

Work Better

WB

Design. Insights. Research.

Fall | Winter 2022

A World of Design

Discover exceptional design through the Steelcase community of brands

Leadership by Design

New spaces for leading in the era of hybrid work

New + Notable

Design with intention that inspires

The Design Issue

Steelcase

Steelcase Community of Brands

Steelcase and our community of brands bring together a spectrum of products and services in design, technology, materials, learning and health, to help create places that work better.

PUBLISHER & EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Gale Moutrey

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Chris Congdon

MANAGING EDITOR
Stav Kontis

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Erin Ellison

ART DIRECTION & DESIGN
Emily Cowdrey
Rationale

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Jacob Van Singel

GLOBAL CORRESPONDENTS:

AMERICAS
Brad Doan
Laura Feinauer
Carey Potter
Lindsey VanDenBoom

EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA
Anna Ault
Rocio Diez
Alicia Ries
Deena Sami

ASIA PACIFIC
Samantha Giam
Cherry Wan

CONTRIBUTORS
Rebecca Charbausk
Jill DeVries-Dryer
Jeremy Frechette
Brandon Lacic
Lisa Light
Krista Markell
Brian Miller
Anna Parini
Jonny Ruzzo
Jody Williams

DIGITAL MEDIA
Areli Arellano
Jordan Marks
Anne-Sophie Peter



Smith System

DESIGNTEX

coalesse

orangebox



viccarbe

zoom

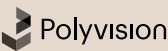
Steelcase



Bolia.com



logitech



grado

segis



HALCON

Commune

Inside This Issue



Leadership by Design

6
Executive spaces are not designed for hybrid work. It's time for change.



A World of Design

18
Discover exceptional design through the Steelcase community of brands

Designing *With*, Not *For*

30
Key learnings point to equity, not equality, as a goal for inclusive workplaces

Shape Shifters

46
How designers and our leading tech partners are exploring new room configurations, new angles and innovating new shapes to support hybrid collaboration

Departments



Conversations

28
Featuring Michael Held, VP, Global Design, Steelcase

Of Interest	2
People + Planet	4
New + Notable	31
Inspiration	48

Change by Design

Some media say the office is dying, but we'd argue it is being reborn.

Yes, office attendance is below pre-pandemic levels, according to data from Kastle Systems, but that reflects how often a badge is being swiped, not how many people are coming into an office or how they feel when they get there. If a hybrid worker comes into the office three days a week they are simply swiping their badge less often. That's not to suggest that hybrid work is the only reason attendance numbers are down – many people were unhappy with their office before the pandemic and plenty are in no hurry to return. But if you step back and take the long view, work is going through a time of dramatic change – hybrid is new for most of us. We are all figuring out new rhythms and how work is evolving. It's a fluid situation and leading organizations are asking themselves, “What is the role of the office? What job do we need it to do?” It's a time of rethinking and rebirth, not death. And that's where design comes in.

Designers are problem solvers, and the reinvention of work that is happening right now needs designers to challenge our assumptions and recreate our experiences.

People are being deliberate about where and how they work. So we need to be deliberate about designing places for the way work happens today, that are flexible enough to adapt to the way it might be tomorrow. Our new Work Better is dedicated to sharing the latest in design, insights and research that helps the world work better. In this inaugural issue, we celebrate the many talented designers from Steelcase, our expansive community of brands and from firms around the world who solve problems and help create places where people want to be. We explore ideas for how the office might be reborn, in big and small ways. And we are committed to helping design places that work better so people can do their best work.

Welcome to Work Better, where we'll bring you new ideas, insights and solutions that help how we all work.



Chris Congdon
Editor in Chief,
Work Better Magazine

Chris Congdon

New Spaces for New Work

New WorkLife Centers have opened in Paris and Melbourne to showcase solutions for the new era of hybrid work. Our spaces in Dubai, Munich, NYC, Toronto, L.A., Washington, D.C., Boston, Dallas, Atlanta, San Francisco, Chicago and Grand Rapids have also been updated. Visit a location near you to experience concepts for the new ways people are working today.



Grand Rapids



Toronto

WorkBetterLabs Popping Up in North America

Open for a limited time, these WorkBetterLabs prototype the workplace of the future. Visit one now in Philadelphia, Austin, Northwest Arkansas and San Diego. New locations in early 2023 include Raleigh, Houston and Calgary.



Melbourne



Paris



Dubai

Latest Hybrid Work Research

Creating an equitable and engaging experience for both in-room and remote participants requires intentional integration of technology and space, including lights, cameras and audio. Ocular™ is a curved table designed specifically for the Microsoft Teams Front Row experience. The curvature of the table ensures every in-room participant can see one another and be at eye level with remote colleagues.



New hierarchy of needs for the hybrid workplace

Enhance Performance

Access to better technology, tools and spaces should make work easier than working at home or anywhere else.

Socialize with Purpose

People need intentionally designed spaces that help them break down silos, build team camaraderie and influence others to advance their work.

Create Community

Engaging in rituals like volunteering, hack-a-thons, cultural celebrations or personal milestones brings meaning to work and aligns people's values with others.

Learn more about this research
steelcase.com/NewHybridNeeds



Steelcase Global Report: The New Era of Hybrid Work
Find out what matters most in the office now.
steelcase.com/GlobalReport2022

71% Of leaders embrace hybrid work*

#1 Employee need: hybrid collaboration spaces*

56% Of all meetings will be hybrid*

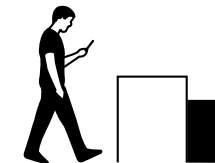
*Source: Steelcase Global Research 2021-2022

Three emerging types of hybrid workers

1 Anchored
Required attendance. Needs owned, individual spaces.



2 Untethered
Has no assigned space and works in shared social, team and personal settings.



3 Destination
Decides when to come into the office and needs more owned team or project spaces.



Welcome to the Steelcase community of brands

H A L C O N

HALCON, known for their beautiful precision-tailored wood furniture, uncompromising design and master craftsmanship, is now a Steelcase company.

W

WENDELBO

Wendelbo is a Danish furniture brand with a long-standing history and heritage established in 1955, Aarhus, Denmark. Since its beginnings, Wendelbo has specialized in the production of upholstered furniture.

segis

Segis was born in Italy in 1983, well-known in the Renaissance period for their craftsmanship in patrician home furnishings. Today, Segis is one of the biggest brands famed for their innovative designs and top-notch quality in the production of chairs.

Buildings have an outsized impact on climate change, causing 37% of all global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the World Green Buildings Council.

As a company that makes office furnishings that go into buildings we have the opportunity – and responsibility – to minimize our impact. **Better Is Possible.**

Designing for the Planet

“There are many choices product designers can make such as using recycled content, designing for recyclability or reuse or minimizing waste. One area we’re focused on is designing products that weigh less, meaning we use less materials in the first place.”

Michael Held
Steelcase Vice President of Global Design



Steelcase Flex Perch Stool

Uses electronic waste byproducts vs materials from virgin fossil fuel

70% of recycled content

100% recyclable

Changing colors during production creates imperfect mixed pigment versions that are gifted to charities, not wasted

Another First for Think

Think is the first Steelcase product to receive a Declare label – like a nutrition label, it provides the highest level of transparency about what building products are made from.



Carbon-Smart Choices

Steelcase Series™ 1 with CarbonNeutral® product certification offsets 100% of emissions through projects like forest management, renewable energy and electric transportation.



Knit-to-Fit Stops Waste

Steelcase Flex Personal Spaces Privacy Wraps use Camira Knit, made from recycled polyester and “Knit to Fit” using exact measurements, so it’s waste-free.

Old Mattresses, New Life

The Savina sofa uses Ecopure®, a recycled foam made from discarded mattresses and sofas.

A Force for Good



Australia
Healing, Respect and Equality

This year we introduced our first of four Reconciliation Action Plans (RAP) in Australia. RAPs provide a framework to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through job opportunities, professional partnerships and cultural exchange.

India + Germany
Plants Install Solar Power

493 solar panels in Pune, India and 76 panels + technologies that produce both heat and electricity in Rosenheim, Germany deliver:

50% of energy for their daily manufacturing activities



Europe
Employees Help Ukraine

Employees throughout Europe organized many efforts, including donation drives for people seeking shelter in Romania, raising money for a field kitchen and essential supplies to refugees on the Polish border and providing funds for temporary housing for Ukrainians arriving in Bavaria.

France
Building a Circular Economy

Through a Steelcase program offered in France, Belgium, Switzerland and Luxembourg called Eco'Services, we help find alternatives to landfill through product resale, donations, upcycling and recycling. Circular by Steelcase is a new offering from Eco'Services that brings products back to like-new conditions so they can be used longer and stay out of landfills.



United States
Best Employer for Women

Steelcase ranked 13th out of the 400 organizations Forbes named as best employers for women in the U.S. These companies rank highly in the areas of parental leave, family support, flexibility, inclusive hiring practices, representation, career and pay equity.

Women make up:

1/3 of top executive positions at Steelcase

India
Women of Steel

Only 12% of manufacturing jobs in India are filled by women, and in early 2021 women represented only 10% of the workforce at our Pune, India plant, who mostly sewed or packed boxes. A focused effort and new program called “Women of Steel,” designed to support learning, development and engagement, increased the number of women to 60%, filling diverse manufacturing roles in the plant.

64% of Steelcase Board of Directors



Steelcase Impact Report 2022 Now Available
Learn how we impact our communities, strive toward bold emissions reduction targets and foster a culture of inclusion and integrity.
steelcase.com/ImpactReport

Introducing the Better Futures Community

This new community of people and organizations work to explore bold approaches to equity, education and the environment. They invest and accelerate new ideas, collaborating with partners to co-create solutions that make lasting social impact.

Leadership by Design

Executive spaces are not designed for hybrid work. It's time for change.

It used to be an experiment on the fringes, but hybrid work has gone mainstream and it's one of the biggest economic and cultural changes facing leaders today. Most organizations who choose hybrid work are trying to offer a balance between the flexibility people want and the need to bring employees together to create greater cohesion and build a sense of community.

Some leaders worry their corporate culture is slowly dissolving and talk of “quiet quitting” – pulling back from work while staying in the job (or, as some would say, a Tik Tok term for disengagement) – is making them think it's time to make sure they're leading by example.

Hybrid work policies can be a struggle for companies when people come into offices that still look like ghost towns. There's a critical mass that's needed to gain momentum and leaders play a critical role – they need to be accessible in ways they may not have considered in the past and to set the tone for the adoption of hybrid work. “Congratulations. You are the new amenity,” McKinsey's Workplace Strategy and Change Leader Phil Kirschner tells leaders. “It used to be the gym, the cafeteria, being able to bring puppies to work, whatever it is, but the executives are the new amenity.”

But the current office might be a barrier to leaders who want to be accessible and role models for hybrid. Workplace design traditionally focused on leaders' needs by creating executive floors or suites that were set apart from the rest of the organization. It became a constraint to building transparency and made it harder for leaders to have serendipitous connections with employees. A fundamentally different approach to leadership spaces can be an important tool for building the kind of culture and fostering the kind of behaviors leaders want to see.

Accessible. Approachable. Functional.

One of the things we know from our research is that employees want their leaders to be visible, accessible and transparent in how they run the business. For many leaders this requires new behaviors and practices, which can be a challenge because they also need to get their jobs done.

“Executives are the new amenity.”

Phil Kirschner, McKinsey's Workplace Strategy and Change Leader

So how can leaders balance the need to be more approachable to employees yet still have a highly-functional space to handle the moments of crisis they're dealing with more frequently, as well as the day-to-day needs of the organization? How can they collaborate as a leadership team and share quickly with each other as well as the larger organization. And how do they do all this in a hybrid work environment when they need to interact with people in-room and remote participants? “Our clients are telling us they are struggling with these issues and looking to us to help them,” says Steelcase CEO Sara Armbruster.

This is a time of seismic change and we believe space can help shape new leadership behaviors. We have a history of prototyping and testing progressive new ways for leaders to work. Our new leadership space applies our research and insights to create an innovative approach for leaders in a hybrid world.

The new space, called the “Leader Commons” and located within the Steelcase Learning and Innovation Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan is a behavioral prototype – a fully-built-out environment where concepts are tested and evaluated in real time. Like its name implies, this space is designed to be highly accessible and approachable for employees, yet functional for the demands of leadership roles. It offers spaces where they can focus and collaborate, both in-person and remotely. “We know organizations need to rebuild the social capital that was lost while everyone worked from home,” says Cherie Johnson, global design director. “Traditional leadership spaces don't offer the transparency and accessibility people want today.

The design was inspired by dynamic neighborhoods that have a range of diverse public and private spaces which encourages equity, engagement and ease of use to address the needs of hybrid work.

Making Hybrid Work

Hybrid work will require new kinds of spaces for leaders to connect easily with both in-person and remote participants and the right technology is essential for a seamless experience. Leaders need a variety of hybrid collaboration options for both 1:1 and group conversations in open and enclosed spaces that are easily accessible.

Steelcase is collaborating with industry-leading technology partners to rethink the hybrid work experience and create holistic solutions that integrate space and technology. We work together early in the design process to ensure spaces work better for people, teams and organizations.

 Microsoft

zoom

logitech

 CRESTRON

 VERGE SENSE

Learn more
steelcase.com/technologies



Designing a Leadership Neighborhood

The design concept of creating spaces that are more like a vibrant neighborhood is based on our belief that the workplace needs to be more inclusive and create the sense of community that people and organizations need to thrive. Neighborhoods are a tangible way for organizations to communicate their values and shift their culture. Every neighborhood has its own distinctive character and four key design principles guide their creation.



Me + We

Just as city neighborhoods have homes and shared spaces, a leadership community should support both individual and team work.



Fixed-to-Fluid

Leaders need a highly adaptable and resilient space that can ebb and flow with their needs. The easier it is for them to make changes on demand, the more effective the space will be.



Open + Enclosed

Privacy and the ability to focus in the office has become even more important. Leaders need to be able to find the level of privacy they require.



Braiding Digital + Physical

Every space may need to be a video space. Video meetings are a new norm in the office and everyone needs to see and be seen, hear and be heard. Technology and the physical space need to be considered holistically to provide an equitable experience for both in-person and remote participants.

Topography of a Leadership Neighborhood

A leadership neighborhood includes a diverse range of owned and shared spaces that meet the various needs of hybrid work.

1 C-Suite Home Bases
Owned personal spaces for leaders that provide privacy for focus work with adjacent back porch spaces for 1:1 collaboration.

2 Executive Assistants Pods
Workspaces provide proximity to leaders as well as to other assistants who work as a team to support leaders. Highly mobile furnishings allow for personal control and preferences.

3 Social Hub
Located at the entrance of a Leader Commons, this approachable space encourages people to gather and allows informal access to leaders. It can be an “on deck” area for people coming to attend scheduled meetings.

4 Courtyard
Located in the center of resident spaces, it’s a space where leaders can easily come together, with mobile boundary elements that can accommodate varying team sizes, provide visual and acoustic privacy and enable hybrid collaboration.

5 Front Porch
Located near main traffic thoroughfares, these informal and comfortable ancillary spaces can be used before and after meetings, as touchdown spaces, for casual conversations or for hosting guests.

6 Community Meeting Spaces
A range of fully enclosed, bookable meeting spaces are equipped to support hybrid collaboration and are available to all employees. These include Hybrid Huddle Rooms, Hybrid Active Collaboration Spaces and Hybrid Informative Collaboration Rooms.

7 Communication Kiosks
Analog and digital media integrated throughout the space provide places for storytelling and messaging to both employees and guests (*not shown on floor plan*).



Making Leaders Visible

To make the space accessible, this leadership neighborhood was intentionally designed on a major footpath to create opportunities for serendipitous interactions between leaders and employees.

Homes for Leaders

This space includes 10 C-Suite Home Bases, distributed throughout the Leader Commons. Their close proximity makes it easy for leaders to connect. Each space provides similar amenities and tools, but privacy levels vary based on leader’s work style preferences.

Illustration by Jody Williams

A New Vision for Leadership Spaces to Support Hybrid Work

C-Suite Home Base

This new kind of CEO space is highly visible, positioned on a main traffic path, yet gives leaders the privacy they need to do their work. Designed around a freestanding pod, the space has multiple areas for different kinds of work. Close the sliding door for deep focus work or video calls (each leader has a curated background that speaks to who they are).

In this setting:

*Campers & Dens by Orangebox
Mackinac Desk System by Steelcase
Steelcase Karman™*



Back Porch

An aside space to the pod serves as a back porch that signals availability and allows quick shifts for collaboration with both in-person and remote participants. A height-adjustable Mackinac table behind the pod provides a place for 1:1 meetings or to connect virtually.



Private Zone

Integrated technology and easy access to work tools makes this compact space highly effective for deep focus and hybrid 1:1 collaboration.





C-Suite Home Base Personal Zone

For leaders who prefer a more open environment, boundary elements provide shielded privacy and the opportunity to personalize the space.



Back Porch

This back porch uses lounge furniture to create a comfortable and relaxed space — an alternative to working at a desk or a place for gathering with a colleague.

In this setting:

*Steelcase Flex Personal Spaces with Privacy Wrap
Steelcase Flex Active Frames
Gesture™ Chair by Steelcase
Grace Sofa by Bolia*



Social Hub

An approachable and multipurpose café space for leaders and employees to meet; ideal for connecting before and after meetings with leadership. It also includes touchdown spaces for people to do individual work.



In this setting:

*Grid Sofa by Established & Sons
 Marien152 Guest Chair by Coalesse
 West Elm Work Greenpoint Bookshelves and Credenza
 Wing Chair by Carl Hansen & Son*



Remote Leader Space

This novel approach gives remote leaders a place to call home when they are in the office. A “work tent” for individual work, a front porch for informal meetings, and a freestanding acoustic pod provide a range of spaces from which to choose.

In this setting:

Steelcase Pod Tent
Steelcase Karman™ Chair
On the QT by Orangebox
Steelcase Flex Active Frames
Hana Chair by Moooi
Pooof Pouf by Moooi

Behind the Scenes

The Steelcase design team and the Applied Research & Consulting (ARC) group worked closely with Steelcase leaders to learn the new behaviors they wanted the space to support and what changes needed to be made to help re-energize the organization’s culture. The ARC team conducted a series of discovery exercises, workshops, surveys and interviews to better understand the challenges leaders faced and how the space should be designed to support the new needs of hybrid work.

The Steelcase design team used a highly collaborative process with leaders to create the Leader Commons. Through the use of survey tools and one-on-one interviews, they learned about each person’s leadership style and how they prefer to work — alone and together with others. The result was a range of solutions that solved the tension between the needs for accessibility and privacy.

“Every individual workspace was designed to enhance performance as well as provide sanctuary,” says Cherie Johnson, global design director. “But they are unique in how they achieve that. Every workspace provides similar amenities and tools, but differs in how we tailor visual privacy, and how they are represented as individuals. Curating a space that embodies their personality and creates a personal connection when seen on video calls or in person was an important part of this new hybrid experience.”

The Steelcase Design Team (from left to right): Global Creative Design Lead Jon Rooze, Interior Design Lead Sarah Armbruster, Senior Industrial Designer Kai Yu and Global Design Director Cherie Johnson.



A World of Design

Discover exceptional design through the Steelcase community of brands

At Steelcase, we are a community that serves our customers and the beauty of work through extraordinary design. We develop, source and deliver innovative design works from many points of view and from many creative brands to provide boundless possibility for all the ways people work. Our design brands represent a spectrum of aesthetic, price and performance options – from renowned designers around the world. And as a community, every brand we partner with reflects our shared principles of design with intention, integrity and quality to help you create beautiful places that work, your way.

Learn more about our design brands
steelcase.com/asia-en/brands/

W

WENDELBO

Its success lies in the combination of design, functionality & quality; elements rooted in the Scandinavian design mindset. Driven by a strong passion for design & quality, Wendelbo gives life to innovative classic designs set in a modern contemporary context. Offering hand-crafted, striking furniture with a clear identity and sleek comfort.



The Panorama modular sofa is designed to be an organic fit for any space, be it grand or large. Simply configure and combine its modules exactly as you'd like.



Jonas Wagell
Designer of Panorama modular sofa

“Panorama is a sofa that infuses its surroundings with lightness and understated details, designed with contemporary yet timeless look and created in a modular context it allows tailoring to exact needs, be it at home or for a professional project.”



Bolia.com



Kateryna Sokolova
Designer, in collaboration
with Bolia
Ukraine

“Ukraine, my native country, inspires my industrial designs. Its eternal transformations constantly give me ideas. I always try to capture the cultural differences and uniqueness of the countries I visit. In my opinion, good design combines three essential ingredients: simplicity, functionality and passion.”

Inspired by the colors and materials found in mother nature, Bolia reinvents Scandinavian design to create beautiful furniture built to last, to love and to keep.



coalesse

Coalesse creates enduring furniture for the modern workplace that performs beautifully – in spaces where people can connect, create and focus comfortably.



Micheal Young
Designer, in
collaboration with
Coalesse
Hong Kong

“The work of a designer is to take the language of a product to a new dimension. For me, design is all about the evolution of shape and form, and what the materials bring to the environment that we live in.”

DESIGNTEX

American designer and manufacturer of research-based applied materials for built environments that deepen the human experience, balancing beauty and utility, form and performance.

“Products designed for the workplace should deliver an emotional, aesthetic experience as well as an added layer of performance. We like products with purpose.”



Susan Lyons
President,
DesignTex
U.S.



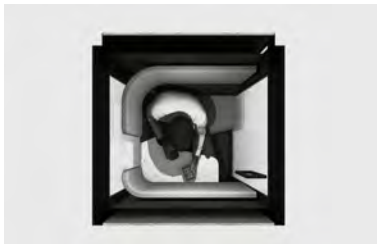
orangebox

Workspaces that remove barriers and bring people together. Smartworking™ solutions respond to ever-evolving workplace needs so you can work wherever you want and however you choose

“Phone booths are incredibly popular spaces for quick call privacy insted of using the stairwell or corridors or worse still walking around the office and annyoing hovering around other people's desks.”



Mark Partridge
Designer, Orangebox
U.K.



“The design personality of the first range of Cubb seating and tables was intrinsic to its success. We knew that this gave Cubb additional scope of potential, and this has now been realised with this extensive range of team tables.”

“Our best-selling collection, the Sling ticks all the boxes; modern, comfortable and functional”

from m.a.d furniture design



The Hong Kong-based furniture brand delivers well designed, modern furniture for home, work or play at an accessible price point.



grado

Grado is a young brand composed by a group of young people, with a wild dream to be a perfect combination of office and residential furniture.

Inspired by the naturally occurring segments in bamboo stems, the sofa features unique upholstery design with embedded fabrics. The elegant sections enable designers to create modular settings in any workspace.



Commune

Strong in product design & development, Commune places great emphasis on high quality workmanship and furniture craft.

With their crafty home-inspired products that fuse current trends, colonial style motifs, texture, and woodcraft – Commune products add a unique design element to any environment.



Carrying on Wright’s vision, the Foundation’s mission is to inspire people to discover and embrace an architecture for better living. Steelcase and the Foundation are joining in a new creative collaboration.
steelcase.com/FLWCollection

“While people know Wright for his work in architecture, his passion for creating equitable, inspiring work environments was visionary and his ideas have only become more relevant over time.”

Stuart Graff
President & CEO,
Frank Lloyd Wright
Foundation
U.S.



viccarbe

Founded in Valencia, Spain, Viccarbe works with designers from around the world to create a collection of collaborative furniture and accessories inspired from a blend of different cultures.



Victor Carrasco
Founder + Designer,
Viccarbe
Spain

“Improving the life of others is my biggest motivation and this is why I believe that creating kind and iconic products for people can provoke new, unexpected and positive bonds between them.”

Introducing Michael Held

Steelcase Vice President of Global Design



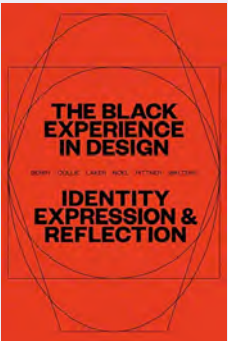
Michael recently took over the reins for the Steelcase Global Design Studio and relocated his family to Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has lived in seven countries and traveled the world extensively. Work Better caught up with him just a few days after he arrived in the U.S.

WB: How did you get attracted to design?
MH: I grew up in a small German town that was almost like a medieval museum. When I was 12, my brother and I got to move into our basement. I got to think of what I would do with my own space for the first time. A few years later, when my parents redid their living room, for whatever reason, they listened to my ideas. A carpenter used my rough sketches to create my first pieces of furniture. They liked it and so I also ended up designing my dad’s office. My parents still live with that furniture today. I also built furniture for a couple of friends, very industrial pieces of welded, raw steel and cushions my mom sewed. I wanted to learn more about design as a means to learn new things.

What Michael's Reading Now

The Black Experience in Design: Identity, Expression & Reflection by Anne H. Berry, Kareem Collie, Penina Acayo Laker, Lesley-Ann Noel, Jennifer Rittner, Kelly Walters

Design Emergency: Building a Better Future by Alice Rawsthorn & Paola Antonelli



WB: How do you approach design challenges?
MH: Curiosity and creativity. Asking questions instead of falling in love with answers and valuing creative ideas. It’s a privilege to work in a job where you get asked to be creative every day. That needs to be paired with a purpose for what we do. For us, it’s our customers. You have to connect creativity and curiosity to a tangible business mission. You can work all your life on crazy explorations, but what’s the point if none of it impacts what people do or how they go through their day?

WB: What do you do when you have a creative block?
MH: Empty my head. Do something else. Ask others for help. Go cycling or walking, hiking, climbing, making, building ... anything to lose myself in repetitive physical activity so my brain can do the work without being watched.

WB: How do you think about sustainability when designing new products?
MH: We should design lighter-weight products with as much recycled or recyclable material as possible. And we need to make it intuitive to disassemble. My grandmother went through WWII. She learned how to live with less. How to reuse. We used to think that was crazy as kids. But now as an adult I look at that with different eyes. We grew up in an era of abundance. Just use more, there’s always more. But now we’re realizing that designing less is more.

WB: How is that reflected in the way you’ve designed your own home?
MH: The way we live is inspired by the way we lived in Asia. It’s super efficient. The layout is smart. There’s nothing that isn’t there for a reason.

WB: What is the biggest workplace design shift you are seeing right now?
MH: People can work anywhere. The office will play a different role than it has in the past 100 years. To be truly customer-centric, we will help our customers solve their problems wherever they work. I’m excited. This challenge is different from anything Steelcase has thought about. Work is not going away. It’s changing. Some people want a routine. Others want freedom. All of this means the workplace is changing, too. I’m not in preservation. I’m in design and I think about where we’re going next.

WB: What’s your favorite part of your workplace?
MH: Project areas when new prototypes are set up. It’s the fastest way to engage and learn. I enjoy a good barista bar for great coffee and pastries, meeting colleagues and customers while learning new things. And our new hybrid-ancillary spaces at our Learning + Innovation Center in Grand Rapids make it easy to connect with great technology in beautiful spaces.

WB: How has living and working in different parts of the world influenced you?
MH: My views are much more diverse because I have more cultural references to draw from and more comparisons to make. I’ve become more humble, reminding myself not to jump to conclusions. It’s helped me to understand people a bit better and become more empathetic. I am able to draw on my experiences to help open other people’s minds as well.

Last Words
I’ve always been fascinated by creatives that operate at the fringes of their fields or society, the weird ones (and their collaborators) that push us forward with new ideas and commit to radical approaches at the time. I always liked to do things a bit different from other people. I was okay not fitting in, maybe that’s why I was lucky enough to stumble into design relatively early on. —

Design Voices: Education

What is the single biggest change you’ve made in the way you design learning spaces since students have returned to schools?



Prof. Dr. techn. Katja Ninnemann
Digitalization and Workspace Management, Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft
Berlin, Germany

I’ve redesigned my teaching concept so I can easily switch between physical and virtual learning spaces, and focus on learning processes independently of external factors and spatial options. Architects and designers should first understand the challenges of hybrid teaching and learning processes and then redesign learning spaces step-by-step together with lecturers and students.



Gretchen L. Holy, Assoc. IIDA
Principal, Higher Education Interior Design Leader | DLR Group
Kansas, U.S.

The past few years have shown a spotlight on student anxieties and insecurities. Our focus has shifted to ensure student engagement and wellbeing are infused in all academic and social settings to nurture the whole student and meet not only their academic, but their social and emotional needs.



Richard Leonard
Architect and Director, Hayball
Melbourne, Australia

Effectively overnight, online teaching and learning became an integral and routine part of education. This has had an obvious impact on the technologies applied to support online education, and emphasized the importance of spaces to facilitate it – spaces that are video capable and incorporate furniture and settings that support its effective use.

Illustrations by Jonny Ruzzo

Designing *With*, Not *For*

Key learnings point to equity, not equality,
as a goal for inclusive workplaces.



Illustration by Anna Parini

“Nothing about us, without us” is traced back to the South African disability rights movement of the early 1990s and communicates the idea that any decision affecting a group of people should not be made without the direct participation of the people being impacted.

“Designing for inclusivity is not a solo endeavor. The more we partner and practice inclusive design, the more we can absorb and build upon the knowledge people share with us,” says Kamara Sudberry, Steelcase inclusive design leader. “It’s impossible to share our learnings without recognizing we are always improving and have more to learn moving forward.”

In that spirit, we are working with leading organizations to accelerate our learning (see community partners). These partners are

invaluable as Sudberry and her colleagues learn, listen, observe and create more inclusive practices and workplaces.

Surveys, interviews, roundtables and design exercises all inform a better future workplace. These interactions come from a place of trust, respect and empathy.

Equity Over Equality

There are nearly 8 billion people in the world. Yet for decades workplace design has focused on standards — giving everyone the same accommodations. Offices with rows and rows of desks and chairs strive for equality. But this assumes everyone works in the same way, at the same time, in the same place. That’s simply not true. Hybrid work is the latest example of people desiring more choice and control over their work experience.

Today’s era of hybrid work should take on a more inclusive approach to designing the

workplace focused on equity. Instead of giving everyone the same thing, provide people with a range of experiences that allow them to select what best accommodates their needs.

Inclusive Design Process

Inclusive design is not a destination or an outcome — it’s a process. Done well, it is baked into an organization’s culture, process and place. It invites people in, gives them a voice and provides them with agency to participate.

“Designing for inclusion begins with recognizing exclusion,” says Kat Holmes, author of *Mismatch: How Inclusion Shapes Design*. Identifying those left out leads to the next step which is to intentionally invite those important voices to identify barriers and co-create accommodations.

Exclusion can be the result of physical, cognitive and cultural barriers, as well as many others. Exclusion often intersects many areas based on someone’s identity and the personal knowledge about the world they’ve gained through direct, first-hand life experience. Reimagining accommodations with people who have been left out is at the heart of innovation, and creates opportunities to solve for one or many forms of exclusion.

“It’s time to move away from one-size-fits-all to the one-size-fits-one approach,” says Sudberry. “By championing choice and control, we empower people to find the place and ways in which they feel their best and do their best work.”

Community Partners

G3ict Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies. g3ict.org

IAAP International Association of Accessibility Professionals. accessibilityassociation.org

Special Olympics Michigan Sports training and athletic competition for people with intellectual disabilities. somi.org

SPORK! A voice for the disabled community. sporkability.com

The Valuable 500 Global business collective innovating together for disability inclusion. thevaluable500.com

World Enabled Supporting implementation of legal mandates for inclusion and diversity. worldenabled.org

New + Notable

Design with intention
that *inspires*

Discover solutions from Steelcase
and our community of brands

steelcase.com/new



The combination of hybrid work patterns and the accelerated use of technology to connect virtually and in-person is a key driver for change in both the workplace and working practices.

Air³ acoustic pods designed to provide private spaces wherever you need it.





“During the design and development process it became clear that my principle aim was to design a system that was elegant yet simple. My experience in the fashion industry is made manifest in the subtle yet important contrasting graphic gap at the external seams, which gives Cwtch a contemporary twist.”

Angela Gidden
Designer of Cwtch

Places for Privacy

Access to private spaces is more important than ever, especially as more work happens on video.



On the QT by Orangebox
Freestanding phonebooth that can be placed anywhere you need privacy.



Away from the Desk by Orangebox
Unique high back design provides refined acoustic and visual privacy, and offers an upright, ergonomically controlled seating position more reflective of a task seat posture, giving employees more support in the collaborative spaces.



Air³ Pod by Orangebox
Its automatic louvered roof and fail-safe fire system makes it the most advanced pod in the market.

Seating With Style

Add comfort and luxury to social spaces, meeting rooms and waiting areas with these new contemporary and versatile seating designs.

Mono Chair
by Wendelbo



Mango Chair
by Wendelbo



Marteen Chair
by Viccarbe



Transit *by m.a.d*



Dragonfly
by Segis



segis

Camel *by Segis*
Inspired by Camel's hump, the shape of the cozy shell is essential, nothing is superfluous expressing originality is comfort.



"When we were creating Camel, we got inspiration from the Camel hump... its an eclectic collection of seating with delicate soft designed lines, comfortable in a variety of applications"



Bartoli Design,
Designer for Segis
Camel collection



“The design of this new chair, appropriately named “Dragonfly”, was derived from observations made on the same insect, whose body is characterized by an imbalance in weight distribution between the front legs and its extended tail. The formal design evolved into a cantilevered seat with its legs nested at the front giving the impression that the chair is defying the force of gravity.”



Odo Fioravanti
Designer,
in collaboration with Segis
Italy

Dragonfly by Segis



Better Hybrid Collaboration

Hybrid meetings are here to stay but less than 10% of the world’s 90 million meeting rooms are video-enabled*. And while technology is critical, more often people report frustration with the space itself, complaining it’s too small, uncomfortable, noisy, lacks visual privacy or is hard to reserve.**

The best hybrid collaboration experiences bridge the gap between people physically in the room and those who are remote. It’s not enough to bring remote people into the space, in-office participants need a better virtual presence by designing for the entire experience — keeping important elements like cameras, acoustics, content and lighting in mind. Three key goals guide these spaces: equity, engagement and ease.

We’ve learned it’s critical for design, facilities and IT to work closely together to pilot, design and develop new hybrid spaces. The room should enhance the technology and vice versa so everyone can contribute at the highest level. That was the goal when Microsoft and Steelcase began working together to redesign the conference room. The result: a new room configuration paired with new furniture designed to augment the technology.

It starts with flipping the layout of a traditional rectangular conference room so everyone is facing the long wall. Ocular™, a new curved table, developed for the Microsoft Teams Front Row Experience (which positions remote participants in a larger, eye-level gallery while sharing content, chat and other meeting elements) cues people to sit where they can see one another and remote participants eye-to-eye. Overhead lighting ensures everyone has a soft glow and is literally seen in the best light. And Logitech technology adds a camera that automatically zooms in on the speaker and a controller that joins the meeting with one touch for a seamless experience.



*Frost & Sullivan, March 2021; State of the Global Video Conferencing Devices Market, Forecast to 2025
**Steelcase Global Research 2022

Hybrid Collaboration Goals

- Equity**
Strive for equal experiences on both sides of the camera
- Engagement**
Design for everyone’s ability to participate and contribute
- Ease**
Create a seamless flow between different types of work and experiences



Tap Controller by Logitech
Makes video meetings simple with one-touch join, calendar integration, easy content-sharing and a consistent experience across all rooms.



Rally Bar Mini by Logitech
All-in-one video conferencing experience, provides brilliant optics and high performance audio to meeting rooms.

Ocular by Steelcase + Microsoft
The curved shape of the table creates an eye-to-eye view so it’s easy to see and be seen.



Air³ by Orangebox
Provides best-in-class acoustics and integrates a wide variety of technology.



Power Where and When You Need It

Innovative ways to keep your devices powered and people working.



Under Worksurface Utility Power by Steelcase
One cord-out technology lets you plug in multiple items below the worksurface.



Steelcase Flex Mobile Power
Just under three pounds, Mobile Power is lightweight and portable. A responsive, flexible handle makes it easy to take with you when you're on the move.





Spaces for Learning

79% of students say active learning experiences are better than traditional classrooms. Flowform™ by Smith System lets students rearrange the space however they want.

Smith System®

Built for Learning. Smith System believes that every student and teacher deserve the best possible space to inspire learning.

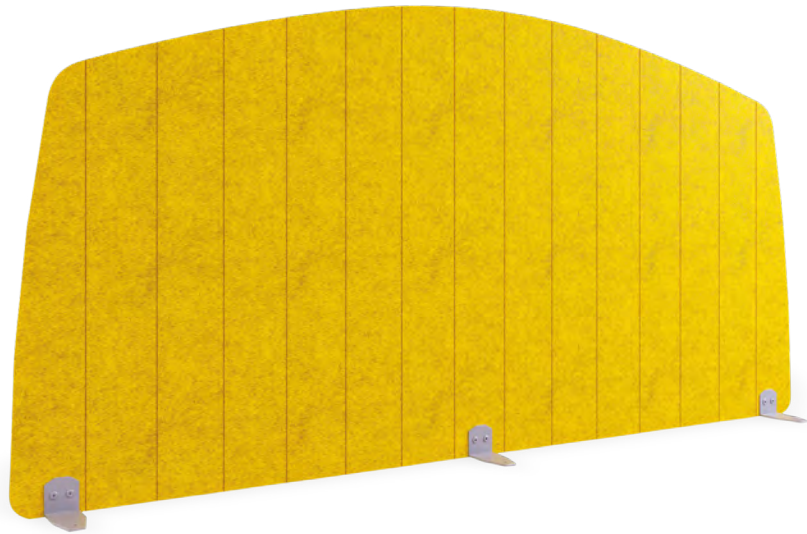


Flowform Learn Lounge Table

Flowform Square Ottoman



Flowform Learn Lounge Screen



Flowform Learn Lounge Single Seat



Flowform Hexagon Ottoman



Flowform Learn Lounge Double Seat



Accord Mixed-Media Collaborative Board
by Polyvision

Shape Shifters

Going beyond rectangles
in the hybrid era

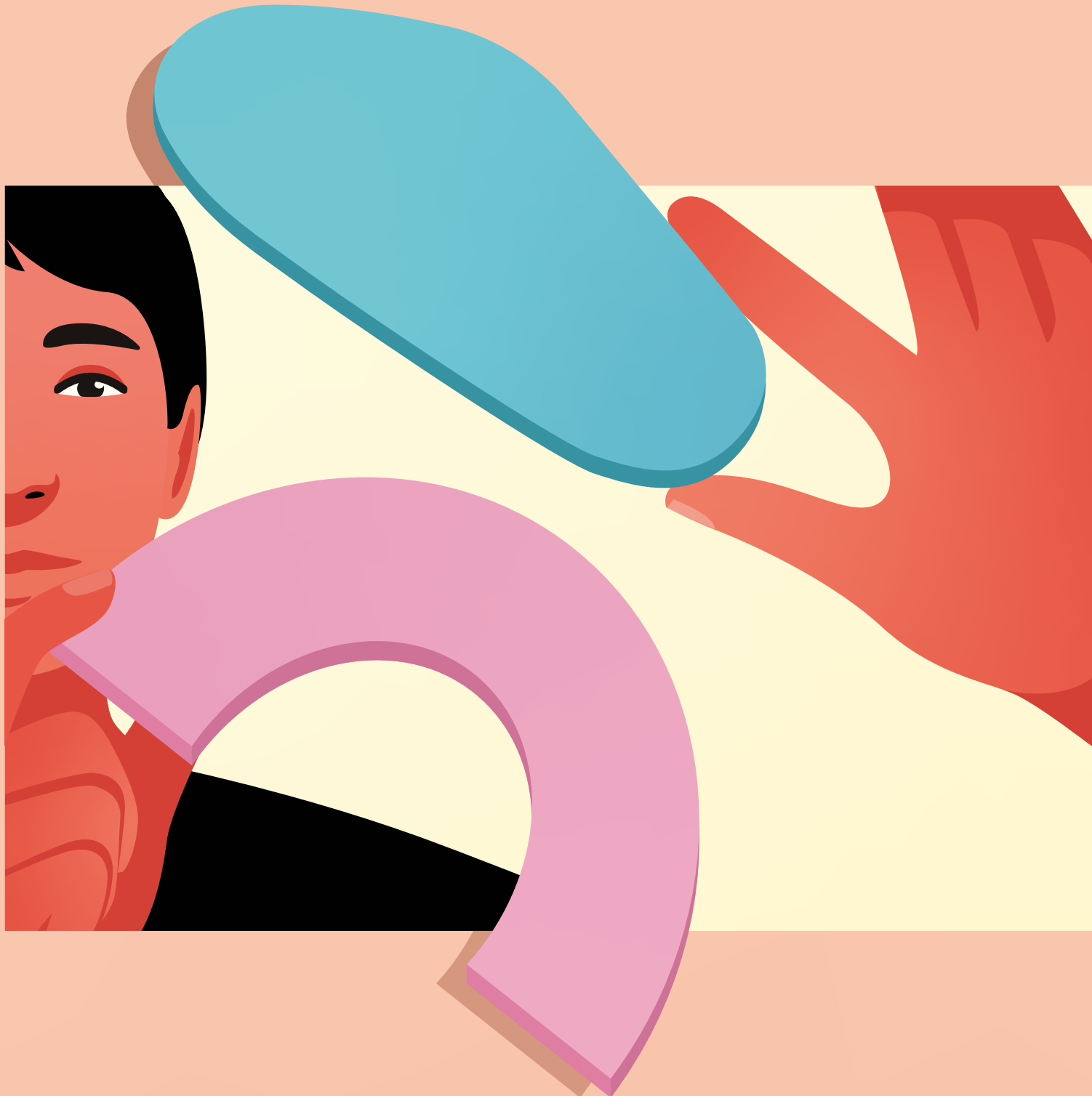


Illustration by Anna Parini

Picture a typical conference room. A long rectangular table faces a short wall. People sit turned toward the monitor — forced to lean in to see remote teammates. Looking at the back of one another’s heads. Some voices are hard to hear. And, the setup reinforces hierarchy. The “head of the table” is likely running the meeting.

Today, more than half of all meetings are hybrid. Designers are rethinking traditional paradigms to create spaces that work for everyone — in person and remote — which means designing for the camera as much as the people in the room. It also means rethinking that rectangle.

“This is all about sightlines,” says Mary Elaine Roush, Steelcase global design principal. “We have to design so everyone has eye-to-eye contact with remote participants and any content being displayed. But we can’t lose what we know about in-room collaboration that works which includes everyone in the room being able to see one another as well.”

Collaboration is the top reason people want to come into the office. Yet, Steelcase global research suggests people are not satisfied with spaces for hybrid collaboration. Successful hybrid collaboration requires thinking like a movie director. Lights, camera, audio, content. Where should cameras be mounted for natural eye-to-eye contact? How many speakers and microphones do you need? Where can cords be nested?

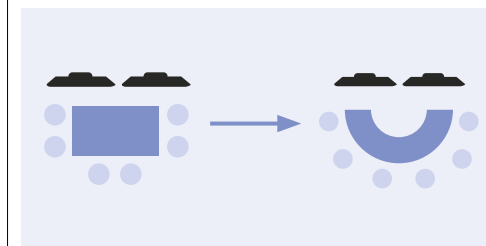
Roush was one of the designers who took part in a global design charette with input from our IT partners; Microsoft, Zoom, Logitech and Crestron. Teams experimented with new ways to create more equitable, easy-to-use spaces that enhance how people engage in the conversation. “Understanding the capabilities of specific technology is critical. That’s what helps us create holistic solutions that really perform,” says Roush.

Teams co-created new room configurations, discovered new angles and innovated with new shapes to support hybrid collaboration.



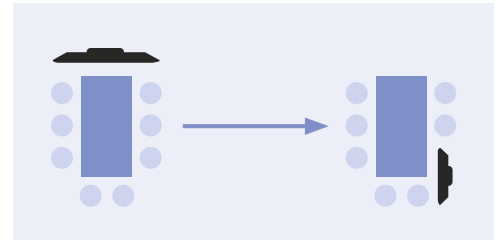
Portrait to Landscape

Hybrid meetings present an opportunity for designers to think differently. When fewer people are in person, the room can be used in new ways. By changing the orientation of the room from portrait (facing the short wall) to landscape (facing the long wall), people on both sides of the camera can see and be seen. Everyone in the room is equidistant to the camera. Remote participants can see facial expressions and body language.



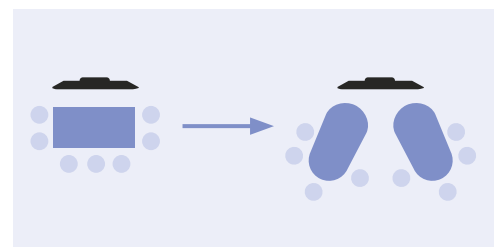
Corners to Curves

By shifting from rectilinear furniture and spaces to furniture designed and configured in geometric shapes with rounded or curved features, in-room participants can see one another at all times in addition to being at eye level with remote colleagues. That eye-to-eye view creates more equity between those in-room and remote. “The shape of the table helps position the person in the room for the best video experience,” says Roush. “Rectangles stack people on video and you can’t see everyone easily. Thoughtfully designed table shapes specifically for video, position people to have the best sightlines.”



Humanizing Hybrid

“We spent a lot of time talking about how to bring remote participants down into the conversation instead of having them displayed as if they are always at the front of the stage,” says Roush. The teams are exploring where the remote participants live in the physical space — trying to get closer to an in-person experience. By offering more flexibility and improving sightlines, designers can create more natural, human interactions. Multiple monitors, mobile devices and new software and hardware features offer ways to separate people from content. A camera positioned with the monitor that hosts people helps maintain eye-to-eye contact to emulate a more natural conversation.



Few to Many

As part of a range of spaces and technologies, multiple furniture elements or monitors allow for a variety of solutions for different types of hybrid collaboration. Lots of factors need to be considered like how the space will be used, its size and available software and hardware features. Ownership plays a role here. If a team owns this space, they are more likely to take advantage of adjustable elements. If this is a widely-shared space, a fixed configuration may be more successful since typically meetings leave little time to test or troubleshoot devices. ■■■

Inspiration

“The dynamic aspect of this chair has been enhanced through the introduction of vertical fins at the rear of the backrest that allude to the design elements present in the automotive world.”

Odo Fioravanti
Designer,
in collaboration with Segis
Italy

Work Better
WB Magazine.
Podcast.
Online.

Introducing the podcast where we think about work and ways to make it better.

S1:E1
A New Vision for the Workplace *with Chris Congdon*

S1:E2
Neuroscience of Community *with David Rock*

S1:E3
Groupiness at Work *with Annie Murphy Paul*

S1:E4
Loneliness, Lingerin + Libraries *with Eric Klinenberg*

S1:E5
Be More Human in the AI Age *with Kevin Roose*

S1:E6
Innovation as a Recipe for Engaging Talent *with Simone Ahuja*

S1:E7
RTO Is Like Returning From Deployment *with Lt. Col. Adria Horn*

S1:E8
Change Community and Your Company *with Kenny Clewett*



Listen. Learn. Subscribe.

Visit steelcase.com/podcasts
or find us wherever you listen.



Stay Tuned



Work Better Online

Find more design ideas,
our latest insights
and in-depth research.
Delivered in real time.

steelcase.com/research

Find us on social



instagram.com/steelcase

pinterest.com/steelcase

facebook.com/steelcase

twitter.com/steelcase

linkedin.com/company/steelcase



On the Cover
The Menagerie of Extinct Animals by Moooi, part of the Steelcase community of brands, celebrates nature's diversity and Moooi's commitment to protecting the planet and its occupants through sustainable design.

22-0000704 © 2022 Steelcase Inc. All rights reserved. Published by Steelcase Inc. Trademarks contained herein are the property of Steelcase Inc. or of their respective owners. Material in this publication may not be reproduced in any form unless you really want to help people work better — just ask us first, okay?