

Four New Designs for AI-ready Workplaces

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Let's be honest. Today, what is being referred to as "AI-enhanced work" will soon just be "work." ChatGPT launched about two years ago, and already 92% of Fortune 500 companies use its generative AI technology*. Organizations' use of AI has accelerated significantly in the past year — both a promising and challenging reality. Leaders are deciding on tools, policies and ethical guidelines, while employees figure out use cases to benefit their work and teams.

Focus work, for example, is no longer a solo pursuit if it involves an AI assistant or agent. Team brainstorming may use generative AI technology to kick-start the ideation process. Since people are spending more time with screen-based artificial intelligence, they're at greater risk for stress, burnout and social isolation — so they need their workplace to support their mental health and human connections. As behaviors evolve, the physical workplace must evolve too (Read: [AI Needs a Human-Centered Workplace](#)) or risk becoming a barrier to productivity and wellbeing.

Steelcase WorkSpace Futures researchers and designers worked together to understand how AI is changing work behaviors and how the workplace should adapt. In addition, Steelcase works closely with leaders like Microsoft, Logitech and Zoom to identify the best ways to integrate technology in workspaces — considering furniture, acoustics, camera positioning, and lighting — because these factors directly impact visibility, sound quality and the overall effectiveness of AI-driven interactions.

Designers applied [Community-Based Design](#) principles to create spaces for a range of AI-augmented work. Developed by Steelcase, this design approach is inspired by urban planning practices that help communities adapt to change. It helps create flexible workplaces that support a range of activities and diverse work styles. Technology is seamlessly integrated to amplify human strengths like creativity and innovation, so people can do their best work with or without AI. The result is a flexible, human-centered workplace that adapts to evolving needs.

Here are four ideas for how today's workplace can empower people in the AI era and help organizations maximize their investment in new technology.

These designs explore ways to balance the needs of humans working alongside AI. They consider both AI-prominent and -ambient spaces. AI-prominent spaces support the active use of AI to get work done, whereas AI-ambient spaces allow technology to fade into the background and support environments focused on human connections and wellbeing.

AI will have a profound impact on all the ways people work throughout the day. Most current workplaces are not designed to support these new ways of working, which is likely why 78% of leaders agree AI will cause them to redesign offices in the next 3-5 years (Steelcase research, 2025). Organizations can benefit from working with partners that understand how to seamlessly integrate technology and the physical environment to design a better human experience.

Focus

Start the day by setting aside a block of time to focus with an AI agent in an acoustically private enclave. Chat back-and-forth to generate ideas and explore possibilities around a complex topic. Join human colleagues in the nearby collaboration area to review, analyze and take AI-aided ideas further to develop a point of view — keeping critical thinking front and center. AI hallucinations can lead to inaccuracies, which drives the need for human review. More open spaces encourage transparency and peer learning, so AI becomes an additional partner, not a substitute.

No matter what someone's AI proficiency level is, these spaces integrate technology in various ways to support a broad range of tasks and work styles. The nearby open workstations make it easy for people exploring or experimenting with AI assistants or chatbots to stay connected to their team.

How It Works

- Inside the enclave, acoustic privacy and dual monitors, including one in a vertical orientation, support content creation and conversation with an AI agent. The option for task or lounge seating makes a longer-duration session more comfortable. Logi Dock adds an all-in-one docking station for quick technology setup. A Brio camera with auto framing and noise-reducing mics improves remote meetings.
- A tablet on the shelving and ceiling speakers allows those inside the enclave to create a natural soundscape if it helps them focus.
- Adjacent to the enclave, a small “front porch” provides a transitional area where people can shift

from focus to collaborative work. The Logitech Rally Board 65 with AI-enhanced camera and acoustic fencing mitigates noise for nearby colleagues.

- Tech-enabled back-to-back workstations nearby provide visual privacy while also encouraging transparency and peer learning with AI.

Collaboration

A cross-functional team reserves this space for a few weeks to several months to tackle an urgent project where they can switch rapidly between different kinds of work, alone or together. As AI accelerates the pace of work, self-forming, temporary project teams need flexible spaces that can adapt based on what needs to be done throughout the day. By dividing the space into micro zones, teams have everything they need to transition from one type of collaboration to another during the long-term project, no matter how AI evolves in the future. Whether jumping on a virtual call (informative collaboration), working side by side (evaluative collaboration) or brainstorming in person (generative collaboration), teams can work with the help of their human and AI collaborators.

How It Works

- Team members can quickly switch between focus and teamwork as they work with AI individually and together in small groups.
- An always-on AI-assisted dashboard on the left keeps track of progress and action items.
- The Ocular Coupe 5 table in the back right supports evaluative collaboration, suggesting where

people can sit so everyone is eye-to-eye, whether in person or remote. The [Moooi Pallana Pendant](#) provides the right lighting for virtual meetings. The Logitech Rally Bar Mini and Logitech Scribe work with Microsoft Teams to use object detection to frame and label each person individually to create more equity.

- The space near the front right is designed for more generative collaboration, including group brainstorming and iteration. The Microsoft Surface Hub and [Steelcase Roam Mobile Stand](#) can include a remote team member in the conversation. High-sit stools encourage movement and engagement with content. In-person teammates can digitally whiteboard while AI takes notes and provides real-time updates.

Social Connection

Outdoor or indoor? Pick the right vibe for a quick chat, team huddle or personal downtime. This lively social hub uses technology to enhance what makes people uniquely human — communication and connection. Working with AI can be intense and mentally draining. As people interact more with AI, spaces can help balance those AI interactions with human connection. Designers cluster seating to foster community and include solutions for powering personal devices while keeping them out of view, reducing visual technology distractions and supporting face-to-face human connections. Grab a back booth with AI-assisted translation to facilitate a multi-language conversation. And learn what's happening around the company on the large-scale digital wall.

How It Works

- Technology blends into the environment. A large digital wall can display information or transform into calming visual art.
- Semi-private nooks equipped with AI translation technology facilitate conversations between people who speak different languages by displaying captioning in real time.
- Power is intentionally hosted on the lounge rail, side work table and [Steelcase Flex Mobile Cart](#) so devices can be plugged in and out of someone's direct line of sight, discouraging distractions from texts and pings that so often interrupt conversations.
- People can choose from a variety of postures and settings to relax, recharge and reconnect in a calm, nature-infused environment.
- A coffee bar encourages casual chats, spontaneous interactions and group discussions.

Rejuvenation

Reserve this immersive space where AI can personalize the environment to help people recharge and reset. Too often, staring at a screen or jumping from video call to video call may actually stall progress. When people take a break, it gives the brain a chance to make subconscious connections between disparate ideas. It's where "ah ha!" moments happen. Integrated technology lets people set the mood by customizing lighting, sounds and what's displayed (or not) on the large digital wall. Organic shapes, natural materials and a choice of lounge postures ease the strain of a hectic workday.

How It Works

- On the left wall, technology blends into the environment, transforming into nature-inspired visual art

or appearing as an architectural element when not in use.

- Phillips Hue AI adds smart lighting. An app on the tablet allows personalization based on mood, activity or time of day. Ask it to “create a cozy space for journaling,” for example.
- Anyone can use the tablet to control different natural sounds, such as a babbling brook or music coming from ceiling speakers.
- A seat situated closer to the ground encourages a more relaxed posture away from a desk and computer screen.
- Natural materials, plants and nature-inspired prints create a calming space.
- The floor mat signals to people they can meditate, stretch or just take a break.

Interested in learning more about how AI is changing the workplace? Explore the latest Steelcase AI research by reading [AI Needs a Human-Centered Workplace](#).