

The future of collaboration

New ways of engaging people that shape
the future of office space.



Foreword

The pandemic forced many organisations to rethink the purpose of the office since most people could work productively at home. Collaboration is one of the primary activities defining the future office role, but we have also learnt how to do this virtually.

To ensure effective and enhanced collaboration in the workplace, we must rethink how we balance face-to-face, virtual and hybrid settings, plus the tools we use to support them. We have identified the current communication challenges in the post-pandemic context to understand the future uses of new technological solutions.

The value of diverse knowledge

The value of diverse knowledge is widely recognised and is only shared successfully when the environment and platforms do so openly and transparently. Many organisations strive to develop collaborative models to break siloes, promoting different competencies and experience across departments to best achieve common business goals such as new product development, process improvement or sharing client opportunities. Let's dive into these factors in more detail.

Degree and types of collaboration

Each type of interaction has its own frequency and level of intensity. We have observed among our clients that an average of 20%-40% of the weekly activities are dedicated to collaboration in all forms as opposed to 60%-80% spent on individual-based activities, dependent on the company or departmental function. Within this minority of time dedicated to collaboration, we include formal activity in

meeting or project settings as well as informal group and even social activity. Although collaboration represents the minority of activity time, it is often the highest value activities on multiple levels, including individual growth, generating innovation, gaining consensus and a shared understanding for individual projects but also reinforcing a sense of purpose and belonging.

Business synergy and siloes

Amenities and a variety of work settings in the office complement collaborative online tools to curate internal community and enable physical, virtual and hybrid engagement. Teams and departments which understand, learn, help, and know each other promote business synergy and break down siloes. This enables collaboration to be efficient and cohesive as diversity stands in unity, commending rapid consensus. All forms of interactions need to be stimulated and supported spatially as well as virtually, to ensure the consistency of staff engagement.

Connected world

Global migration to hybrid working

Organisations across the world migrate to hybrid working practices empowering people to work remotely from anywhere. In today's more than ever connected world, people are constantly adapting in learning new technologies to share content, communicate and interact meaningfully from different locations. This is reinforced by Generation Z and particularly those who are about to join the workforce who have experienced both the collaborative online gaming trends but also learning remotely during lockdowns.

Reasons to commute to the office

We have surveyed over 80,000 employees as part of workplace strategies we have developed globally, and we have identified that the primary reasons for commuting to the office is often face-to-face interaction for social and work purposes as well as learning and professional development. Therefore, there is a need to rethink and clearly articulate the purpose of the office to be a place primarily to gather people with a focus on education, collaboration, innovation, and culture.

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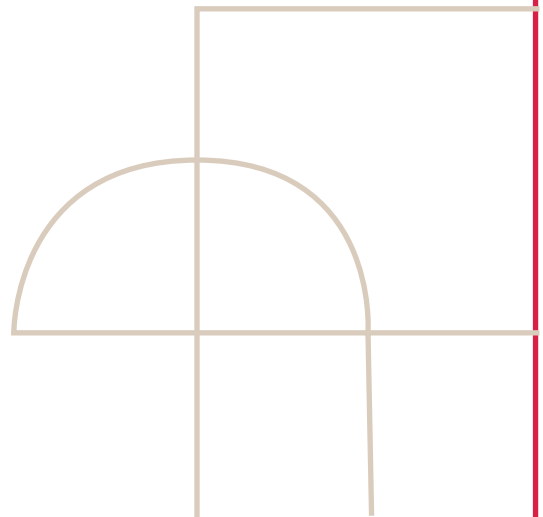
The post-pandemic world has seen a greater focus on wellbeing and the increased provision of amenities in the office

Benefits and challenges

Staff are benefitting from reduced commuting time and a better work/life balance, whilst businesses trust their people to choose from the environment that will enable them to best perform. However, there is a paradox as we also see in the responses that the sense of isolation and the ability to collaborate effectively are the most significant challenges identified when working remotely. We can conclude from this that it is important to get a balance between virtual, face-to-face and hybrid collaboration, and that different individuals would have different preferences related to this balance and the mix of collaboration methods.

How technology supports collaboration

Traditionally, the various types of interactions and collaboration were taking place formally in meeting rooms and informally at a desk. Anybody who had the misfortune of being dialled into a meeting was at best a second-class participant and at worst totally ignored. The post-pandemic world has seen a greater focus on wellbeing and the increased provision of amenities in the office such as a social hub, café, lounge area, yoga rooms and so on as well as the provision of a greater range of collaborative settings to better support virtual, face-to-face hybrid group activities in a seamless way. Immersive rooms to enable virtual participants to have the same experience as participants in the room are being created, with much more thought on the table configuration, as well as line of sight and audio quality.



Technology shift

Metaverse in the workplace

New technology has brought about the growing interest and curiosity for the metaverse in the workplace to address the challenges of remote collaboration and its regimented operation.

Immersive technology

The metaverse is the three dimensional version of the internet. It duplicates our physical world using avatars to represent ourselves in this virtual world, allowing an immersive experience where people can interact, do business, and create social connection in real time simulation, with all participants having the same status and access to unlimited data and tools. This is and will impact all sectors as the platform providers invest enormous sums in this world, including Meta (formerly Facebook), Microsoft, Google, Tencent, Qualcomm, Autodesk. We are already seeing enhanced user experience, bridging the physical and virtual world by enabling facial expressions and temporarily connecting people in a more meaningful manner virtually.



METaverse BY META (FORMERLY FACEBOOK)

The use of the metaverse

The metaverse requires an internet connection, a computer and a VR headset, but otherwise minimal equipment that can be available anywhere. The metaverse has the potential to better support our new ways of working. The expectation is that the metaverse will complement the physical office space rather than a substitute, as it can not replace the social dimension of work.

Application to formal collaboration

The benefits of this new technology for corporates are enabling its staff to connect from anywhere in an authentic manner through an immersive and high-resolution experience. This can be particularly beneficial when meeting a greater number of participants where video calls still require hierarchical interactions, such as hand raising before speaking and the lack of facial expression to further engage efficiently. Equally relevant, the metaverse can be a tool in informal settings such as a parallel workplace to support employee relationships through gaming and live chat.

Spatial impacts

What is it going to look like

The future of collaboration is being shaped today by organisations adopting hybrid working and redefining a clear purpose of their office post-pandemic as a place. A place to collaborate, educate and innovate to support and develop the business culture and particular focus on wellbeing. This will inevitably reduce the need for focus space such as desks and offices, but increase the need for collaboration spaces, formal and informal, as well as rooms to connect virtually.

Workplace design impacts

In addition, we will see an increase in vitality spaces such as a social hub, café, pantry and tea point and yoga rooms to support bonding and bridging connections. The formal and informal collaborative zones will be designed with technology integrated to engage seamlessly in person and remotely. Finally, immersive rooms will create high experience portals into the metaverse for onboarding, education and training, as well as project collaboration within and beyond the organisation.



Immersive rooms will create high experience portals into the metaverse for onboarding, education and training

Experimentation phase

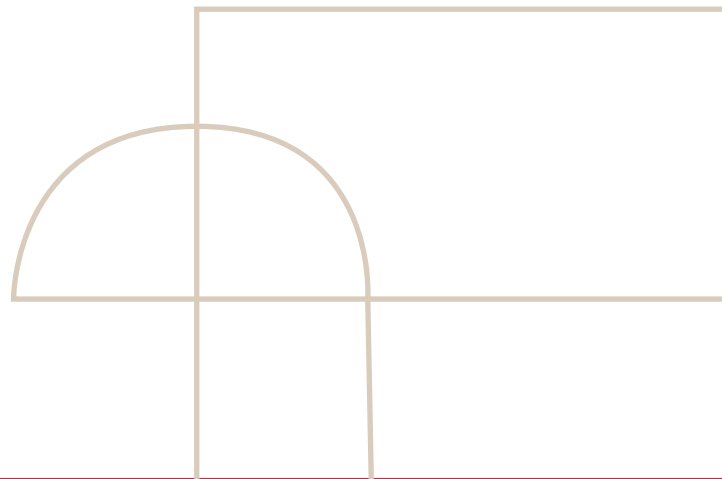
As a new generation of creators and technology literate people join the workforce, we can envisage integrating the metaverse into the workplace to bring people together in an immersive and data-rich world, addressing the sense of isolation often reported by home workers.

The workplace needs to evolve and adapt to continuously meet the changes in work activity, the new purpose of the office and to support collaboration formats of the future – face-to-face, virtual, hybrid and immersive in the metaverse to positively influence performance and productivity.



At Knight Frank, we look forward to working with our clients to explore and develop the collaboration format of the future workplace.

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