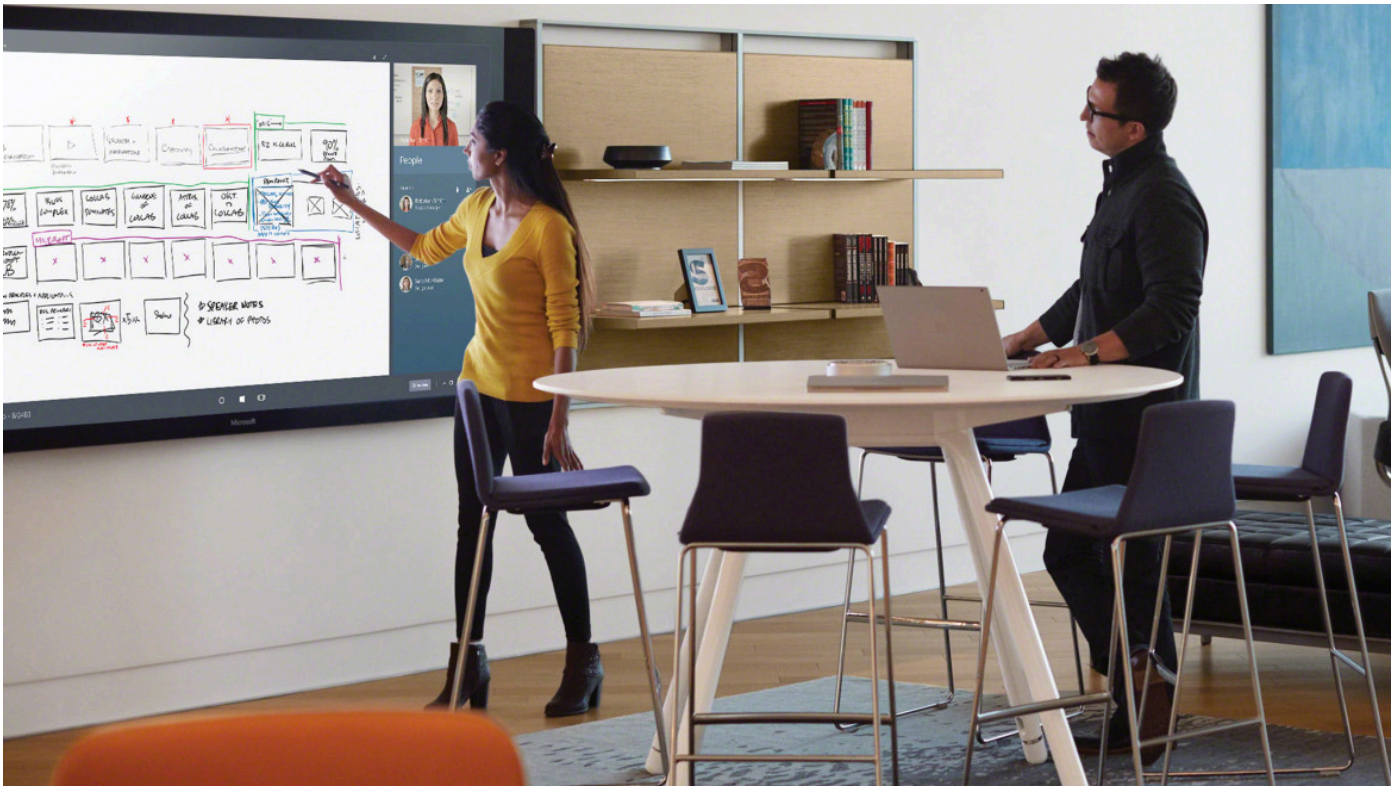
People + Planet

Why Are People Searching for Better Places to Work?

Read 6 minutes



A new Gallup State of the American Workplace report is garnering headlines for this finding: The most engaged employees are people who work away from the office three to four days a week. But, it's another conclusion from Gallup that should be resonating with leaders around the world. If organizations want to compete today they should consider giving their people greater flexibility, autonomy and care for the holistic wellbeing of employees.

"Organizations have nowhere to hide," writes Gallup. "They have to adapt to the needs of the modern workforce, or they will find themselves struggling to attract and keep great employees and therefore customers."

What does it take to provide an attractive work environment? As mobile work increases and people are working anywhere at anytime, we know people are seeking out new ways to get work done. So, the real question is: Is your work environment adapting to keep up or are people leaving the office to get work done?

At Steelcase, we believe the complexity and challenges around today's global marketplace requires people to come together so companies can create and innovate more quickly. Innovation requires planned and unplanned collaboration as well as individual focus, inspiration and rejuvenation.

But this cannot happen in yesterday's office. What's needed is reimagining the workplace to build the places employees choose to work – not because they have to but because they want to. What's needed is an office renaissance. The workplace has a critical role to play for organizations who intend to grow and thrive in the midst of constant change. It has to provide people with what they're looking for to perform at their best, or they will find it elsewhere.

"They (Workers) are looking for inspiration and creativity at work, as well as human-centered technology that makes life easier instead of more complicated," says James Ludwig, Steelcase's global head of design. "Designers saw this shift starting years ago, but now we're in an accelerated evolution and those ideas are being embraced and adopted at a rapid pace."

The new report from Gallup proves some offices aren't supporting the new ways in which people are working. As a result, workers are looking for alternatives and seeking places free from distractions. So, they're leaving the workplace — the very place where they have access to the people and tools they need for creativity and innovation.

According to Gallup's State of the American Workplace Report:

75%	People who experience frequent noise while working.
42%	People who say they would change jobs to have privacy when they need it.

The report also found employees who can move around to different areas while working are 1.3 times more likely to be engaged; and employees who have a space that helps them connect with coworkers are 1.5 times more likely to be engaged. The conclusion is simple: employees are most engaged when given choice and control over where and how they work.

Leaders know people want flexibility, according to Gallup. "But, leaders also know that most people still work in an office — and benefit from doing so. Surrounded by their team members, employees collaborate and connect with each other and accelerate innovation, creativity and productivity in ways that working remotely sometimes cannot."

These findings by Gallup are about the American workplace. Steelcase sought to understand how a global workforce is best supported. The results found in the Steelcase Global Report: Engagement and the Global Workplace, a study conducted in 20 countries around the globe in partnership with global research firm Ipsos, shows people who are highly satisfied with their work environment are much more likely to be a highly satisfied and highly engaged employee. That includes the ability to find privacy when needed.

According to the Steelcase Global Report:

- **88%** – Highly engaged and satisfied employees who can choose where to work at the office based on what they need to accomplish — just 14% of highly disengaged and dissatisfied employees say the same.
- **98%** – Highly engaged and satisfied employees who can concentrate easily at work — only 15% of

highly disengaged and dissatisfied employees say the same.

- **94%** – Highly engaged and satisfied employees who can work in teams without being interrupted — a mere 13% of highly disengaged and dissatisfied employees say the same.

The office isn't going away. But, it is evolving into something fundamentally different. It must provide an ecosystem of spaces that work together to support today's employee. Spaces designed for focus, socialization and collaboration allow for people to access the place they need to get their jobs done. Purposeful work deserves a meaningful place that brings together design, materiality and performance to create informal, authentic and inspiring spaces.

Never before has there been a more urgent call to action for leaders. Gallup says people are increasingly confident and ready to leave if their organization doesn't give them what they are seeking. The work environment is just one tool, but it's a powerful one, proven to correlate with highly satisfied and engaged people.



Rebecca Charbauski
Senior Communications Specialist

Rebecca, an Emmy-winning journalist, reports on global research impacting the places where people work, learn and heal. Over her career, Rebecca spent 17 years covering local and national news events on television and a variety of digital platforms. She directed a digital news group in Kansas City for three years before becoming news director in Grand Rapids, Michigan for more than five years. Prior to Steelcase, Rebecca worked with one of the four largest media groups in the United States to coordinate news coverage among 48 newsrooms from the east to west coast.