HU**GO**

Workforce Blurred

WHAT NEW GRADUATES WANT FROM A CHANGING WORKPLACE

CORGAN

Contents

Executive Summary

In April 2021, Corgan completed a design research study to better understand the remote learning experience and how it may impact what graduates are looking for in their future workplace. With news headlines like *Generation Work-From-Home May Never Recover, How to Navigate the Post-Pandemic Office,* and *How to Design a Hybrid Workplace* in major news outlets across the globe, the impact of work is on everyone's minds.

But after a year of remote learning amidst pandemic life, candidates are establishing new perspectives on their career needs and goals. These perspectives will play a key role in determining how companies support their employees in a post-pandemic world. Using design research methodologies, the team was able to gather user research data in both qualitative and quantitative formats as follows.

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

Corgan conducted 45 in-depth interviews with graduates across the United States, as well as with seasoned professionals navigating career changes. Participants were recruited from industries that included knowledge workers, healthcare, retail, and more, all of whom self-identify as looking for a new
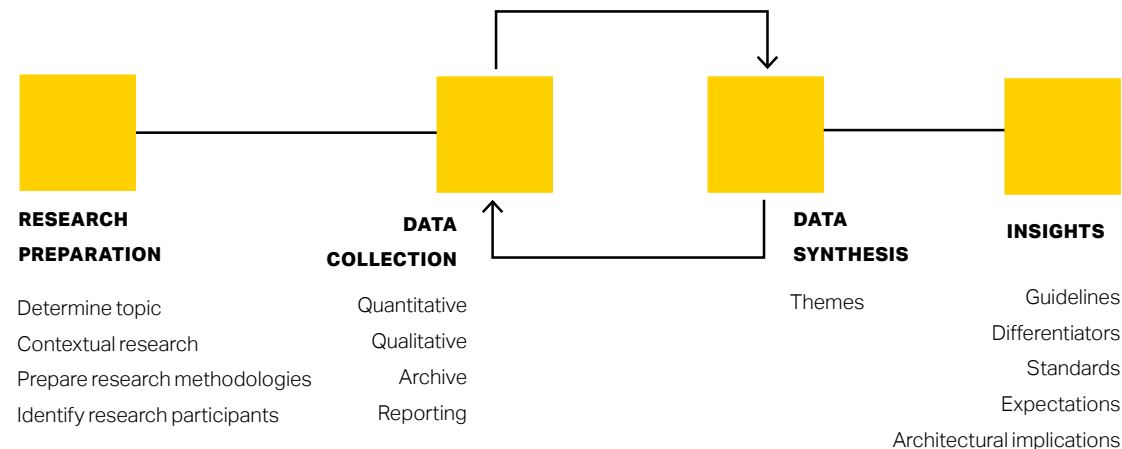
job. During each interview session, participants were asked to reflect on their remote learning experience, describe ideal working environments, identify ideal levels of workplace flexibility, and consider various workplace offerings. Interview participants were divided into six main categories:

1   Recent High School Graduates
2   Upcoming Undergraduate Graduates
3   Recent Undergraduate Graduates
4   Upcoming Advanced Degree Graduates
5   Recent Advanced Degree Graduates
6   Mid-Career Switchers

QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

In addition to in-depth interviews, Corgan also conducted a 150-participant quantitative survey to understand the new graduate job-hunt experience through outreach to architecture and design schools across the country. This survey examined whether (and how) COVID-19 has impacted students' job seeking preferences and attitudes.

With just over 20 hours of recorded anecdotal data, Corgan's research team was able to identify key insights and emerging opportunities which are documented throughout this report.

RESEARCH PREPARATION	DATA COLLECTION	DATA SYNTHESIS	INSIGHTS
Determine topic	Quantitative	Themes	Guidelines
Contextual research	Qualitative		Differentiators
Prepare research methodologies	Archive		Standards
Identify research participants	Reporting		Expectations
			Architectural implications

Key Insights

Research Context

What do recent graduates want from the workplace?

It's a topic that deserves deliberate consideration as this emerging generation prepares to enter the workforce. A majority of these graduates are experiencing their second global crisis within a decade. They entered their youth in the midst of a financial crisis, and they are now entering adulthood in the throes of a global pandemic. But not all recent graduates are coming of age. Some of them are seasoned career professionals who are completing their higher education later in life as they prepare for a mid-career change.

Many of these students are "leaving school with no exam results, or enduring an unsatisfactory remote learning experience at university, and to make matters worse — they're graduating in a time of high unemployment and economic downturn." [1] As a result, they have career anxieties and are referred to as the *Pandemial* generation.

> **Pandemial (n.)**
> Individuals who are entering the world of work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

These recent graduates have adapted to changing landscapes and are ready to launch their careers. **And as architects and designers, there is a ripe opportunity to develop thoughtful workplace design that supports this incoming generation of workers.**

U.S. Labor Force Composition by Generation

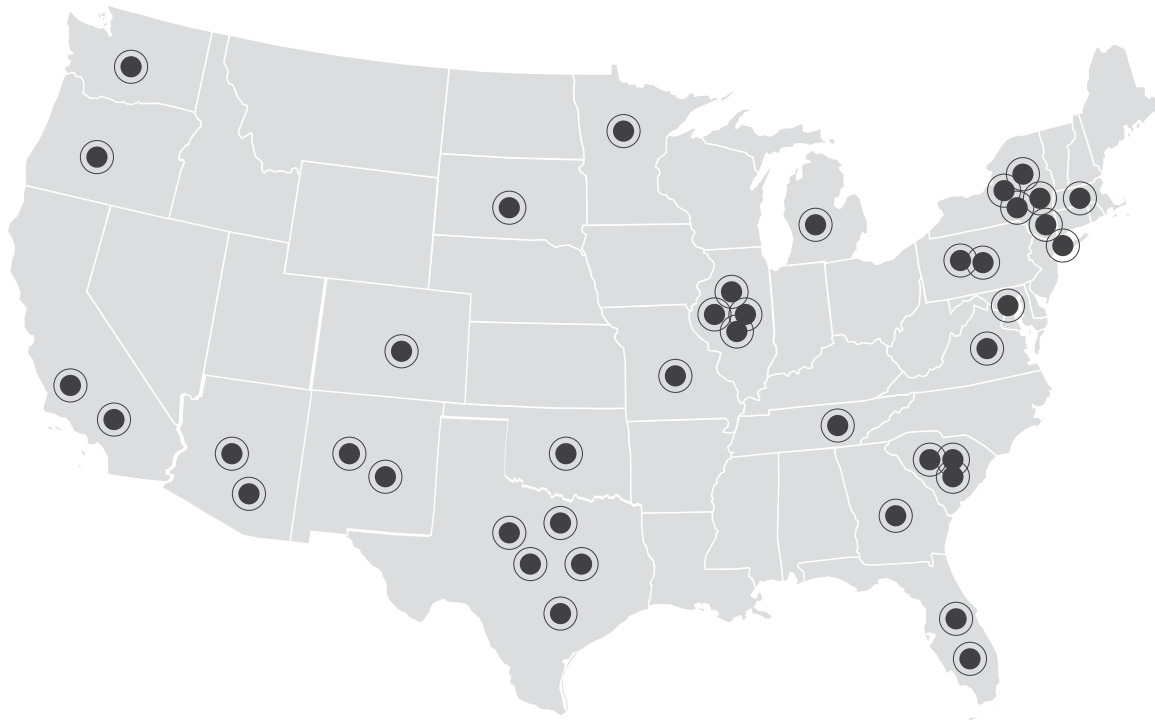Legend:
- Gen Z
- Gen Y
- Gen X
- Baby Boomers
- Silent
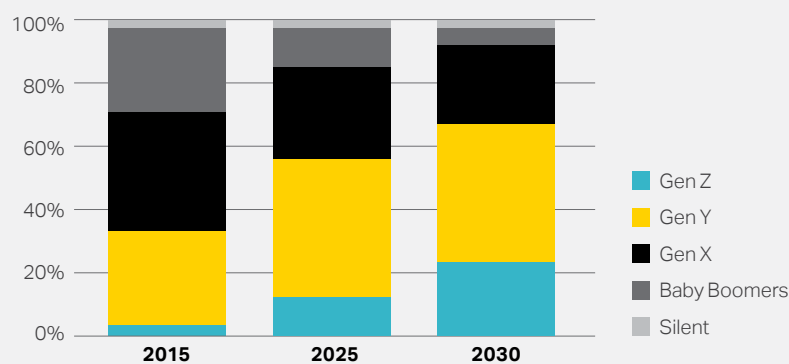
Source: Welcome to Generation Z, Deloitte [2]

Now, more than half of Americans are millennials or younger. Those born between 1995 and 2012 will make up the most diverse and most populous age group across the world.[3]

4

Research Context

45 in-depth interviews were conducted and 150 incoming and recent graduates surveyed.

◉ In-depth Interview Participants

Note: 2 participants preferred not to share their state of residence

> "[You can really see] how an employer cares for their employees by how everyone has reacted in this past year. I think that's probably what remote learning has taught me."

UPCOMING COLLEGE GRADUATE

10

MID-CAREER SWITCHERS

Seasoned professionals who have recently decided to change careers.

+

150

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY RESPONSES

A sample size of upcoming and recent graduates in the architecture and design field.

35

UPCOMING + RECENT GRADS

A combination of high school, college, and advanced degree graduates.

We surveyed 150 upcoming and recent graduates:

99%

experienced remote/ hybrid learning or work

82%

study or studied architecture and design

80%

say that their industry traditionally uses office space

Key Insights

The Office Used to *Offer* Amenities, Now it *is* an Amenity

While some research participants said they "work to get paid" and "it's all about the money," most expressed strong sentiments that workplace amenities, including access to physical office space, are key-decision makers for their job search.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a participants' ability to "see themselves in the job" was typically associated with a physical workplace as a functional expectation. As the office evolves and adapts in response to hybrid work offerings, the workplace can shift its identity — it can transition from the place that used to offer amenities, to becoming the amenity itself.

Our research findings show that the majority of participants want to have the option to go to a physical office even if they prefer to work mostly remotely. They see the office as a conduit to socialization, collaboration, respite from distractions, and access to quick feedback and learning and advancement opportunities.

In a survey of 150 upcoming and recent grads, 92% chose a hybrid work arrangement over fully remote and fully in-person options when presented with mock job offers.

"When we're in-person, it's easier to see the larger purpose and feel connected to the purpose of our work."

MID-CAREER SWITCHER
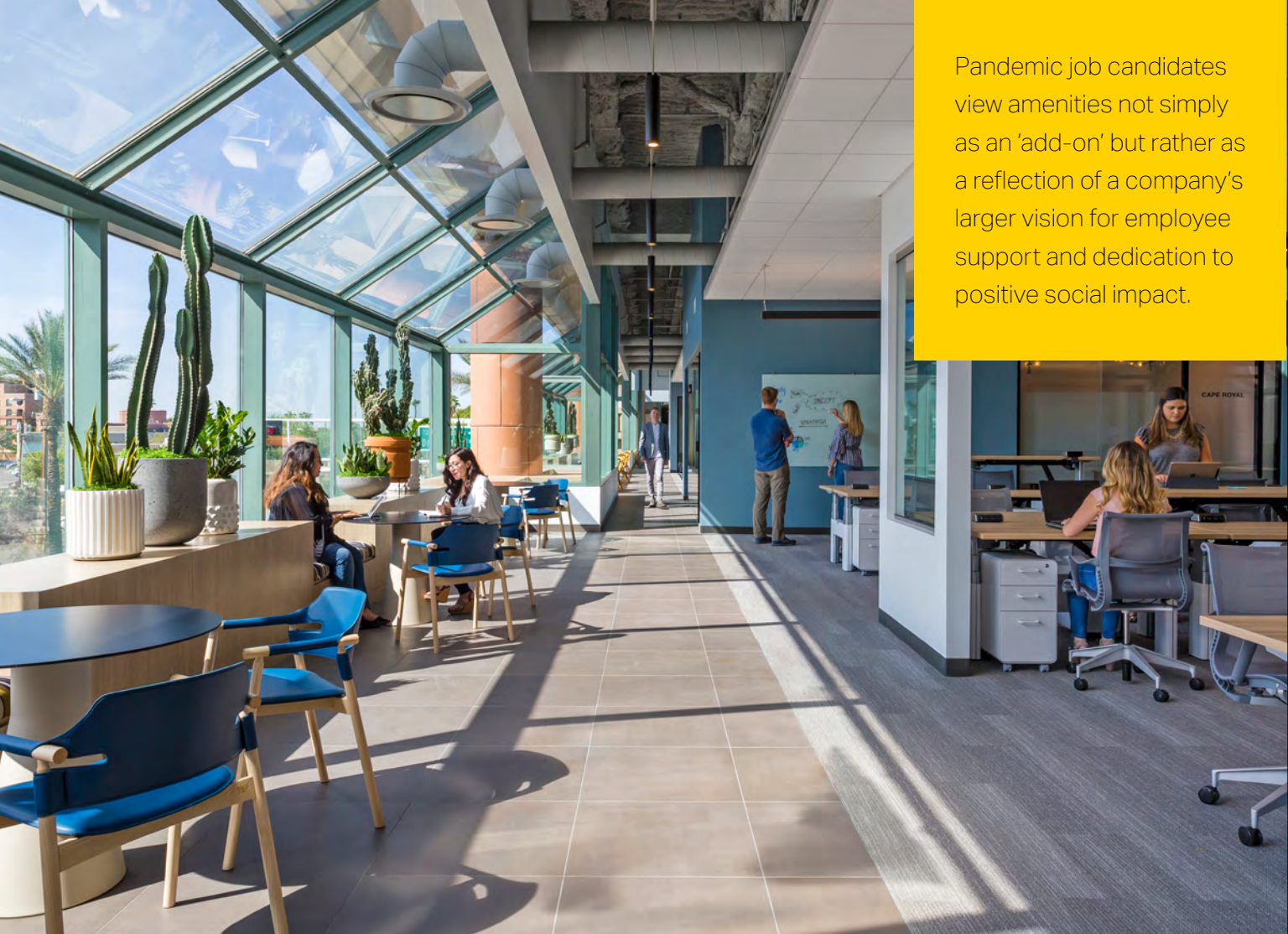
Pandemic job candidates view amenities not simply as an 'add-on' but rather as a reflection of a company's larger vision for employee support and dedication to positive social impact.

"Amenities have a really big impact on my feelings towards the workplace."

RECENT ADVANCED DEGREE GRAD

"[Non-salary-related benefits and amenities] showcase a company's culture by their sheer existence or lack thereof."

UPCOMING COLLEGE GRAD

"I need to be with the company that represents things I agree with."

RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

Comfort, convenience, and sustainability stand out as key amenities that new and recent grads are looking for in their next job opportunity.
Approximately 65% valued quick access to snacks and beverages, outdoor space, parking availability, and cutting-edge green practices as most desired in their next opportunity.
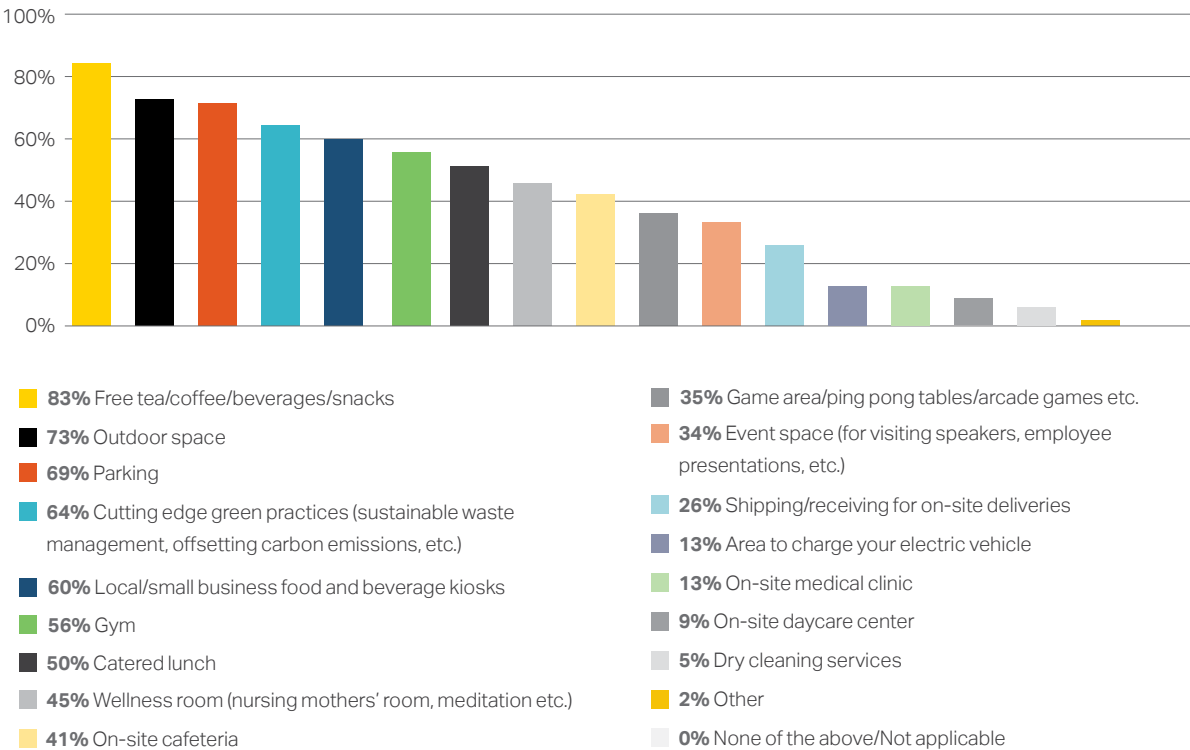

83% Free tea/coffee/beverages/snacks

73% Outdoor space

69% Parking

64% Cutting edge green practices (sustainable waste management, offsetting carbon emissions, etc.)

60% Local/small business food and beverage kiosks

56% Gym

50% Catered lunch

45% Wellness room (nursing mothers' room, meditation etc.)

41% On-site cafeteria

35% Game area/ping pong tables/arcade games etc.

34% Event space (for visiting speakers, employee presentations, etc.)

26% Shipping/receiving for on-site deliveries

13% Area to charge your electric vehicle

13% On-site medical clinic

9% On-site daycare center

5% Dry cleaning services

2% Other

0% None of the above/Not applicable

Figure 1

Approximately ⅔ of survey participants would most like to have quick access to food, snacks, and beverages, parking availability, and cutting-edge green practices as amenities in their next job opportunity.
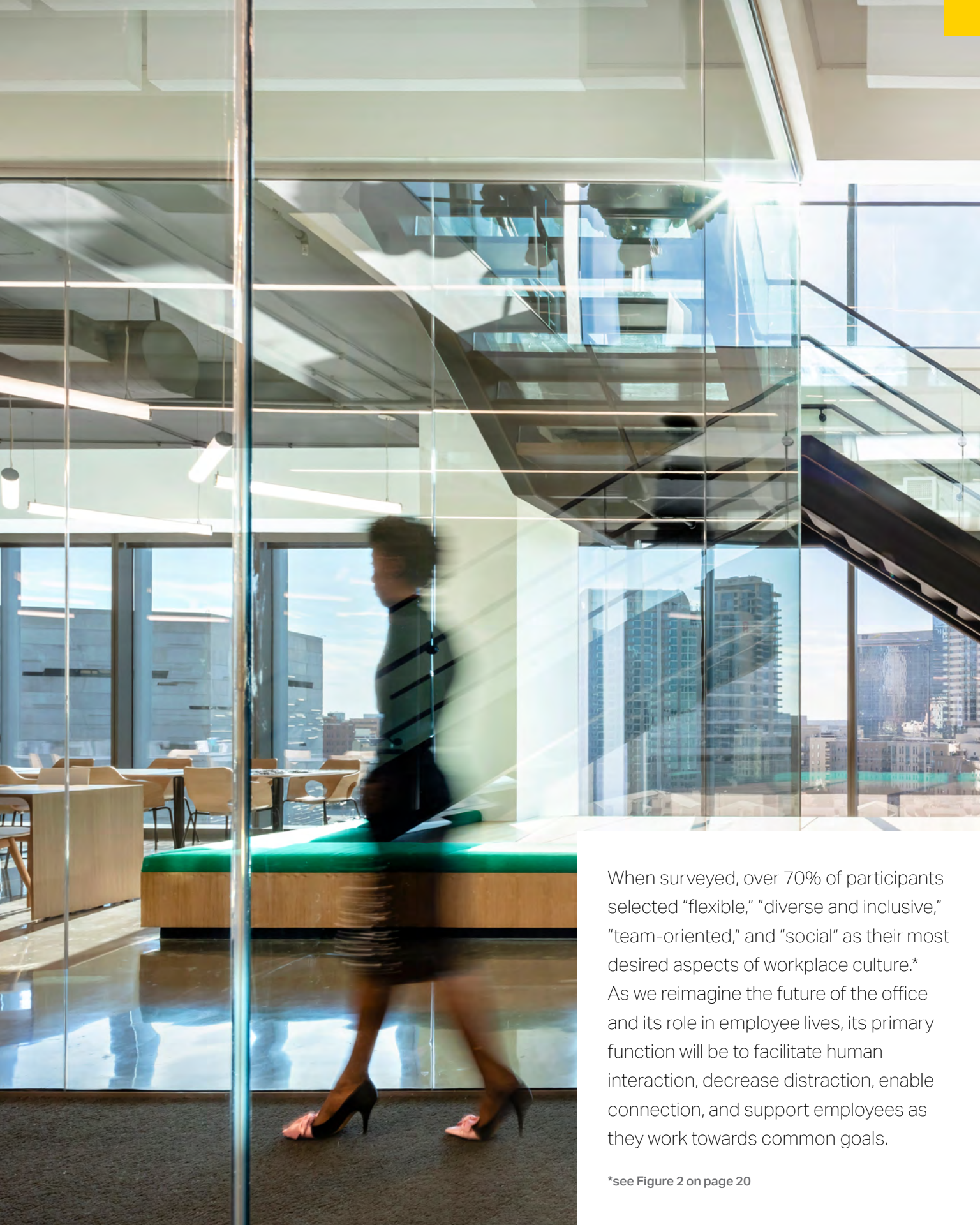
When surveyed, over 70% of participants selected "flexible," "diverse and inclusive," "team-oriented," and "social" as their most desired aspects of workplace culture.*
As we reimagine the future of the office and its role in employee lives, its primary function will be to facilitate human interaction, decrease distraction, enable connection, and support employees as they work towards common goals.

*see Figure 2 on page 20

Design Research Methodology
The Hypothetical Job Offer

During in-depth interview sessions, participants were asked to review five hypothetical job offers with varying degrees of flexibility.

While reviewing hypothetical job offers, participants highlighted the importance of both remote work flexibility and the ability to come together in-person. Participants often embraced a change of scenery from the distractions and monotony of home. Participants also expressed the ways a physical workplace motivates them and encourages a "work mode" mindset, acknowledging that for some, remote work can offer too little structure.

"I do want to be in-person.... if I wasn't in-person I wouldn't know who to go to, what I need to be doing."
SOON-TO-BE COLLEGE GRADUATE

"I like the consistent schedule...you can still go in to work if you want to. But when life happens, you can have a little more flexibility."
SOON-TO-BE COLLEGE GRADUATE

March 15, 2021

Dear Candidate,

We are pleased to formally offer you the position of [your desired job title] with [your desired company] contingent upon the satisfactory completion of a background and reference check. This position includes a starting annual salary of [your desired salary]. Now please select from one of the following options.

Option 1.) Our in-person office hours are 9am-5pm, Monday through Friday.

Option 2.) Our hours of operations are 9am-5pm, Monday through Friday. We operate on a hybrid flex schedule that will be determined by your immediate team; however, you can expect to work on-site in the office 2-3 days a week.

Option 3.) Our hours of operations are 9am-5pm, Monday through Friday. As an organization, we work on-site in the office on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. You are welcome to work remote on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Option 4.) Our hours of operations are 9am-5pm, Monday through Friday. You are welcome to work remotely any and all days, but are also welcome to work from our office location anytime at your preference.

Option 5.) We operate as a fully remote company with no office location(s). Our hours of operations are 9am-5pm, Monday through Friday CST.

As a full-time employee, you will be eligible to participate in our benefits plan including 401K contributions, medical and health benefits, professional development stipends, Paid Time Off, and holidays.

To accept our offer, please sign and return this letter (a digital copy is acceptable). Please let us know if you have any questions. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

I, _____, understand and agree to the terms and conditions set forth herein and accept the offer of employment. Intending to be legally bound, I agree to abide by all the terms and conditions set forth in this agreement.

Signature _____

_____ Date _____

Kind Regards,
Human Resources
Talent Acquisition Manager

CREATIVE
TAGLINE

Green *Matters*

This new generation has witnessed transformative societal changes in their lifetime; however, one monumental challenge that lies ahead for them is climate change. From rising sea levels to more frequent natural disasters and toxic air pollution, climate change presents a complex societal challenge that will require substantial effort from both individuals and larger entities alike.

These new workers recognize that while individual contributions to climate change can have significant impact, they also believe a large portion of the responsibility is systemic and, therefore, driven by industry stakeholders. This will require businesses to make major changes, like offering and supporting cutting-edge green practices at the workplace.

Additionally, this incoming generation of workers project their personal identity — or *personal brand* — through the goods they purchase, the media they consume, and the social issues they feel passionate about. Where they choose to work is no exception. And a cutting-edge green workplace creates a future-forward identity they can relate to.

CUTTING EDGE GREEN PRACTICES

During in-depth interview sessions, participants explained that having cutting-edge green practices on-site make them feel proud of where they work and what their company stands for. These green amenities don't serve the traditional purpose of an amenity, in that, they are not just for individual use. These green amenities reflect a larger social impact and greater good. This mindset is best demonstrated by individuals who expressed interest in amenities like electric vehicle charging stations even when they don't own an electric car themselves.

> With greater demand for transparency comes greater expectation of action. From eco-friendly amenities to giving back to the planet — sustainability is no longer an option.

"

"I definitely need outdoor space to recharge my body and mind. Coming back from a break like that makes work so much better."

UPCOMING ADVANCED DEGREE GRAD

OUTDOOR GREEN SPACE

According to research participants, having access to greenery makes work feel "easier and more comfortable." Outdoor green spaces allow them to make the most out of their often-limited break time, which is important to them. Research participants are also looking for walking trails and green areas to spend their time during the workday for things like walking meetings and brain breaks. Many participants also said the pandemic reminded them how effective an outdoor walk can be for recharging throughout the day, while for others said it has always been an important part of their daily routine.

In our survey of 150 upcoming and recent grads, **"outdoor green space"** was the second most popular option for on-site workplace amenities. **"cutting-edge green practices"** ranked as the fourth most popular option.

"

"I really like the greenery and the glass, I love the look of the building. I feel comfortable here and it appeals to me especially with the greenery. If I'm having a stressful day at work, this is a great way to relax. It just seems very comfortable, inviting, and welcoming. I think your productivity ties directly to the environment you're in and you want to have an environment that you're comfortable in and where you can work effectively."

RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

In our survey, 42% of respondents preferred a **campus** office setting and 76% selected **green space** and **nature** as a workplace asset they are looking for.

Remote Environments are Inclusive and Exclusive — at the Same Time

The topic of flexible work arrangements is dynamic and multi-faceted. While in some instances it creates an equal playing field for employees, in other cases it inhibits opportunities for things like face-to-face mentorship and learning and development.

1. SOCIAL CAPITAL GAINS

We all know the office is so much more than just "work." It's a living, breathing representation of people coming together to achieve a common goal. In that process, we often make lasting relationships with coworkers and mentors that encourage personal growth and fulfillment.

However, when incoming graduates are placed in fully remote settings, they feel like they are missing out on opportunities to build social capital within their organization. From childhood into early adulthood, our social networks are often tied to our education system. These early career workers are accustomed to having social structures embedded within their academic institutions and look forward to developing their next phase of community at the workplace. For these reasons, multiple interview participants described the thought of being completely remote as "scary" or "uncomfortable."

Additionally, when research participants considered the idea of being entirely removed and remote, they realized they might not have the same opportunities that more established and seasons workers might have. These new workforce members are starting their careers and want opportunities — and they recognize that face-to-face time can facilitate growth.

Connection to Coworkers   **CULTURE**   Connection to Organization

The topic of remote work is multi-dimensional.

On one hand, remote work:

· Opens up the talent pool

· Provides opportunities for geographically less-represented populations

· Can increase diversity, equity, and inclusion with a wider talent pool

· Equalizes employees who have been remote prior to the pandemic

It also:

· Reduces valuable face-to-face time

· Impedes the building of social capital (which is often done in-person)

· Limits an employee's connection to workplace culture

· Can contribute to fewer opportunities for advancement

New and recent graduates are looking for flexible, diverse, inclusive, team-oriented, and social workplace cultures, and they want equal access to those opportunities whether in the office or working remotely.
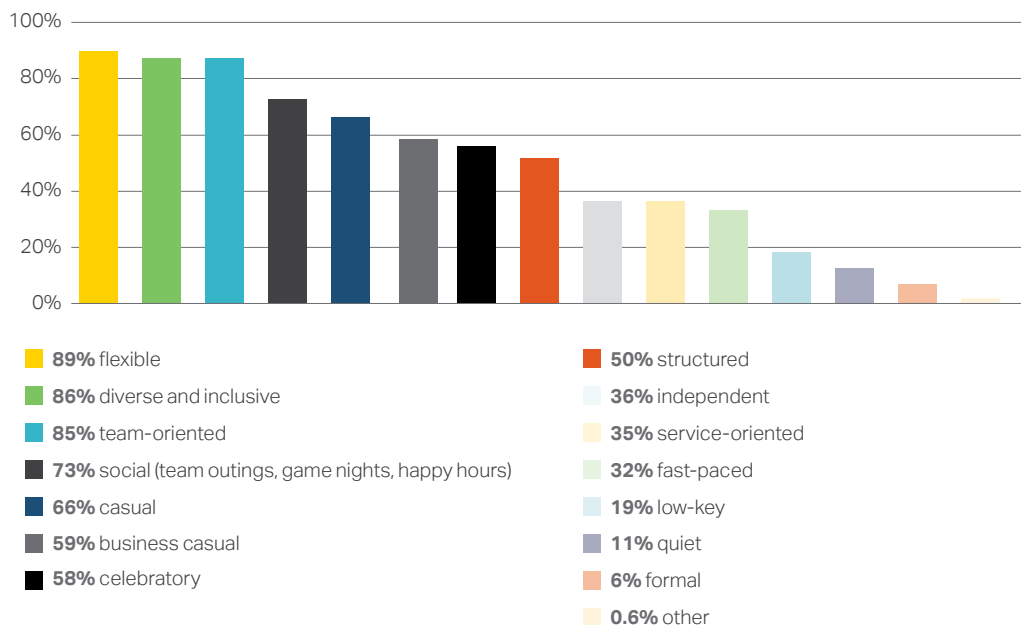

89% flexible

86% diverse and inclusive

85% team-oriented

73% social (team outings, game nights, happy hours)

66% casual

59% business casual

58% celebratory

50% structured

36% independent

35% service-oriented

32% fast-paced

19% low-key

11% quiet

6% formal

0.6% other

Figure 2

"I would not accept a fully remote job opportunity. I would go stir crazy. It's much harder to meet people in remote learning and I imagine it would be just as hard to meet other coworkers in a fully remote setting."

RECENT UNDERGRADUATE GRAD

"There's something about being with your peers. The socializing — it is so important for kids growing up and realizing you are in a world and need to learn to get along with everybody."

UPCOMING ADVANCED DEGREE GRAD

In a survey of 150 upcoming and recent grads, no one selected a fully remote job opportunity as their preferred work arrangement. In our in-depth interview sessions, participants expressed interest in fully remote work opportunities for a variety of reasons including but not limited to: medical conditions, family commitments, autonomy, flexibility, and opportunities for travel. However, when forced to choose between multiple job offers with varying flexibility, **a majority of participants selected a hybrid option acknowledging the benefit of having a physical office.***

*Some of these results may be compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic

2. FEAR OF REMOTE WORK STIGMA

The transition to remote work during the pandemic revealed a surprising opportunity, especially for individuals who had worked within a remote capacity prior to COVID-19. **These remote workers, who had previously felt disconnected and removed from their on-site counterparts, suddenly felt like they were on an equal playing field for the first time.**

Researchers have identified a phenomenon known as *Flexibility Stigma.* Multiple studies in various work settings have found that both men and women who ask for flexible work arrangements are penalized, because they're seen as caregivers. Other research has found that women are more harshly judged for tending to their children during the workday.[4]

During in-depth interviews, participants expressed concern regarding this Flexibility Stigma in a post-pandemic setting. **Across different user groups, from recent high school grads to mid-career switchers, there was concern around potential career repercussions if given the opportunity to work remotely some or all of the time.** Would they be discriminated against? Would they be excluded from opportunities for growth and contribution? Companies must set systems and protocols in place now to ensure that on-site and hybrid/remote employees are treated equally.

"I would expect to be supported as an employee by getting the same support in-office as I would online."

UPCOMING UNDERGRADUATE GRAD

"Wherever I'm working from, I just don't want it to matter...I don't want people to question if I work remotely for several months."

RECENT UNDERGRADUATE GRAD

In an interview with CNN, Forrester [5] senior analyst Andrew Hewitt described that, "Many companies succeeded working remotely in 2020 largely because everyone was doing it — there was no built-in preference for office workers or stigma against remote workers." *The Harvard Business Review* described the previous stigma as "a classic problem that remote workers often run into: being an afterthought to the "core" office team."[6]

Flex Work Requires Different Modes and Platforms for Communication

When it comes to remote work, we can't just do the same things we did in-person but with more tenacity in a virtual setting. Flexible work requires different tools and, with it, intentional architectural design. **These alternative and flexible work arrangements require us to reimagine office telecommunications, the infrastructure it requires, and how it facilitates the work we do.**

During in-depth interviews, participants detailed the ways in which boundaries of access and communication have been blurred leaving many individuals feeling disconnected. Even when systems are set up to support quick communication, interviewees told us that they don't always feel comfortable pursuing those avenues — especially if it felt like overstepping.

For example, one student decided to send her question via email even though the professor had specifically provided students with a direct phone line for quick text message interactions. Other students expressed disappointment with email and the ways in which it bottlenecks quick progress in remote settings.

These expectations around frequency, types of deliverables, and communication format in remote settings were consistent pain points across all user groups. Whether they're in a remote learning or remote work environment, participants want clear guidelines on when they can do asynchronous work and when they have to respond quickly.

Additionally, participants also want ways to provide and receive quick feedback when necessary, often finding that remote work makes this much harder than it used to be in-person. Without clear support, communication, and guidelines, workers don't feel as connected or motivated.

According to Pew Research, younger teleworkers (ages 18 to 49) are more likely to report feeling "worn out" by time spent on video calls than older teleworkers: (40% vs. 31%). [7]

> "The hardest part of being remote is technology issues and having teachers that aren't as tech savvy."

UPCOMING UNDERGRADUATE GRAD

> "Communication is the most important aspect when it comes to supporting remote work."

MID-CAREER SWITCHER

> "I would want transparent calendar schedules so people can easily see my availability."

RECENT UNDERGRADUATE GRAD

Students who experienced positive remote learning experiences, often attributed it to clear and concise communication with expectation. In certain settings, this was demonstrated by the adoption of synchronous and asynchronous learning modules.

SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

Synchronous learning sessions mean that students are learning at the same time and communication is taking place in real time. For these reasons, synchronous learning is possibly more engaging and effective since it allows for instant feedback and clarification.

ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

Asynchronous learning occurs when students learn the same thing at different times or from different places. The primary purpose behind the asynchronous learning process is to be less tethered from typical constraints like time and space. For these reasons, asynchronous learning is more convenient, flexible and allows students to work at their own pace.

"Communication is key. I don't really believe in email anymore. It's too slow. I think there needs to be a much more direct and accessible method of transferring information. A lot of times emails get shuffled. Or I have more than one email account. It all needs to be streamlined."

RECENT UNDERGRADUATE GRAD

Flexibility, Motivation, and Trust Reinforce One Another in Hybrid Work Environments

While students are enrolled in school they adopt flexible working strategies — they build their own schedules, they decide how much work to contribute for each of their classes, and they learn how to ask for help through arrangements like office hours and tutoring centers. This promotes the use of skills like effective time management, asynchronous and synchronous learning styles, clear communication and project management. **Their desire for autonomy and flexibility at a future workplace seems to emerge as a natural extension of their student experience. This generation has also grown up in an era of personal data tracking. As a result, they may be accepting constant monitoring in exchange for more freedom, autonomy, and flexibility.**

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has also forced workplace flexibility into the spotlight and is now perceived as an expected benefit of a job offering. The reason workplace flexibility is so valuable to people can be found in its relationship to time. Social science research shows us that "most people, most of the time, are more influenced by time and experience rather than money or possessions." [8]

Years of social science research tells us that people are motivated by their own autonomy. Autonomy motivates our unconscious part of the brain — making us feel in control by minimizing the likelihood of danger. [8]

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"I enjoy working with people who trust me and know I am doing the best job I can without looking over my shoulder."
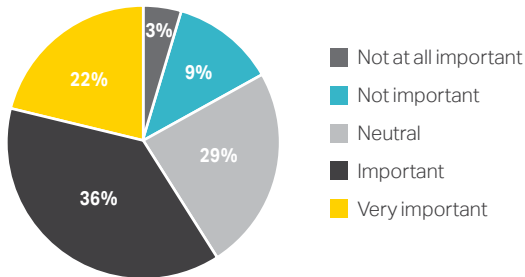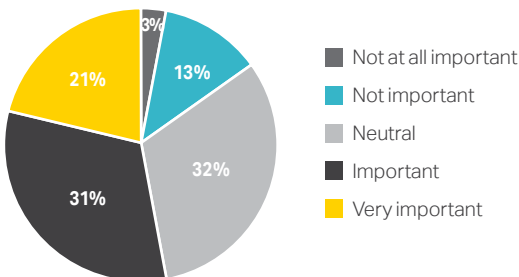
UPCOMING ADV DEGREE GRADUATE

52% of survey participants said flexible work hours and locations are important to their job search. Approximately 30% said it was neutral and 20% reported it as unimportant.

89% of respondents said flexibility is the most important aspect of workplace culture.

FLEXIBLE HOURS

3%
9%
29%
36%
22%

- Not at all important
- Not important
- Neutral
- Important
- Very important

FLEXIBLE LOCATIONS

3%
13%
32%
31%
21%

- Not at all important
- Not important
- Neutral
- Important
- Very important

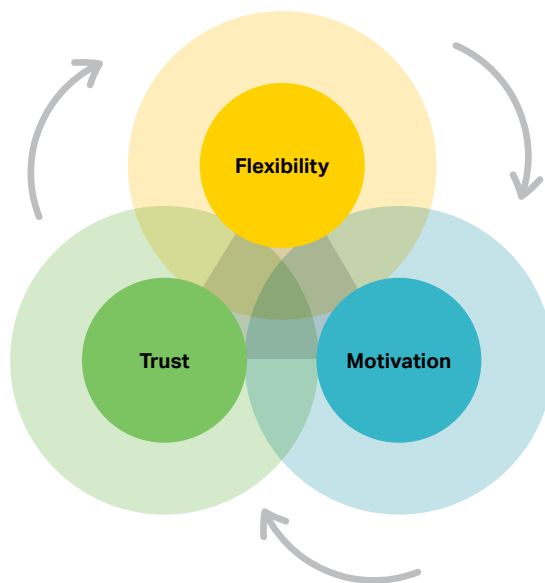# Flexibility is not an amenity, it is part of workplace culture

The recent graduates we spoke with are new to the workforce and want to prove that they can complete work on their own while still feeling supported by their managers. Throughout our interview sessions, participants expressed frustration with micromanagement techniques which, in turn, discourage intrinsic motivation and drive. **This desire for autonomy requires an environment that facilitates trust, which then encourages flexibility, and in turn, reinforces motivation.**

More established workers also appreciate flexibility. It provides them with time to focus on their tasks off-site (encumbered by common workplace distractions); but still value being in the office together with their team for valuable face-to-face time. When these seasoned work professionals are given flexibility, they feel appreciated and more balanced, which allows them to focus on their work with more intention and purpose.

Flexibility, motivation, and trust have a relationship with one another in remote settings.

> "I would like having team game nights but also being able to have my own space and not have someone look over my shoulder all the time. I would like to be independent while also being unafraid to ask questions when I need help."
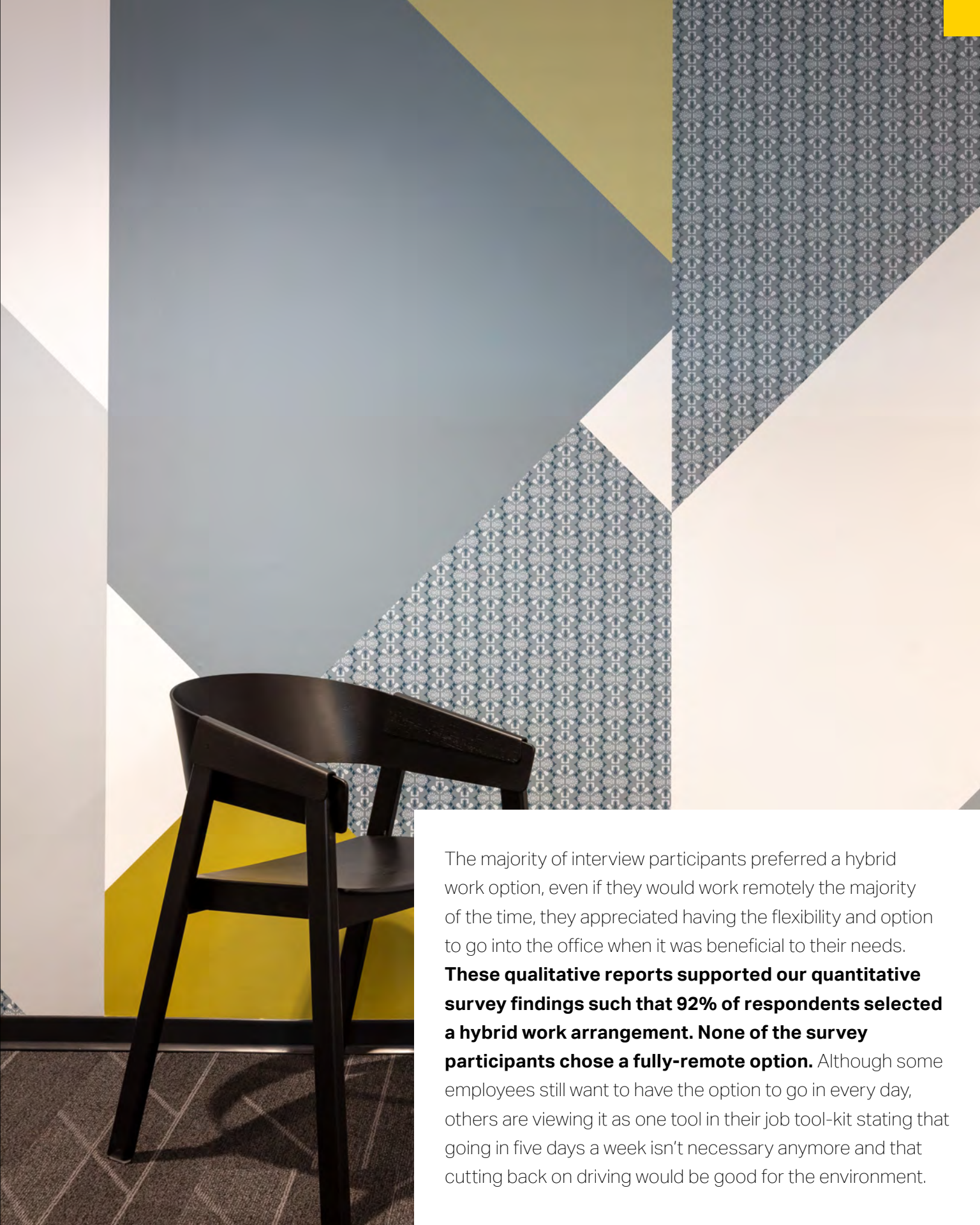
RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

> "I'm glad we know how to work remotely now. It means we're prepared for the next event that requires us to do so."

RECENT UNDERGRAD GRADUATE

The majority of interview participants preferred a hybrid work option, even if they would work remotely the majority of the time, they appreciated having the flexibility and option to go into the office when it was beneficial to their needs. **These qualitative reports supported our quantitative survey findings such that 92% of respondents selected a hybrid work arrangement. None of the survey participants chose a fully-remote option.** Although some employees still want to have the option to go in every day, others are viewing it as one tool in their job tool-kit stating that going in five days a week isn't necessary anymore and that cutting back on driving would be good for the environment.

Types of Motivation

There are many reasons why people work (it's not just about money). Academics have studied why people work for nearly a century, but in the 1980's, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan from the University of Rochester identified the six key motivations behind work. Additional research has also found that the first three motives listed tend to increase performance, while the latter three impede. [9]

- **Play** is when you are motivated by the work itself. You work because you enjoy it. Play is our learning instinct, and it's tied to curiosity, experimentation, and exploring challenging problems.

- **Purpose** is when the outcome of work fits your identity. You work because you value the work's impact.

- **Potential** is when the outcome of the work enhances your identity or opportunity for growth and advancement. In other words, the work enhances your potential.

- **Emotional pressure** is related to an external force that threatens your identity. If you've ever used guilt to compel a someone to do something, you've inflicted emotional pressure.

- **Economic pressure** is when an external force makes you work. You work to gain financial reward or avoid punishment. This motive is separate from the work itself as well as separate from your identity.

- **Inertia** is when the motive is removed from both work and identity that you can't identify why you're working. When you ask someone why they are doing their work, and they say, "I don't know; I'm doing it because I did it yesterday and the day before," that signals inertia. It is still a motive because you're still actually doing the activity, you just can't explain why.

Upskilling for a New Era

As recent graduates close out their academic career and transition into the workforce, they are actively exploring ways to continue their journey with lifelong learning. Whereas the academic setting has taught them subjects in theory, they are now entering the workplace ready to dive into practice.

As a result, these new employees find opportunities for learning and development to be extremely important. During in-depth interviews, research participants considered learning and development opportunities essential to prospective employment. **Not only do they want to learn for their own future careers, they feel that access to the latest trainings and certifications will allow them to do their best work for their company and be the most knowledgeable on up-to-date practices.**

These opportunities are also thought of as a reflection of how the company views their employees, that they are valued and worth investing in, and that the company looks anticipates what future skills will be needed. Employees consider these opportunities to be worth staying for even if other aspects of a job are not as rewarding.

Learning and development opportunities can make or break offer acceptance decisions for new and recent graduates.

"

"Ongoing training and development is important regardless of what you do because even if you're an expert there's never a cap on what you can do. There are always new things that pop up. Especially in fields that have anything to do with technology — there are always new things that can be learned."

RECENT UNDERGRAD GRAD

The most desired learning and development opportunities:
Sponsored license and certification options
Mentorship programs
Paid continuing education and training

*based on survey of 150 upcoming and recent graduates
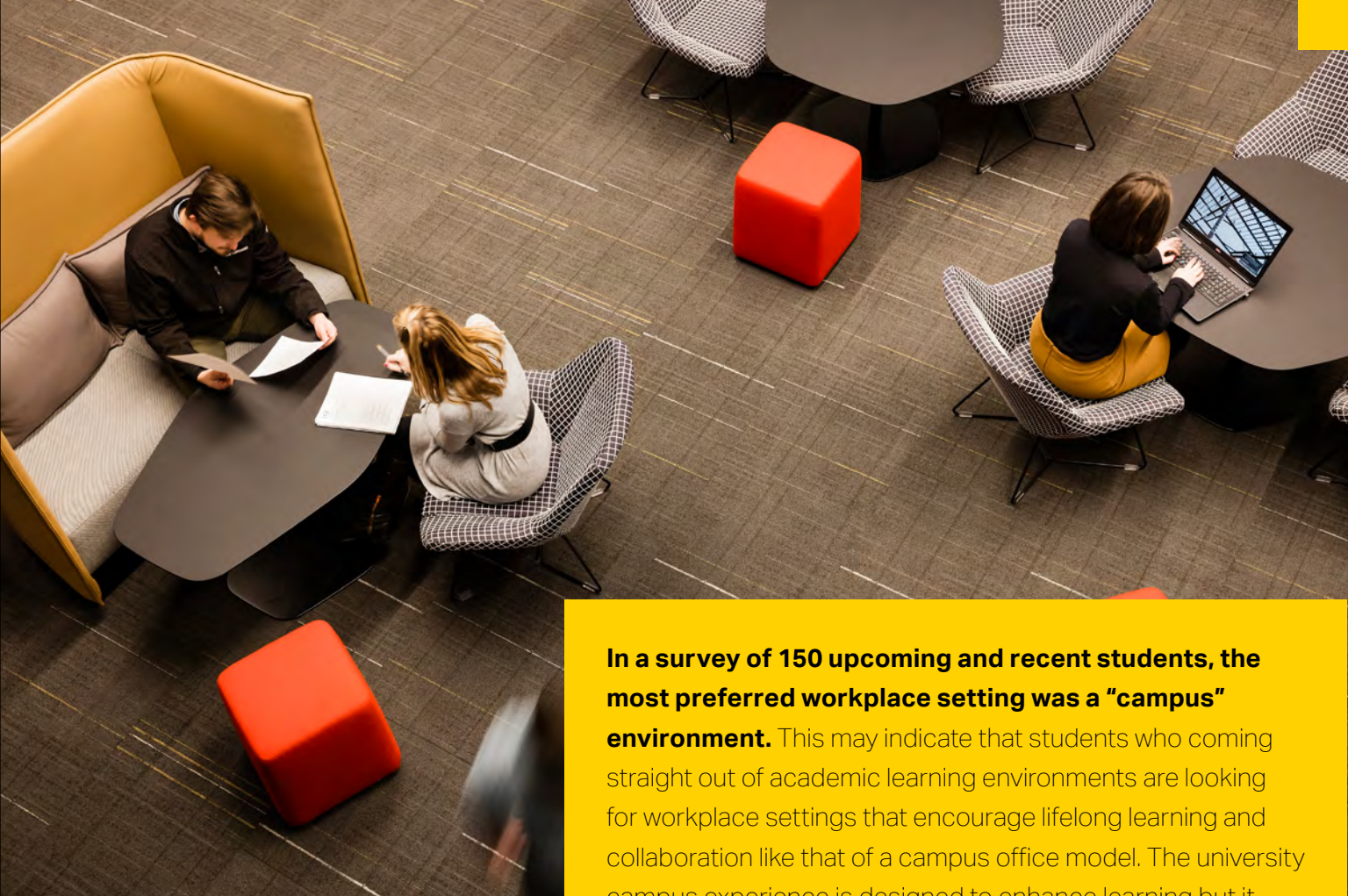
In a survey of 150 upcoming and recent students, the most preferred workplace setting was a "campus" environment. This may indicate that students who coming straight out of academic learning environments are looking for workplace settings that encourage lifelong learning and collaboration like that of a campus office model. The university campus experience is designed to enhance learning but it also facilitates social interaction and community building.

"Opportunity for growth and advancement implies that the company has invested in learning, training, and contribution towards their employees."

RECENT ADVANCED DEGREE GRAD

"I think learning and development is important, big time! If you offer training to your staff, it will help them advance which can then help advance the company. The more proactive you are the more ready you will be for different opportunities you may give them."

RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRAD

Impact to the Workplace

As the world becomes more interconnected and complex, it's important to consider the different ways in which people are interacting with and perceiving the built environment.

ECOSYSTEMS

The future of work extends beyond the physical footprint of the office. Younger generations are accustomed to living in a digital world, which they access from physical spaces. But today, the ecosystem of work is both digital and physical, and flexibility is an expectation not a preference.

NEIGHBORHOOD

Neighborhood context matters to this group. The incoming workforce wants to feel a part of something bigger. They want to support local restaurants and businesses, in an environment that feels safe, comfortable, and aligns with their personal values. Neighborhood engagement also spurs team building and connection between employees.

BUILDING

User experience within the building context should be considered from the time they park. From the entrance, to the configuration of individual spaces, the overall facility should support flexibility and ease. Social interaction should be enhanced by increasing opportunities for both spontaneous and planned engagement. Facilities with green design and practices will be an expectation.

SPACES

Personal ownership of space is a tradeoff for the freedom of flexibility. Social spaces should be prioritized, while enclosed spaces will provide flexibility, heads down space, and effective hybrid collaboration. Free snacks and drinks will go a long way with this group too. Amenities that ease a financial burden or provide safety will be valued.

PRODUCTS

Adjustable furniture and intentional technology will be key to supporting communication. Organizations should consider the products they provide both in and out of the physical space, placing the priority on personal technology. Consider environmental impacts and promote green practices in all aspects of the organization like reusable serving ware, specific recycling practices, and electric car charging stations.

ECOSYSTEMS

NEIGHBORHOOD

BUILDING

SPACES

PRODUCTS
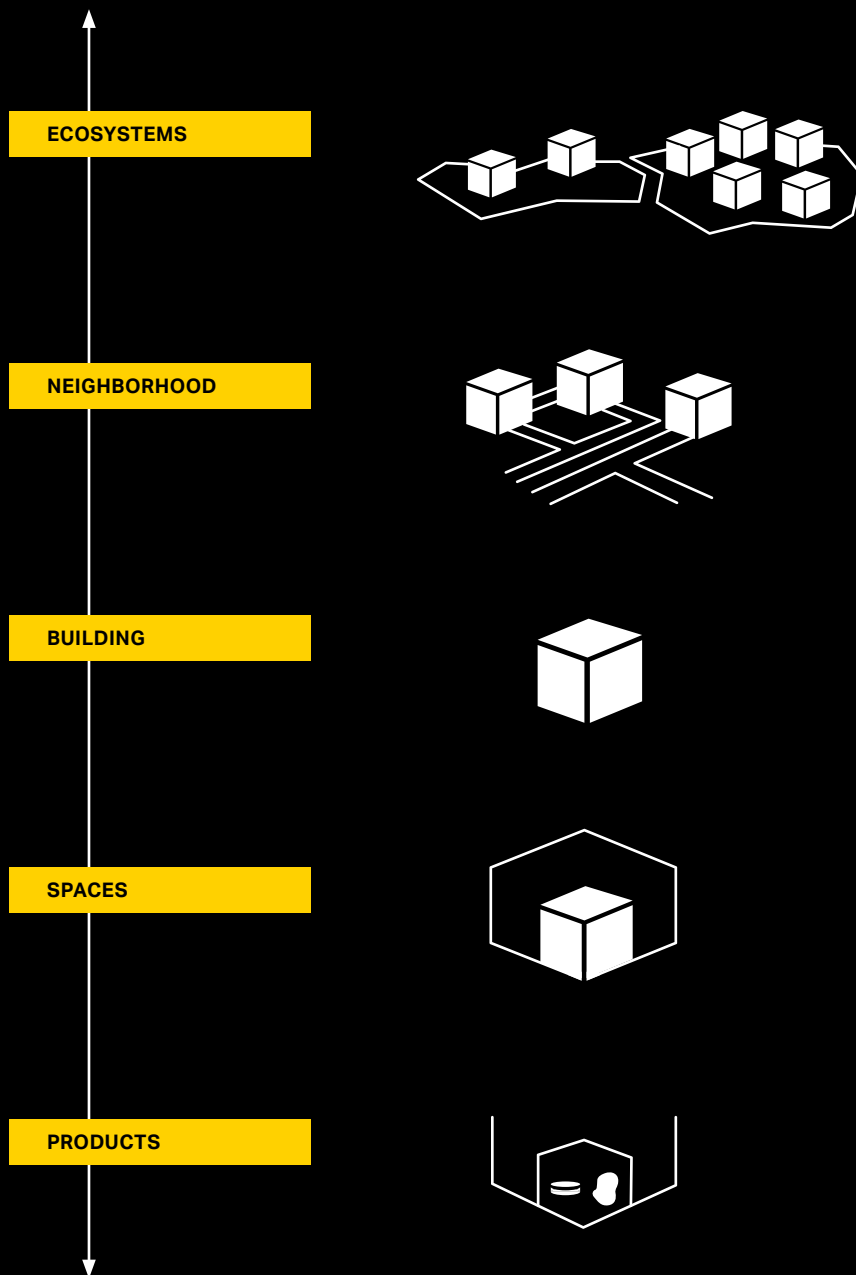
The Office Used to *Offer* Amenities. Now it *is* an Amenity

- The workplace becomes a place employees want to be, not a place they have to be. It should be designed and viewed as an added benefit to the job.

- Design spaces that are human centered at the core, taking into account not just what people need to do their job, but what will make them thrive as human beings.

- Understand your demographics — design spaces and provide amenities that speak to your unique workforce.

HERE'S AN IDEA:

Provide a concierge service or a community organizer who seeks to help incoming employees acclimate and thrive.

INSIGHT NO. 2

Green *Matters*

- Provide an environmentally friendly work environment, incorporating green design features such as light and water savings.

- Consider the wholistic impact decisions have, commute times reduce carbon emissions and reusable coffee mugs prevent waste.

HERE'S AN IDEA:

Products and design are only the start to green practices, ensure the right programs are implemented and staff is trained to maintain the intent.

Remote Settings are Inclusive and Exclusive — at the Same Time

- Set expectations and clear communications about effective ways of collaborating. Should this be an in-person meeting? Digital? Or a hybrid?

- Utilize platforms such as Teams or Slack as the main point of interaction between teams so all can track and participate in project building.

HERE'S AN IDEA:

Create digital channels, groups, or rooms uniting people around common interests (not just work related ones). For example, a podcast channel might connect employees who love podcasts regardless of location.

Flex Work Requires Different Modes and Platforms for Communication

- Establish clear expectations and guidelines around how and where work is accomplished, including clear distinctions between when to use various platforms for collaboration and expectations when working away from a physical office.

- Provide well-equipped enclosed spaces to accommodate virtual collaboration within the office. Include a variety of sizes and levels of privacy.

HERE'S AN IDEA:

Most conference rooms are designed towards a presentation screen, consider new types of technology that focus on showing individuals, not the room.

Flexibility, Motivation, and Trust Reinforce One Another in Flexible Work Environments

- To enable flexibility, consistent and seamless technology must be implemented. When designing for technology, think outside of the building and to the entire ecosystem.

- Provide private spaces for people to work alone. This could include phone rooms, small offices, workstations, touchdown areas, desk reservations, or hoteling.

HERE'S AN IDEA:

Unassigned seating sends a message that your location does not define your productivity. You are trusted to accomplish your work regardless of being seen.

Upskilling for a New Era

- Provide new types of spaces to learn in such as tinker spaces, innovation maker labs, and townhall lecture rooms.

- Technology should be easy to use and fluid, supporting learning regardless of location.

HERE'S AN IDEA:

Encourage groups of like-minded individuals to interact, forming groups centered around common interests. Provide social spaces for them to meet and collaborate.

Company Culture. Flexibility. Sustainability. Work/Life Support. Equality. Opportunity.

Throughout this research, we heard from students of all backgrounds and interests. We learned that work is not just a place you go — it's a thing you do. This next generation workforce wants the right cultural fit and values organizations that holistically support their employees. They want a workplace environment that offers comfort, convenience, and flexibility, with equal access to opportunities for development and advancement.

As the workplace continues to evolve, we look forward to identifying new opportunities that support a 21st century workforce.

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