal wellbeing. They also improve coping and produce wellbeing, not just in the present, pleasant moment but over the long term as well.

"The benefits of positive emotions do not end with changes within individuals," she writes. "Because one individual's experience of positive emotion can reverberate through other organizational members and across interpersonal transactions with customers, positive emotions may fuel optimal organizational functioning, helping organizations to thrive and prosper."

Small choices can have major benefits. From providing smart functionality in worktools and supporting different postures and varying levels of privacy, to selecting fabrics, colors and textures that engender positive emotional responses, these are important choices that further the wellbeing of each person in the work environment. 



DESIGNTEX

ARIZONA STATE
STUDY:

MOVEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

It's not an unrelated coincidence: During the past 50 years, most jobs have become less physical and obesity rates are rising. Today, most people spend most of their time at work sitting at a computer or talking on the phone, and as a result they burn fewer calories—at least 150 fewer per day, according to a 2011 study conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Less activity at work has been identified as a key contributor to the rise of obesity in America.

Sitting down on the job isn't just a U.S. problem, and weight gain isn't the only negative impact on people's health. A study in London showed that bus drivers had higher rates of heart disease than ticket-takers, who moved around on the job. Another recent study, a data review of 18 different studies published in the Australian journal Diabetologia, revealed that adults now spend 50-70% of their time sitting, leading to higher risks for diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and even earlier death.

It's becoming clearer all the time that finding ways to encourage workers to move more throughout the day can be critically important for their health. At Arizona State University, administrators at the College of Health Solutions and the College of Nursing and Health Innovation took on that challenge as they planned a new workplace for their staffs—a complete renovation of the 5th floor of a university-owned building in downtown Phoenix. Starting with the blank canvas of a completely open floorplate with large windows and impressive views, they challenged the design team to leverage the space in every possible way to benefit their staffs and enhance their programs.

“Our vision was to have an ambience of productivity and peak performance,” says Teri Pipe, dean of the College of Nursing and Health Innovation. “One of the key aspects of that was to have natural light permeating the space so our staffs can look out and see our beautiful desert surroundings. Another important conceptual piece was having people from different backgrounds and professions work together, to have the space reinforce the message that working together was important. And then, finally, we wanted to make sure our people would have opportunities to be physically active at work, because health, creativity, both short and long-term memory, agility in terms of being able to see things differently mentally—all of that is tied to how active we are in a day.”

“As leaders in health education, we wanted our physical space and design features to be providers of health and wellness instead of the opposite, which is too often the case,” echoes Keith D. Lindor, executive vice provost and dean of the College of Health Solutions. “It's important for us to be role models in a positive way.”



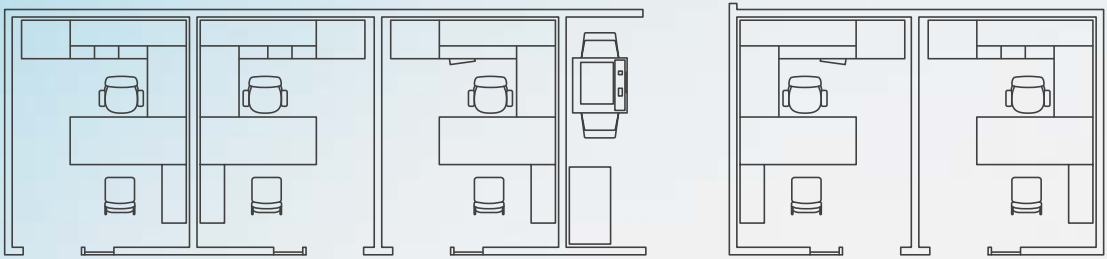
Measuring the impact of physical space

To improve the work environment for their employees, ASU administrators were eager to introduce significant changes. The project also presented an ideal opportunity for the colleges' researchers to conduct what they term “a natural experiment”—involving their own staff as participants in a research project to measure the effects of the physical work environment on physical health, cognition and stress levels. With the help of a grant from Obesity Solutions, a Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust-funded initiative of Mayo Clinic and ASU, the project goal was to reengineer physical activity into the workplace by having employees stand, move and walk more frequently on the job. Steelcase, along with Phoenix dealer Target Commercial Interiors, is collaborating with ASU on the project.

The joint effort aims to demonstrate that a workplace designed to encourage movement is a good investment on a scale that can pay off in improved worker health, wellbeing and productivity.

Before staff members moved into the new space, researchers took baseline measurements ranging from weight and cholesterol levels to assessments of the amount of time workers sat and moved about during the day. Employees were equipped with devices on their thighs to gauge the amount of time they sat or stood during the day in the office and at home. Accelerometers on their wrists track movements, physical activity and sleep patterns. The pre-move assessments will be compared with follow-up data collected four months later.

Low-paneled workstations throughout the ASU work environment allow co-workers to stand up and collaborate or sit down for more focus and privacy.



in the workplace.

A more active way of working

In addition to comparing weight, blood pressure, biomarkers (glucose, insulin, cholesterol, etc.), activity levels and sleep patterns, researchers will also determine whether movement and standing at work improves reaction times, decision-making, multi-tasking, job satisfaction and overall workplace productivity, including less absenteeism.

The researchers are also gathering data from a control group—office workers in a different building who are being exposed only to “ergonomics intervention”—healthful tips and information, but no changes in their physical workspace.

By comparing the data sets, the researchers hope to gain quantitative evidence that workplaces designed to provoke frequent movement have significant and positive impact on people’s physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing. The project offers a unique opportunity to study the impact of changes to the whole environment where employees work, not just an individual workstation, notes Matthew Buman, assistant professor in ASU’s School of Nutrition and Health Promotion and the project’s principal investigator who’s done most of his research in the area of sedentary behavior

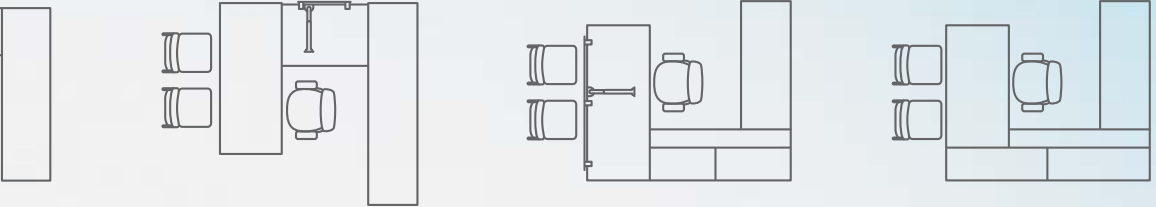
Before moving into their new workplace in July, employees were given the opportunity to choose between height-adjustable sit/stand desks or traditional seated-height: 80% chose the height-adjustable option. To support posture changes and movement, the renovated 16,456-square-foot space also features Details Walkstation®, an integrated treadmill and worksurface. Available to everyone throughout the day, two Walkstations are appealingly located in an open setting near a large window with natural light. Another Walkstation setting offers privacy in an enclosed room.

Low-paneled workstations throughout the workspace allow co-workers to stand up and collaborate or sit down for more focus and privacy, instead of working in closed-off private offices as they did in the past. In addition, the new space features a palette of shared places—conference areas, team spaces, lounges, a kitchenette, wide corridors with natural light, even a yoga room—all intended to get people moving and interacting more.

“Our leadership decided they really wanted to take a step out and do something innovative within the university setting,” says Buman. “As health researchers, we wanted to take advantage of that decision and evaluate it to see what impact it has on health and productivity”.

“If we can demonstrate that this sort of change can produce health improvements and, perhaps more importantly, even workplace productivity improvements.... If we can do this on a large scale, now we’re talking about a potential to really make a dent

Before moving into their new workplace, employees at ASU were given the opportunity to choose between height-adjustable sit/stand desks or traditional seated-height: 80% chose the height-adjustable option.



in the world’s obesity epidemic.”

Making movement at work intentional

Changing body habits also involves changing minds. To encourage employees to leverage what the new space has to offer, the project team mounted a campaign to promote moving more at work. In addition to creating flyers, they set up an email-based support system that offers tips—not mandates—on using the new environment.

“The framework that we used was: Stand more, change postures while sitting, move more. We tried to make it really simple,” says Buman. “We weren’t advocating exercise, just moving. In fact, exercise is not mentioned at all in any of our material.”

Adapting material from previous research by scientists such as Dr. Genevieve Healy and Professor Neville Owen of Australia, the project team has suggested employees stroll over to a co-worker’s office to chat rather than sending an email, or use headsets so they can stand rather than sit during conference calls. They’re also given specific information on how to use the Walkstations, citing the calories burned and other health benefits. Staff members receive a one-page “motivational newsletter” every-other week in their email, with a link they can use to ask specific questions of the project team.

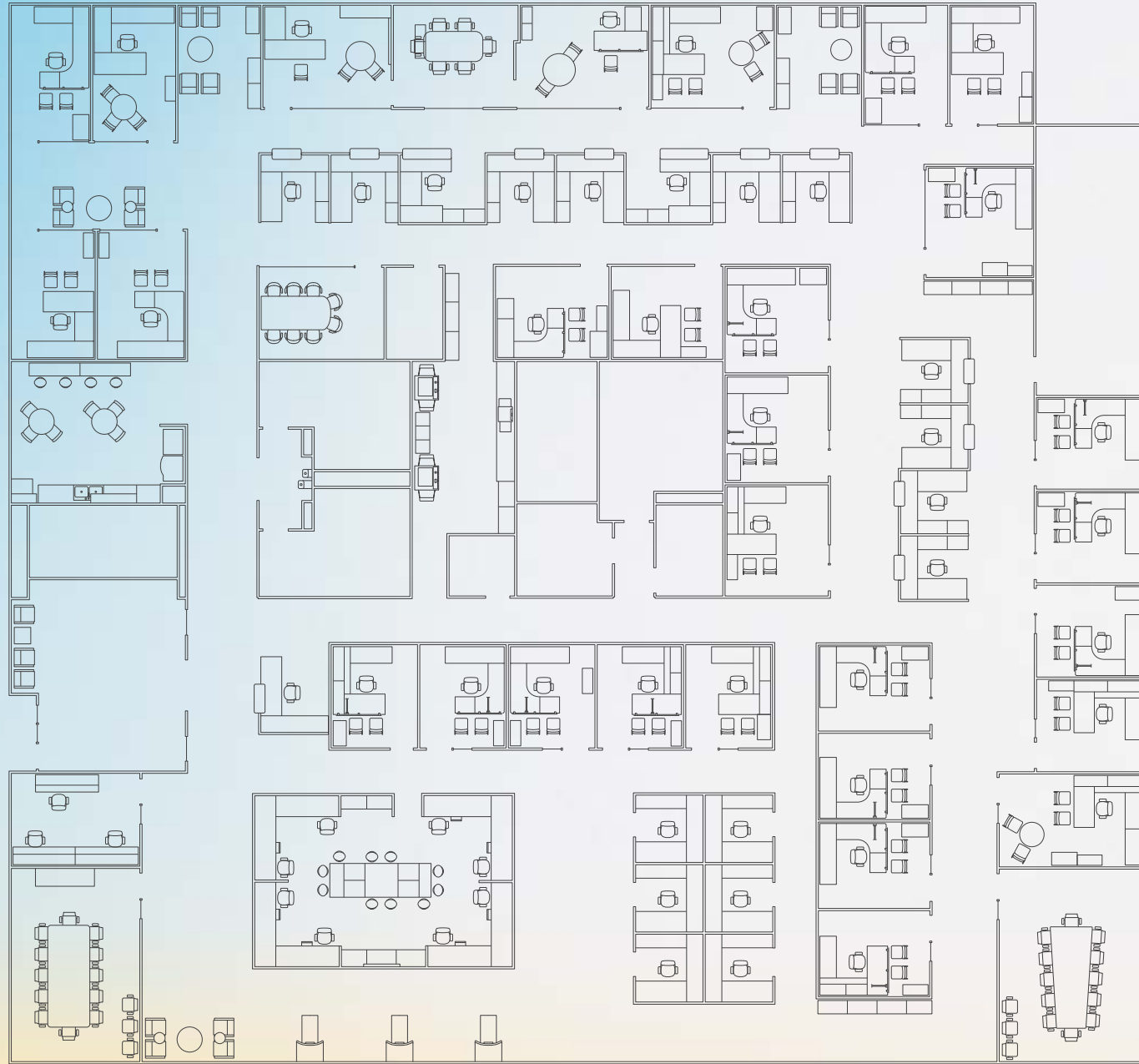
Buman stresses that the college’s top administrators introduced and endorsed the move to a healthier workspace. “It came from the

administration, which is really important—the buy-in from the top,” he says. “If you’re going to provide these types of facilities and opportunities for your employees, then you need to back it up ... give them the message that you support them actively trying to make those changes. ”

In keeping with their philosophy to literally walk the talk, the deans both work in the new space along with their staffs. They requested smaller-than-typical offices and a shared conference room, instead of two separate ones, to free up space for common areas that everyone can use. Pipe has used a Walkstation in her office for several years to stay fit and productive, so she was a convincing advocate for the benefits.

The deans are encouraging staff members to step away from their desks about once an hour (dance breaks have been known to occur), and they frequently conduct walking meetings, complete with a “meeting in progress” sign to let others know they’re not being rude when they don’t stop to chat. In addition to physical exercise and mental stimulation, walking meetings have a beneficial side effect, says Pipe: “When you’re walking side by side on the sidewalk, you’re signaling that you’re approaching the world together. It adds a sense of common

ASU's new work environment re-engineers physical activity into the workplace by providing employees with the choice of standing, moving and walking more frequently on the job.



“YOU CAN’T JUST
TELL SOMEONE
TO STAND MORE
AT WORK. YOU
HAVE TO ACTUALLY
PROVIDE THEM
THE OPPORTUNITY
TO CHANGE.”



purpose, that you’re solving problems together.”

Helping people be their best

Especially amid growing attention on the obesity crisis, Buman calls the project a “win-win”—good for ASU employees and promising potential benefits worldwide. “We’re interested in finding health solutions and ways to improve the health of our whole society,” he says.

Other studies, Buman says, have shown that workers are unlikely to alter their behavior unless the overall infrastructure permits and encourages those changes.

“It’s hard to get people to stand at work if they don’t have the type of options that allow them to stand at work and be productive,” says Buman. “You can’t just tell someone to stand more at work. You have to actually provide them the opportunity to change.”

“They moved these departments from a relatively static and typical-looking environment to one that really does address the need for people to move more and change their postures,” says Maren Channer, marketing product manager for Steelcase’s FitWork group.

“It seems that many adults have lost the habits we may have established as children when we developed through physical activity,” says Lindor. “I think that if you can also develop good habits in your working life that will maintain muscle tone, bone mass—the things we know come from standing and exercising—then you are much more like to stay healthy as you age. We know the opposite will happen if people get too sedentary.”

“One of the things that we know from our research,” says Channer, “is that when you put these kinds of tools into a work environment, if one person begins to stand up, their neighbor will stand up. It becomes

viral. They challenge each other.”

In addition to increasing movement, reducing stress among their staffs is an equally important goal that the deans share. “We talk about the importance of healthy environments around us, but there’s also the ‘inside of us’ environment, and the interaction between our work space and who we are is really very closely related,” says Pipe. “Having an aesthetically pleasing, productive workplace impacts our stress levels and the way we can focus on the work we need to do. We all have a piece of making the world a better place. And we can do that much more effectively if there’s coherence and balance between our inner self and the outer environment.”

It will take several more months to collect and analyze all the data, but the deans are already seeing signs of change and progress.

“It’s amazing to sometimes see the whole office standing, and they talk about how much better they feel for having done that,” says Lindor. “And I watch relationships evolving as people use this space. People see each other every day, multiple times a day, and interact. When people were sequestered in private offices, that virtually never happened. I think it really helps the morale of the workplace. I was struck one time on a Sunday afternoon when I came up here to do some work and there were five people also up here. We’ve created a place where people want to be.”



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THE NEW ACADEMIC HUB

GVSU Reinvents the Library for Learning

“We were trying to escape the gravity of the common library. We wanted this to be a very different place. We wanted it to feel different and look different, so that students could act differently.”

Different indeed. As Lee Van Orsdel, GVSU dean of university libraries suggests, the new Mary Idema Pew Library & Information Commons at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich. breaks free of the traditional college library in favor of a learning center for the 21st century. Forget the library as stuffy book warehouse, this is an inspired integration of space, furniture and tools for active learning, one that supports individual and collaborative learning, provides assistance and coaching for students in acquiring new skills, and allows unfettered access to content in every form.



How to make a college library relevant for the 21st century

Steelcase researchers and designers developed key design principles for libraries that play a leading role in higher education, principles that were integrated into the design of the new GVSU library:

Design a range of library spaces that support social learning between students and peers, in pairs and groups

Support the librarian's evolving, expanding role as content expert, IT service provider, collaborator and educator

Optimize the performance of informal spaces through greater flexibility and user control

Plan for adjacencies that recognize the range of activities that go on in the library

Include spaces for individual comfort, concentration, and security

Provide spaces that improve student awareness of, and access to, library resources

"We've elevated the concept of noise control to an art," says Dean Van Orsdel, noting the building's quieter east side compared to the west side that invites conversation in various collaborative workspaces.



"Up to 90% of learning happens outside the classroom, especially those skills students need to be successful after graduation: the ability to think clearly, to communicate, articulate and persuade, to work in groups and collaborate. This library is an academic hub where the learning that goes on after class reinforces what they learned in the classroom and helps students hone those essential skills," says Van Orsdel.

The transformation begins with a relatively modest number of books—150,000—in open stacks for browsing. Another 600,000 books are available via an automated storage system beneath the library; order a book online and it shows up in less than a minute. Need more? There's nearly a million volumes available digitally.

This strategy reduces the building's book footprint from 60,000 sq. ft. to 3,500 sq. ft. and frees up room for students, faculty and staff to work in ways that for a college library are different.

Here the learning spaces range from reflective, contemplative places, what Van Orsdel calls "almost cell-like spaces where a student can find refuge," to group spaces for active content sharing and creation. "We've elevated the concept of noise control to an art," she says, noting the building's quieter east side compared to the west side that invites conversation in various collaborative workspaces.

A sound system pipes programmed sound into collaboration zones so students feel comfortable speaking in normal tones of voice. On the east side, white noise helps mask sound and reduce distractions. The library also offers several outdoor spaces, including an amphitheater, an indoor café, outdoor patio, even a third floor reading garden.



**“Up to 90%
of learning
happens
outside the
classroom”**

Mary Idema Pew Library
& Information Commons—
by the numbers

153k
square feet

1,500
seats

19
group study rooms

10
media:scape
collaboration settings

29
types of seating

150k
books in open stacks

600k
books in automated
storage and retrieval

1 million
books in digital format

250
computers

50%
less energy used
(compared to other
buildings of equal size)

\$65
million total cost



Back in the heart of the learning process

Traditional college libraries designed around print-based resources became less relevant in recent years as access to digital content exploded. When GVSU began planning their new library five years ago, they wanted to rethink the library's role in learning and how the process of learning itself was changing. The university partnered with Steelcase and its WorkSpace Futures research group, along with SHW Group, an architecture and engineering firm specializing in educational environments, to conduct on-site research at GVSU.

“The college library can be a key location outside the classroom where active learning plays out. In the classroom, students are involved in hands-on learning but the instructor still leads. In the library, students take control of their instruction as they discover, analyze, and share information, and in the process become comfortable working individually and with others. It's a major shift from being a reading and storage site to a center for active learning,” says Elise Valoe, senior design researcher with Steelcase, and part of a team that studied libraries at private and public colleges and universities across the country.

The researchers developed a comprehensive view of student learning patterns, including “a rhythm to students' life that was unknown to us,” says Van Orsdel. Not unlike predictable semester patterns, with student activity increasing around mid-term exams and due dates for papers, “we found that there's a certain rhythm to each day, too. Students work pretty much alone during the daytime. But at night, groups come together, pull apart, reform and regroup constantly. They don't just go to a table or into a room, they consult all night long.

Forget the library as stuffy book warehouse, the Mary Idema Pew Library is an inspired integration of space, furniture and tools for active learning, one that supports individual and collaborative learning, provides assistance and coaching for students in acquiring new skills, and allows unfettered access to content in every form.

Student grades

GVSU students are giving the new Mary Idem Pew Library and Information Commons high marks.



Even student postures change during the day. While on task and hurrying between classes, they sit upright in a chair at a table. If they're waiting for a friend they kick back on a stool or in a lounge chair with a phone or tablet and relax. At night, they look for furniture that's mobile to accommodate team projects. The university also discovered that study groups—unlike most groups, tend to meet between 10AM and 3PM.

The vagaries of student study habits presented a design challenge: plan the space for the daytime when students work on their own, or for the evening when they work in groups? GVSU believes they found the ideal solution: spaces with furniture that's mobile, reconfigurable and in a variety of sizes and shapes, including 29 types of seating, plenty of whiteboards on both walls and wheels, and media:scape collaboration settings in various places around the library.



"Collaboration with digital content usually means six people in a room with laptops, swiveling screens around and a whole lot of straining to see the information. media:scape allows people to focus on the intellectual process of creating and learning together by not being bound by the physicality of everyone having a different device in front of them," says Van Orsdel.

She believes there's an added bonus to the library's inherent flexibility: "if we're wrong about this, we have so much flexibility that whatever students want to do, we can do it."

Another signature concept in the library is the knowledge market, an entryway place where trained students help classmates improve specific skills. "Universities typically do not make their services seamless. They're compartmentalized into pedagogical areas where they're taught: English, writing, research, technology, speech, etc. The knowledge market puts together in one place the resources to build all of the skills employers tell us are critical in the workplace: writing, speaking, presenting, research. Students manage their own learning, choosing the type of help they need, when they need it."

Open 6pm to midnight ("when we see the most collaborative behaviors"), the knowledge market is an open area in a can't-miss path by the main entrance. Kiosks, video monitors and displays encourage walk-ups, questions and quick collaborations. ●



**Study Reveals Classroom
Spaces Significantly Impact
Student Engagement**

New data from a Steelcase Education Solutions study has shown that student engagement is favorably impacted in classrooms intentionally designed for active learning.

The study, completed at four U.S. universities, assessed how different classroom designs affect student engagement, which is widely recognized as a reliable predictor of academic success.

“Improving educational outcomes is a nearly universal goal, but how to achieve it remains a focus of continuing research and debate. Although noteworthy studies have been completed in recent years, a variable that is still often underemphasized is the role of classroom design,” notes Lennie Scott-Webber, Ph.D., Steelcase director of Education Environments. “We developed our study to address this important gap, create a reliable evaluation instrument, and contribute in a significant way to a growing body of knowledge about the relationship between the learning environment and student success.”

Using the evaluation survey instrument developed by the Steelcase Education Solutions team, participants compared their experiences in a traditional classroom with row-by-column seating to their subsequent experiences in a classroom intentionally designed for active learning. The active learning classrooms were furnished with Steelcase products for active learning settings: Node® seating, Verb® classroom collection, LearnLab™ and media:scape® collaboration settings. Participants answered questions about engagement in learning activities occurring in the classrooms and then evaluated the impact of the classroom furnishings in support of these activities.

The majority of students rated the active learning classroom better than the traditional classroom on each of 12 factors identified in the evaluation, and there were no significant differences in the results from each university. In all, the active learning classrooms generated improvements in active learning practices for both students and faculty.

In total, the study has revealed that classrooms designed to support active learning result in improved student engagement across multiple measures. The study also revealed that students felt that the classroom design contributed to their ability to be creative, motivation to attend class, ability to achieve a higher grade and engagement in class.

“This study yielded major findings, all supporting the highly positive impact of the classroom on student engagement,” says Scott-Weber. “There’s now evidence that Steelcase Education Solutions classrooms encourage and enable educators to practice active learning methods, even without special training. As a result, decision makers at educational institutions, as well as architects and designers, can be more assured that investments in solutions intentionally designed to support active learning can create more effective classrooms and a higher predictability of student engagement.”

Results from the first phase of the research, a beta study at three institutions, were published in the November 2013 issue of Planning for Higher Education, a peer-reviewed journal published by the Society for College and University Planning. The Steelcase team is continuing this managed research study with a number of universities throughout North America, building data and adding knowledge to this important field of study.

A New Learning Curve

Ideas on planning and designing learning spaces

SIT STILL

If I had the choice, I'd ban this command heard in schools around the world. Here's why: A growing body of research and in-classroom experience show that what's commonly called the "sit and get" style of learning couldn't be more wrong. In order to keep the brain active, the evidence shows clearly that we need to move.

Movement enhances learning and memory, writes David A. Sousa, educator and author in his book, "Mind, Brain, and Education: Neuroscience Implications for the Classroom" (2010, Leading Edge). Movement brings more fuel-carrying blood to the brain, and the brain is more active when learners move around.

Consider Canadian teacher Allison Cameron, who equipped her high school classroom with exercise bikes and treadmills, and split her language arts classes into 20 minutes each of exercise and teaching. The result: Test scores went up. One 8th grade class improved their writing test scores 245% over a school year. Another 8th grade class, which didn't exercise and spent the entire 40 minute period on academics, saw its writing scores decline.

Movement allows students to refocus and strengthen their ability to pay attention, report Lengel and Kuczala in "The Kinesthetic Classroom: Teaching and Learning Through Movement" (2010, Corwin). They say that simply allowing students to get out of their seats to move while learning provides the brain with much needed novelty and change.

Businesses are also learning the benefits of movement. The Economist recently reported that "prolonged periods of inactivity are bad regardless of how much time you also spend...jogging or pounding treadmills in the gym. What you need as well, the latest research suggests, is constant low-level activity...even standing up counts, for it invokes muscles that sitting does not." Companies are helping employees by installing stand-up work surfaces, treadmill desks and other furniture that encourages the body to move. Yet school administrators don't seem to have gotten the memo.

John Kilbourne, Ph.D., professor of movement science at Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Mich., is out to change that.

Students deserve the same environments, if only to prepare them for active workplaces. Why not prepare them for this future with the creation of more active and engaging teaching and learning areas?"

For more than 20 years, Kilbourne taught lecture/discussion courses in a typical classroom setting: thirty to 40 chairs with fixed work surfaces in neat rows. "You couldn't change the configuration because of the confined space, time and the other classes before and after mine."

A professor of the history and philosophy of games and sports, he finally had enough of "the stern and imprisoning structure of fixed desks" and secured some grant funding. He created playful teaching and learning spaces—activity-permissible classrooms, he calls them—that included exercise stability balls and Steelcase Node® chairs.

After just one semester, he measured the new classroom's effectiveness by evaluating his students' ability to take notes, pay attention and engage in discussion, as well as exam scores. The results were overwhelmingly positive. Plus, 98% of students wanted the mobility options in every class.


The following year Kilbourne added stand-up desks, and last year he brought in turnstone's new Buoy™ stools, which tilt up to 12 degrees and promote active sitting. "It has some of the characteristics of a stability ball, but it's much sturdier," he says.

"Most learning throughout history has been active, not sitting in one place. I can't think of a class where it wouldn't be beneficial to have an activity-permissible classroom, especially when you want students to work with each other."

Students aren't the only ones to benefit. Movement provides teachers and students with a stimulating environment, according to Lengel and Kuczala. Instructors' brains seek novelty and change, too.

All of us—the administrators, instructors, designers and researchers who plan and manage learning spaces—should help equip classrooms with furniture that moves and encourages movement.

Students have a responsibility to be self-disciplined, to focus and stay on task, but we create environments that engage, motivate and stimulate students, or leave them bored and restless.

Please join our movement. 



Lennie Scott-Webber, Ph. D.,
Director of education
environments for Steelcase
Education Solutions

I've spent years researching educational environments and have seen the insides of more classrooms than I can count. My passion, and my job, is helping people understand the behaviors that come from different environments, and creating classrooms that truly support new ways of teaching and learning.

Email your ideas, questions or comments to lscottwe@steelcase.com or on twitter to [@Lennie_SW](https://twitter.com/Lennie_SW).

**98% OF STUDENTS
WANT THE
MOBILITY OPTIONS
IN EVERY CLASS.**



active
passive
public
private
digital
analog
formal
informal
calm
energetic
social
quiet
choice

the new library

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alone
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engaged
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focused
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brainstorm
contemplative
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Steelcase
Education Solutions



TURNSTONE Bringing fun to the office

by Kevin Kuske
General Manager, turnstone

If you're a mobile worker, you know that it can be tempting to stay in your slippers and lay claim to the better part of your sofa for an afternoon of spreadsheets and email. The flexibility that comes with mobility can convince some that we don't need a community workspace or that the office is overrated.

Are we fooling ourselves? Is there still merit in going into work?

At turnstone, we believe the answer is "yes." Because not only does your presence in the office help your team gel, aid in collaboration and foster relationships, it helps to create that vibe—that personality—that collectively depicts your brand more than any one individual ever could. Being in the office builds relationships and trust with team members, which translates into sparked creativity and fruitful collaboration on projects.

So how do we build the kind of places that people want to come to? How do we convince new hires that we value their voice in the room and their presence around the lunch table? We believe the answer is FUN. And with mobile work on the increase, there has never been a more important time to intentionally foster fun in the office.

If you want to change the climate of your office, here are some things you can do to ramp up the smiles in your space:

Use fun activities to build connections and do good. Fun happens organically when you're building relationships around something out-of-the-box and creative. Try having a contest: Grab your hot glue gun and set aside a day to source finish materials or construction scraps to turn into artwork. Flex your creativity muscle and keep waste from piling up in the landfill. Just as important, perhaps, will be the shared memories you'll have with the person who sits next to you.

Get moving! You don't have to run marathons to reap the benefits of regular movement. Aside from being good for both mind and body, getting up throughout the day encourages people to interact more. All of this is good for wellbeing and creativity.

In a recent article published on Entrepreneur.com, turnstone Chief Brand Anthropologist Kevin Kuske said, "Our bodies weren't designed to sit in a 90-degree posture all day. Movement has physical and psychological benefits. An effective workplace has a mix of spaces and postures. It's about breaking the bond between the user and the desk."

Incorporating a product like Buoy is another fun way to shake things up at the office. It lets your team know that you're not taking life too seriously. And, weighing in at just 20 pounds, Buoy is portable, allowing you to configure your team in ways that best fit their tasks, maximizing productivity and boosting team interactions throughout the day.

Create your own office culture. Creating terrific office culture sets the stage for people being themselves at work. Authenticity in the office leads to trusting relationships, which in turn birth collaboration and innovation. But fostering the kind of culture that attracts top talent and retains team members doesn't happen on accident—it takes intentional effort.

Start by maintaining a central gathering spot for food and moments of celebration. Invite your team to bring in photos of their family or trips they've taken. Find ways to integrate various types of work stations, music and art, and weave them throughout your space. In short, allow people to be themselves at work and send the message that authenticity is valued.

Turnstone customer Joe Fernandez, CEO of Klout of San Francisco, said of their space, "Everyone invites their friends to come and hang out here – if not as a second home, at least as your primary clubhouse."

Joe and his team have learned that great culture attracts great people, and fun is the linchpin for success. For more ideas about building a strong culture at work, visit our blog at myturnstone.com/blog.



“Everyone invites their friends to come and hang out here—if not as a second home, at least as your primary clubhouse”

**— JOE FERNANDEZ
CEO, KLOUT**






Invite some color. Much has been said about color, and that's because it's an important consideration to make when designing your space. Color has been used to inspire, represent and elevate moods or connect physical space to a brand. Our colorful fabrics and finishes are two reasons turnstone has such a fanbase with start-ups and young entrepreneurs, such as Betamore, a turnstone customer and incubator in Baltimore.

Of course, one of the most powerful and affordable updates you can make is simply painting your walls. Consider a bright focal wall or chalkboard paint to start a conversation. Get your team involved by voting on a couple of favorites and seeing which one wins out. You'll win points for democracy and style.

Games, games, games! Even if you're not a Trivial Pursuit wizard, there is merit to loosening up and enjoying games in the office as a way to build camaraderie. Try it before you brainstorm that new project or embark on a product launch.

Goodsmiths of Des Moines has incorporated a pool table into their space, giving team members time to chill and blow off steam between deadlines. Whether it's pool, Mrs. PacMan or Twenty Questions, games help your team relax, laugh and enjoy the journey together.

We spend too much time at work to not be passionate about what we do or love where we're at. We truly want our team members to enjoy coming to work each day. Our goal is for team members to think that a great culture and a fun office can be as much of a perk as is the freedom to work from home.

So be intentional. Invest some time and energy into nurturing your team, cultivating your culture and sprucing up the space you share. Your efforts may not be quantifiable, but they'll certainly be felt by your company's greatest asset: its people. 



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WELLBEING Down under

A 360 VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE

Architecture, design and real estate professionals in Australia have some innovative ways of thinking about how workplaces can support wellbeing.

In fact, this nation of 23 million people has an impact on work environment wellbeing that extends to projects throughout Asia, Europe, and North and South America.

Australia itself holds an outsized place on the wellbeing map. It appears near the top of many health and wellness charts, from the Social Progress Index of 2013 that puts Australia 16th in the world in terms of wellbeing, to Columbia University's

World Happiness Report, which places Australia 9th among all countries in average life satisfaction and 11th in average happiness. The Happy Planet Index ranks Australia 8th in wellbeing and 4th in life expectancy out of 151 countries.

To explore how wellbeing is integrated into Australian work environments, 360 conducted interviews with five leading workplace thinkers based in Australia who work with a wide range of industries around the world. Those conversations produced this virtual roundtable discussion with these experts, who collectively represent well over a hundred years of experience in workplace planning, design and construction.

STEVE COSTER

head of knowledge and sustainability for Hassell, specializes in the strategic use of design to improve organizational performance.



LAURIE AZNAVOORIAN

global workplace sector leader, architect and consultant for Geyer, helps companies use strategic workplaces as a business tool.



How important is wellbeing as a work environment issue in Australia today?

Minnett It's increasingly important. Senior managers here tend to be focused on costs, efficiency, productivity—like everyone everywhere, I suppose—and now that they understand how wellbeing can influence productivity, it receives even more attention.

McCourt Work environments should help people fulfill their potential, help them create a sense of place and belonging, that we're part of something bigger than ourselves. Clients are asking how they take all these things, a combination of issues around wellbeing, and create a community where people can come together to experience something special.

Coster Clients are realizing that workplaces are predominantly not about square meters or furniture, they're about people. Health and wellbeing are obviously key elements of people performing at their best. So as leaders realize that workplaces can directly support people, the more that wellbeing issue becomes firmly on the agenda.

What does wellbeing mean to your clients?

Coster It's often discussed as an absence of sickness, mostly because the symptoms of being sick are easier to describe and measure than symptoms of wellness. The industry often looks at the ability of the environment to eliminate certain symptoms of sickness, helping people to be more well. I hope we can go beyond that and actually think about wellness in a positive sense, what it means to be a really high performing space in terms of wellness. What makes people feel really well, as opposed to what makes people feel less sick? How do we move beyond fixing the hygiene factor to a positive contribution to people's wellness?

Aznavoorian It means better business performance to them. Down here, organizations have understood the relationship between the way people feel, both physically and emotionally, and how they perform. This is partly due to the size of the country and its relatively small talent pool, which has led to an increased awareness of employee attraction, ongoing health, happiness and engagement. Also our smaller population enables greater agility; there is less hierarchal, precedent or legacy to contend with, making changes easier. A significant factor for Australia's focus on health is that we were not as badly affected by the recent recessions that consumed North America and Europe. This gave us the space to focus on other issues that affect performance like wellbeing.



GREG MCCOURT

general manager at Lend Lease, an international property and infrastructure group, where he leads development of innovative and sustainable workplaces.



BILL DOWZER

architect, principal at BVN Donovan Hill, and director of the firm's Sydney studio.



STEPHEN MINNETT

architect, workplace strategy leader and a founder of Futurespace, an interiors and architectural studio.

Why has Australia become a thought leader in workplace wellbeing?

Dowzer Here in Australia there's more project leadership by company departments and human resources groups. When they lead projects, it's caused organizations to put more value on providing work environments where people have choice and empowerment.

Australia also has less structure in the bigger corporations. The other thing is our distance from the rest of the world is actually a wonderful thing. In the early days of these developing projects you weren't necessarily caught in a global structure or way of doing things. You could actually do things remotely quite easily and quite quickly because we weren't really on anybody's radar.

McCourt It's more than a belief that wellbeing is a good thing. It's actually a legal requirement in Australia. We have the Work Safety Act that states that work safety means health, safety and wellbeing of people in relationship to their work.

Coster Australia is a relatively new country without the long held traditions of older societies. It has a culture of early adoption, for instance with

technology. We are an inherently social and relatively flat society compared to other places, so that plays out in the workplace. Generally speaking, there's a sense that all levels in the organization should be accessible to each other, and I think there's less hierarchy and division and you could argue, maybe respect.

There are also structural things here: we have relatively few tenant organizations compared to the much bigger economies of the world. Workplace designers are much more a part of building design here than in the U.K. and certainly North America. It's quite common here for the tenant to be engaged in the design process of the base building, for example, say for connectivity across the organization by integrating the design of stairs and atriums, for example.

There's a whole number of reasons of why the Australian market is different, and they help us create places where people really like being, which is a fundamental part of wellness. It doesn't support your wellbeing well if you have to be somewhere you don't enjoy or want to be.

In Australia, it's more than a belief that wellbeing is a good thing.

What goes into a workplace that enhances wellbeing?

Dowzer The outcome is different for each organization. Some need a large percentage of the floor plate given over to social space to support significant collaboration and community requirements. Others may require shared space located in high levels of daylight where staff work long or odd hours and experience flagging energy levels from disruption to their circadian rhythm. Other workplaces need internal showers to support demand for lunch time exercise, Kitchens with healthy food options.

Coster I think there are four main things. One, the relationship between environmental conditions and wellness. Second, designing places that acknowledge and embed activity and movement as a fundamental part of how you go through your work day. Third, mental wellness. People need a range of choices of different spaces in which to work throughout the day. Choices psychologically give you control over your environment, controlling how you sit, where you work, etc. Helplessness and loss of control are indicators of stress and anxiety and even clinical depression. If you can remove people's sense of helplessness, help them choose outcomes through their choices, you can help inoculate against depression. Fourth, the expression of an organization's identity in the workplace in such a way that people want to be there because the mission and purpose is something they believe in and want to be a part of. You can help make people well by having them positive and engaged about the place where they choose to exert themselves everyday.

McCourt Another interesting phenomenon is biophilia, the idea that there is a bond between people and other living systems, and so natural elements like plants actually help people feel and think better. At our headquarters in London, we installed over 4,000 plants, or about 8 plants for every person. They help decrease toxins, balance the humidity and increase wellbeing. A lot of designers are looking at biophilia seriously as a component of workplace wellbeing.

Minnett At a minimum, a workplace for wellbeing is as healthy an internal environment as possible, using Green Star principles (Australia's version of LEED), for example, around access to natural light, fresh air, materials, plants in the workspace. But also we believe that more agile work places drive wellbeing because the individual is not being asked to go and sit in one spot all day. They can work in a sit/stand situation, go to a lounge area, or work at a desk. Movement and greater choice of space is an important part of wellbeing. There's no one thing, there are many things that tie into a more natural way of working that encourages wellbeing.

Aznavoorian Mobility is an important element for wellbeing. They say sitting is the new smoking; therefore, providing a workplace with a greater variety of places to go encourages movement. Sit/stand workstations, interconnecting stairs and limiting the number of printer stations are other tactics. We have tackled many of the physical aspects, now we need to focus on the psychological and emotional well being of workers to fully activate the contemporary workplace.

Dowzer With mobility, ergonomics becomes more important: having opportunities to sit, stand, to use different working environments and having a range of different settings. Another one is the interconnectivity of organizations by physical means such as stairs. The more open and transparent you make the work environment, the more likely people are going to get up and walk to somebody to have a conversation instead of sending an email. Unifying staircases or voids within organizations connect people physically, and stop people from automatically going to the elevator to go between floors. It's a fundamental business strategy to get people up and moving.

How does the organization benefit from a workplace that supports wellbeing?

Aznavoorian The workplace today is increasingly complex. Space does not stand on its own, it is impossible to isolate workplace or wellbeing from a number of other contributors. Recognizing there is a co-dependent relationship between workspace, technology, and people (their bodies, hearts and minds) is critical. Together they create an experience that will inspire and motivate people, and in turn, lead to better outcomes for the organization. There is an opportunity now to explore how the virtual environment might interact with the physical to further enhance this experience.

McCourt If you only look at individual strategies for improving wellbeing, they are hard to prove on their own. If someone says you add more natural light and productivity will go up a certain percentage, it doesn't work that way. Wellbeing strategies collectively make a difference, but every company is different and the same approach will have different effects for each company. There are many ways to improve wellbeing and together they definitely can increase performance, but there's no single, magic bullet.

Coster Consider identity economics; the idea is that people make economic choices based on both monetary incentives and our own sense of personal identity. For example, why would you pay more money for one car than another, if they're technically the same? The difference in the price you can charge is the difference that people place on brand identity. So it is in your workplace. There is a difference in what people will accept in salary to work in a place where they identify themselves as an insider to the mission compared to a place where they don't identify with it. You can measure the value of that difference. Workplaces that represent that value system you want people to identify with can arguably save you the extra money that you would otherwise have to pay them to commit their efforts to the firm.

Dowzer The happy/productive worker hypothesis is actually quite complicated. There are many ways to frame wellbeing: morale, stress, work-life balance, job satisfaction, as well as organizational

outcomes in terms of absenteeism, customer satisfaction, the decision to resign, withdrawal, and harassment issues. Linking the designed environment to wellbeing factors adds more complexity. I think it's true that an organizational focus on wellbeing recognizes that having happy staff is of little value unless they are performing efficiently. It's also true that an efficient organization is of little value at the expense of wellbeing.

Minnett Look at the elements we're putting into work environments—more natural light, quieter spaces, rooms for yoga and massage, gymnasiums, offices that allow more mobility and movement and a choice in workspaces— all of these things help improve work/life balance and wellbeing. Ultimately these elements prove themselves to the organization in terms of reduced sick days, reduced turn over and better productivity. ●

Down here, organizations understand the relationship between how people feel and how they behave.

WORK WELL LIVE WELL

TEN TIPS FROM COALESSE

Environments that combine comfort, function and emotional satisfaction can inspire people to do their best work as well as increase productivity, satisfaction and engagement.

Based on their research, Coalesse offers these tips for bringing wellbeing into the workplace.





1 Blur the lines. Spaces that blur the boundaries between work and home create a comfortable environment, invite people to relax and think outside the box.



2 Loosen up. For people to work comfortably feet don't always have to be on the floor. Relaxed postures can still support their productivity.



3 Let it be. Work can happen anywhere—a few minutes here, a few hours there. With many ways to get things done, the "right" way is to let people choose their own work destinations.

4 Allow for alone. Most people toggle between introverted and extroverted modes throughout their work day. Spaces that allow people to escape, ponder and disconnect support cognitive and emotional wellbeing.



5 Encourage escapes. A non-traditional, "third place" setting gets people re-energized and optimistic about making progress, especially if they can count on convenient access to power while they're there.

6 Create an unplug zone. A space with zero connectivity to wi-fi and power will encourage people to have face time with each other, read a book or rest their eyes.



7 Break new ground. Knowledge work is demanding and intense. Taking a break from the traditional workstation and leaning back into a lounge supports comfort and productivity.

FOR
THE NEW
WORK
DAY

coalesse®

The Massaud Lounge with Ottoman—
by Jean-Marie Massaud

8 Be moody. Different work modes call for different surroundings. Some materials and colors stimulate creative thinking, others can frame the mind for contemplation and repose.



Part work. Part refuge.

Designed for comfort and connecting with technology, the Massaud Lounge with ottoman is an alternative destination to work, contemplate or relax.



9 Put nature to work. Bring wellbeing to the office by providing the option for people to work outside. Fresh air and natural light are refreshing, and it's been proven that working outdoors or near natural light improves creativity, productivity and engagement.



10 Create choices. One person's lounge can be another person's workstation. A range of settings and support for transitions can accommodate different work styles and postures.



coalesse.com

Leadership Moment

360 spoke with Access Business Centers President and CEO Francisco Lomelin about how his business is helping small and mid-sized companies experience the strategic advantages of an upscale, thoughtfully designed work environment.



FRANCISCO LOMELIN
President and CEO, Access Business Centers



Access Business Centers is an international executive office suites and conference center company that incorporates new approaches to provide highly productive workspaces for its clients. Strategically located to serve an international client base, the recently opened Access Business Centers Dallas is a solution for small to mid-sized U.S. companies as well as enterprises that are establishing a business presence in the United States.

www.accessbusinesscenters.com/conference-center.html

Francisco Lomelin and Sonny Moyers, the people who launched Access Business Centers, are convinced that a high-quality work environment favorably affects the performance of individuals, teams and organizations—so much so that they made it an overarching priority for the new space they opened in March, 2012 in the heart of the north Dallas business district. (Moyers is managing partner of the O'Dea Moyers Group, a real estate consultancy).

“Particularly in medium to small companies, we saw a lack of workplaces that were conducive to working comfortably and productively. They weren’t well equipped, and they didn’t provide for any variety in places to work. Our vision is to build high-end facilities that extend the best insights and innovations to smaller organizations that aren’t ready to invest in spaces of their own that have that level of quality,” says Lomelin. “By providing the high-end technology, the access, the staff, and the quality facility, we make it possible for companies to focus on running their business and developing their people without having to spend time on their real estate.”

The Access Dallas space occupies an entire floor of a glass tower—24,000 square feet—in a high-visibility, two-building business complex. Rather than trying to cram in as many offices as possible, the Access space was intentionally designed for spaciousness, flexibility and variety. Its 53 private suites are scalable to accommodate individuals, dyads or even small teams. And everyone has access to an array of shared areas—informal team spaces, conference rooms, work lounges, videoconferencing settings, reception areas and a kitchen. Some are high-stimulus environments, others are low-key getaways. Together, they comprise about 50% of the total floor space.

“We married the design to the concept that work today has four modes: focused, collaboration, training and socialization. As a result, we are able to offer variation in work environments. So when a person gets tired of working in their focused environment and they need to move, they can walk over to another area to get some social interaction. Or if they need a change of atmosphere to be more productive, they can move to a different work environment. We took the concept of today’s average knowledge

worker and said, ‘Let’s give people more variety so they don’t have to leave to go to a coffee shop.’ Here, they have an environment that’s conducive to change, that’s conducive to movement, so they can feel better on a daily basis about where they work and what they do.”

Adjacencies were carefully considered. For example, outside a large conference room that’s often used for all-day training or meetings, in one direction there’s a quiet lounge area and in the other there’s an open, social environment with TV. “Being in same room all day gets old after a while, so we wanted to provide multiple venues for breaks.”

Another important design decision was to maximize exposure to natural light. All the private suites are on the perimeter, assuring expansive city views as well as daylight. What’s more, the interior walls of those suites all have clear glass clerestory windows, bringing natural light into hallways and adjacent spaces.

Recognizing that workplaces can have psychological as well as physical appeal, the Access team named all the shared spaces after famous artists: Diego Rivera, Picasso, da Vinci, Van Gogh, Monet, etc. “We wanted to name our facilities in a way that went along with an atmosphere of creativity, of leading edge, of special,” explains Lomelin.

After 18 months in business, the signals are strong that the Access concept is working. The facility enjoys 80% occupancy and the only company that’s moved out is a success story, too: It grew rapidly and was ready for a facility of its own. In addition to a growing roster of tenants, Access also services clients with short-term space needs for conferences or day events.

“We designed environments to increase productivity and be a smarter working space. How people respond and feel each day was an important part of our design, as well,” says Lomelin. “In addition to thinking about the needs that smaller companies have to optimize their cash flow and focus on business priorities, we also thought about the needs of individual knowledge workers and what would make them happy. We merged concepts and insights, and created a new kind of environment that’s designed so people can get what they need and want.”

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Lagunitas—
by Toan Nguyen

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A Global View

Since Gesture's launch earlier this year, Steelcase has celebrated with events all over the world. With more than 10,000 attendees worldwide, these events gave people the opportunity to test drive Gesture. Attendees have been completing surveys on

iPads about how they use devices, and which one of the new postures they use most, adding to the Steelcase research.

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