

Building a future-ready workplace



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The pandemic has surely changed the way we work. Pre-Covid, the rise of digital nomads and co-working spaces signalled that evolution was already afoot.

The last two years had a lasting impact on the future of work. The consequences of the pandemic on economic activity, employment, and our way of working have been far-reaching.

Hybrid work is here to stay. The forced isolation of many employees during Covid-19 proved that we can work effectively from home or virtually anywhere with an online connection.

With the return to in-person work environments, employees

desire greater safety, flexibility and connectedness at the office.

Employees want a better office experience and a workplace that facilitates meaningful interaction.

Hybrid work has become a baseline expectation for most employees, and organisations are seeing the effects of this. With the need for employees to return to the office full time, albeit on a rotation basis, staff turnover has significantly increased. Many employees are now seeking

flexible work policies, and this became a key consideration in relation to employee attrition. Employees turnover will continue to increase given that the emotional costs of leaving the organisation are lower with a hybrid work model as there are greater choices of employers when location is no longer a factor.

While employee retention is on the mind of every chief human resources officer, culture is on the minds of the employees that companies are trying to retain.

A well-designed workplace helps foster a high-performance culture, enabling employees to work as effectively as possible to achieve business goals and generate value for the organisation.





With more than 20 years of experience in workplace design and build, SCA goes beyond just delivering good designs.

Our mission is to embrace the endless variations of workplace behaviour and amplify employees' performance by creating the workplace of tomorrow.

Post Covid, we see a greater need to guide our clients to embrace diversity, uplift human connectivity and align their thoughts with the new movements impacting workplace design.

We want offices to be a destination. Employees must be excited to work in their office

Everyone should feel valued and have a sense of belonging to their organisation. The office can be a vehicle for communicating brand values and creating a community at work where people feel they belong. Businesses may also want to future-proof their offices as much as possible.

There is no better time for employers to start reimagining their work and the role of their offices in creating safe, productive, and enjoyable jobs for their employees.

The future of the workplace is now.

Here are six factors that employers should consider for a future-ready workplace.



1 - Agility



No one wants to be greeted by a sea of workstations.

With the shift towards promoting in-person communication and collaboration, spaces and furnishings may serve dual or more uses.

An agile work environment gives employees the freedom and flexibility to work in different areas of an office when and how they choose. Designers need to consider the increasing need for agility at work and simulate the

usage of any particular spaces under different scenarios.

For example, co-working areas can be converted into town hall meeting arenas. Phone booths and workstations can be made mobile to create a variety of configurations for workshopping.

The key to designing such flexibility is to prioritise the users and map the infrastructure for their multiple needs. On top of that, to judiciously select the appropriate furniture.

2 - Diversity



Every visit to the office should boost morale, build community and increase productivity. The opportunity for face-to-face collaboration may draw people together but the environment that they work in should also be conducive for focused, individual work. A diverse workforce requires careful workplace planning and design. Today, we work in an environment made up of individuals with varying perspectives, beliefs, cultures, races, socioeconomic status, gender identities, sexual orientations and backgrounds.

Employees want to be treated fairly, respected, valued and accepted, and know they belong to organisations that embrace diversity. These are found to have increase employee productivity and lower employee attrition.

The office must adapt to evolving and fluid work patterns.

Introducing distinct zones or neighbourhoods within the premises that support a range of activities is an inclusive response to these needs. Each neighbourhood can be designed to offer levels of privacy and confidentiality, as well as cater to varying noise levels. All areas should, of course, be supported by an integrated IT network as a basic requirement.

3 - Belonging



The world is constantly changing and evolving. External events like political instability, global pandemics, racial discrimination and so on, cause frustration, fear and disruptions. This leads to employees finding solace in their everyday life including turning to their organisation for a sense of meaning and solidarity.

With this, employers need to foster diverse, equitable, and inclusive communities for their workers and let them feel that they belong. This impacts how comfortable they feel at work and their contribution to the organisation's common goals.

They should include a variety of interconnected space types that support a mixture of uses, feel organic and flow naturally from one to another. When the workplace is conceived as a community made up of diverse neighbourhoods, a sense of belonging is engendered alongside higher levels of trust among teammates, greater choice and control of the overall work experience, and more options for equitable access to privacy when needed.

This allows seamless shifting between collaboration time and focused individual work.

Having distinct neighbourhoods or zones at the office, just like the real ones we inhabit, helps evoke a home base for individuals and teams alike.

4 - Personalisation



As we move away from having the typical cubicles and desks in the office, this does not mean that the workplace is becoming depersonalised. It is quite the opposite. Although one may not have a spot for personal artefacts, the office can now be personalised in a much more meaningful way - by adapting it to employees' physical and psychological needs.

Studies on the work environment have consistently shown the correlations between workspace personalisation, wellbeing and improved productivity. Enlightened organisations should consider every factor in providing an optimal workspace.

This means providing a variety of workspace types. For those who prefer working in their own private space, an individual concentration pod is ideal.

Should a team need to have a quick meeting, they can easily regroup at one of the open collaboration areas. Or if they feel like stretching their legs, they can work at a standing desk.

The workplace is also becoming increasingly personalised with spaces suited for an assortment of personalities.

Introverts can choose to work in an environment with less noise while others may prefer constant interaction. The other forms of personalisation to consider are the ability to adjust the ambient temperature or lighting levels.

5 - Wellness & Ergonomics



One's health goes far beyond our physical wellbeing.

Employees now look to the office environment as one that should foster mental health through enabling human connections and meaningful experiences. Yet workplace stress can damage mental health, driving the need for creative yet calming environments.

Furthermore, many employees today also find it more difficult to concentrate because of their

work environment, highlighting the need for workplaces to be productive and inspiring.

Returning to work in the office for a few days a week is essential to the nurturing of personal relationships, integrating new employees, generating ideas and building company culture.

The key to success is in creating environments that improve employees' mental and physical health.





Colours have the capacity to impact our mood.

Choosing the right colours and materials for a workplace influences employees' mood and abilities. For example, the colour green is said to enhance mood and relieve stress while the use of natural and tactile materials such as wood, and natural light can reduce stress, improve memory, increase positive feelings and encourage employees to engage with their sense of touch and interact with their surroundings.

Also, the incorporation of plants and biophilia into a workplace can reduce stress and create a comforting and calming environment. Additionally, incorporating

well-ventilated spaces with clean and fresh air throughout develops a sense of health, community, collaboration and comfort in the workplace, and is essential to boosting endorphins.

Corporate benefits like gyms, yoga/fitness sessions at the office, gaming areas, and quiet zones are increasingly common and offer employees a place to “escape” and reflect, encouraging increased productivity and positive mindsets.

In addition, ergonomic workstations such as supportive chairs, height-adjustable desks and proper desk layouts provide opportunities to easily move around and work as a team, which increases efficiency and reduces office-related strains, injuries, and sedentary tendencies.



6 - Phygital

A future-ready workplace must embrace and integrate technology.

The phygital workplace is one where the physical and digital worlds coexist within an environment. The conventional office requires in-person attendance, yet the popularity of combined physical and digital cooperation was rising even before the pandemic.

Now, companies have an even greater need to implement digital technologies to enable remote and hybrid work arrangements.

Indeed, 59% of executives say Covid-19 has accelerated digital transformation at their organisations.



Seamless teleconferencing, cloud computing, workspace booking and configurations, online scheduling, Human Resource amenities and visitor management in addition to app chats and email access

are but a non-exhaustive list of technologies that any user can install on their smartphone. Together, they move personnel towards the phygital realm, empowering and enhancing greater efficiency.



Employers need to determine the working styles of their employees to develop a suitable phygital workplace design for them.

To succeed in the new phygital age, organisations need to offer a digital infrastructure and the greatest user experience to employees and clients.

They can use innovative technologies and design environments for hybrid working to give mixed presence teams the highest-quality interaction possible. Beyond that, new work hacks and widgets created to promote the convergence of online and in-person workspaces will define the phygital workplace.



Unveiling the future workplace

While Covid-19 has made health, safety and wellness in the workplace a critical consideration, business leaders, developers and designers must take a step back and look beyond the pandemic.

Decisions about the design of workplace environments must be adaptable to changes in the future.

Employers should begin thinking of how they can build a future-ready workplace, if they have not already done so.

We urge business leaders to be proactive rather than reactive. The choices they make now will position their organisation for greater success in the longer term. Their organisations will also become more attractive to employees, achieve higher staff retention and foster a culture of excellence.

“A better vision for a workplace is a community – a place where people bond around shared values, feel valued as human beings, and have a voice in decisions that affect them.”

- Adam Grant



We engineer behaviour through design



SCA Design is one of Singapore's leading designers of workplace interiors and part of a multi-disciplinary consultancy that provides future-ready workspace designs for the corporate business market.

With more than 20 years of experience, SCA may be a veteran but our heart remains youthful and relevant. Our mission is to launch dialogues and drive change - embedding creativity and know-how into every single element we touch.

The team thrives on multiple configurations, embracing

diversity, and the endless variations of workplace behaviour. We hunt for new approaches to meet preferences and problems inherent to our clients and develop design strategies to ensure every project meets its unique requirements.

SCA's strategic alliance with ONG&ONG Group (www.group.ong-ong.com) enables us to deliver a seamless 360 Solution, encompassing architecture, branding, engineering, experience design, interior design and landscaping.

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