



# TRENDS REUNITED

You can probably imagine that we get lots of correspondence about trends sent through to us. Colour trends appear to get the most profile, but not necessarily from us, and we completely understand why some companies make a lot of noise about the 'colour of the year' – to raise the profile and sell more – but we like to think our annual A-Z of trends has a little more substance. Over the next dozen or so pages we'll show there's far more to the subject of trends than whether you should be using burnt orange or dusty violet!

Firstly, the following pages are created with the help of a wonderful mix of people from across our sector, which naturally leads to a whole variety of different perspectives.

Secondly, we also find that one person or group may be fully immersed in a particular subject but quite unaware of another. Therefore, we think our very democratic collection of views will more than likely contain a little sparkle for everyone.

Thirdly, discussing trends in 2019 has arguably never been as poignant, as the workplace sector has rarely been at a more interesting point. The lowest unemployment in a long time has focused the minds of business leaders to create a giant workspace. Sectors are merging, with workplace looking like hospitality and so on giving designers and manufacturers the opportunity to deal with economic ups and downs and allowing teams to broaden their knowledge. Technology remains a constant and hugely broad subject understood by imagined by many. The awareness of physical and mental wellbeing has never had a bigger profile, and like most subjects that catch the broader public interest it has already been misunderstood and manipulated – however the downside of people becoming stressed because they think they are stressed is outweighed by the fact that wellbeing has become real.

Finally, the changing age of the population is an immensely complex subject – not just for the workplace – and certainly shouldn't be confined to discussing Millennials.

The following Spotlight may contain elements that are far from new to you or even a little short on detail (you can do further research of course) but we hope you may find at least one spark of interest and, importantly, will be comforted by the fact that our sector is very much alive, bustling and ready to engage – not a bad sign of health.

## A

## AGILITY

Workplace agility stems from this ability to work quickly, seamlessly and cohesively. As more and more employees begin to work from home or on the road, company productivity shouldn't suffer. And whilst the focus has always been on flexible hours or hot desking, the conversation is now shifting from agile workplace to one of agile culture; which is, in essence, a workplace environment where people feel empowered to make decisions. Adopting an agile culture takes strategy and a vision. It shouldn't be reduced to investing in the right video conferencing technology, but rather about moulding the whole workspace environment to people's needs.

Our recent move to our new HQ in east London has given us, as designers, an unparalleled opportunity to transform our ways of working in a way that is relevant to our people, now and in the future. As part of the design process, we researched and tested a number of furniture solutions that would suit our needs. Unable to find a solution that truly reflected the way we work, we joined forces with Fantoni to collaborate on ATELIER; a modular, flexible and adaptable workspace furniture that's given our people the freedom to choose the best place to work and make the space their own. Agile culture is a mindset. Space and technology plays a part, but it's not what matters most – it's about adopting a new way of thinking and, in turn, adopting new behaviours. And furniture can certainly play a big role in this.



**PHILIPPE PARÉ**  
Principal, Managing Director,  
Gensler

# B BALANCE

The trend of incorporating wellbeing into our working lives is showing no signs of slowing down – and rightly so. Modern life is busy. Personal life is busy. We're all 'very' busy. Our always-connected status blurs the boundary between office time and playtime.

As a result, striking a work/life balance has never been so meaningful. As designers, how can we assist? First and foremost, we have direct access to key decision makers at client briefings. We can influence how clients can create great places to work and, in doing so, can make sure our environments provide a balanced design response. We have the responsibility to shake up the way our clients perceive working environments as well as exploring ways to improve the lives of their employees.

When we collect briefs from our clients, it's never a tick-box exercise about

accommodation schedules, but instead focused on people and their typical routine, ensuring users' working days are balanced with a variety of spaces, amenities, functionality and uses. We can't dictate how people operate their lives, but we can certainly assist in ensuring that their day is productive enough to allow them to have a life outside of work.

Clients can't rest on their laurels either; the theoretical scales always need re-adjusting to ensure order is balanced. In other words, spaces and clients need to be flexible too, adapting to the needs of the business and their users.

With work and life becoming so merged, we all strive for the perfect balance.



**HOWARD POWSNEY**  
Director, Aytch

# D DIVERGENT CREATIVITY

As we shift away from 'incremental productivity', where it is about things being faster, better and cheaper, a new model is emerging. 'Divergent creativity' leverages ideation and co-creation to drive to more game-changing ideas that break through boundaries. The 'sage on the stage,' empowered by PowerPoint, is replaced with the 'democratisation' of meeting, where everyone is able to contribute, leading to inclusive ideation and speed of innovation.

Convergent thinking is linear, which often involves going through a list of steps to obtain a single answer.

Divergent thinking is underpinned by



**KAY SARGENT**  
Senior Principal, Director of WorkPlace, HOK

exploring different directions from an initial problem statement to generate many possible ideas. Divergent thinking helps to generate ideas and identify a wide range of potential solutions.

Divergent thinking is important for critical analysis. Ignoring or dismissing opposing views only leads to 'group think' and further fuels silos and mindless conflict. F. Scott Fitzgerald once noted, 'The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.' The ability to break down silos and be more mindful of others' thoughts and ideas can lead to the evolution of an idea and true innovation.

# C CULTURE

50% of the top 500 global companies have increased their productivity with the expansion of global culture. It is no wonder that maximising on this cultural shift is at the top of global priorities; the question remains, however, what is the affect of this expansion on society and its human considerations? The measure of progress in a world driven by artificial intelligence, data and digital design is not self-evident.

If we assume that, as a society, we still benefit from the collective learning of Greek philosophy, roman engineering and renaissance discoveries, we may ask how future societies will benefit from our current culture and its productivity.

If we agree on culture being the common achievement of society, we may also agree that wealth is an important part of that culture. If, however, the negative impact of the productivity of that wealth outweighs the benefits, it will fail to serve the on-going growth of society.

If the outcome is that future cultures are based solely on the need to make the earth inhabitable, one questions whether this is progress. Reflecting on this is an invitation to re-evaluate our definition of wealth and how we proceed in our current approach.



**MARCO SERRA**,  
Global Chief Architect,  
Novartis

# E

## ENHANCED WORKPLACE

Gone are the days of formal cubicles, uninspiring reception areas and even less inspiring canteen lunches. These days, at The Furniture Practice, we're finding that workplace projects share more similarities with the hospitality industry than the traditional office block. As working solutions become more flexible, so does the concept of the workspace itself, expanding beyond mere practicality to instead reflect the creativity, philosophy and concept of the business it houses. Functionality, though still very important, is more prettily wrapped: interiors are taking on more considered colour palettes, materials and fabrics are becoming softer and more tactile, while furnishings are more focused on design and experience. Employers are beginning to understand that work quality isn't always a direct reflection of the hours spent at a desk, either. People need to feel inspired to be both productive and creative and professionals are now demanding the freedom to work in ways that best suit their needs. Home, work and leisure spaces are now less defined thanks to the fact that technology advancement allows us to work from anywhere, so from state-of-the-art on-site gyms to multi-functional social spaces, the workplace is evolving to reflect the changing culture of work itself. Not only an effective form of organic marketing for potential clients, these enhanced workspaces are great for staff retention too: smart businesses understand that employees want a more holistic approach to balancing work and life and are seeking out employers who can provide this through the best workplace possible.



**JENNIFER DUNN**  
Head of TFP Manchester,  
The Furniture Practice

# F

## FLEXIBILITY

When, where and how we work is changing. Timewise found that a staggering 87% of people want to work flexibly. Working flexibly, whether through working compressed hours, working a couple of days from home or using agile workspaces to work in the best environment for the task in hand, can bring many benefits to employees and, by default, to the organisation.

There has been an explosion of brilliantly and beautifully designed flexible workspaces. But we need to think carefully about how we support and manage people working in them. For flexible workspaces

to deliver benefits to wellbeing and productivity, a number of things need to happen: people need to be measured on their outputs, rather than time spent at their desk; managers need the skills, time and resources to manage people working at different times and in different locations and, as people increasingly work flexibly from home, workplaces will need more informal spaces for colleagues to make connections. We are currently working with people from across professions involved in workspace and work culture to find out what makes flexibility work.

**JO YARKER**  
Senior Lecturer, Birkbeck,  
University of London



# G

## GENDER INCLUSIVITY

Diversity and inclusion are hot topics in any workplace, but for many companies it's all talk and no action. This is staggering, especially given how important an accepting culture is for colleague attraction, retention and productivity.

The challenge, however, is creating a culture that is genuinely inclusive, where everyone feels welcome and truly comfortable in their own skin.

As designers, we can play a key role in this, so it's important that we design workplaces that go beyond the traditional office, to meet a wider range of employee needs.

For example, we can acknowledge people's religious beliefs by including prayer and contemplation rooms, or respect gender identity with gender-neutral toilets. Elsewhere, we can look at mothering rooms to support women returning to work, or provide breakout areas and rest spaces to

help colleagues manage their mental health. Examples like this act as visual and practical reminders of our commitment to supporting colleagues.

Of course, this works best when designers are working alongside other teams, all focused on promoting diversity and inclusion. Genuine engagement from leaders is essential for success, and this is something we've seen first-hand at Bupa.

Leaders who promote strategies that bring out the best in people, or recognise and reward without bias, act as a solid a role model to the organisation. Of course, it's not just leadership that should be adopting this outlook - it's something we can all do.

By working together, and supporting our people-focused strategies with sensitive and thoughtful design, we can create a workplace where everyone's happy and comfortable in being themselves.



**KAREN BROADBENT**  
Business Change Manager, Bupa

# H

## HUMANISE

The clash of the digital revolution and the human condition is a constant debate. How do we humanise the office, how do we enable people to thrive at work? We are entering into a discussion that is not just about pay or privilege, location or building flexibility or carbon counting. Our focus with many of our clients has been more holistic – whilst we still want the efficient and the cost effective, we also want to develop buildings and spaces with identity through real human values. The trend to create a sense of place is on course via increased psychological understanding. Our knowledge of sensory factors and good design relationships is improving, while our clients' awareness of good cultural values with matching management procedures is high on the agenda.

Our design solutions are increasingly human-centric and client responses are increasingly philanthropic. To humanise is to successfully provide a workplace environment that is connected with the human spirit, making workers cosy and comfortable in surroundings that invoke an inner sense of contentment and wellbeing.

It seems to me that good design, centred on real and tangible human values, is a trend that we cannot ignore. Actually, it shouldn't be a trend – it should always be a beginning.



**STEVE DICKSON**  
Senior Associate,  
FaulknerBrowns Architects

# I

## IT REVOLUTION

In our working lives we are increasingly connected to different tools and data sources to enable us to be more productive. Connectivity happens at multiple levels. We



are connected to each other via intranets, the internet, e-mail, messaging apps like What's App and LinkedIn. In the latter case, this is often with people we have not met and who may be on the other side of the world.

Our buildings are ever more connected, harvesting data from BMS systems, sensors, cameras and IOT devices. This data can be connected and analysed

automatically using AI to yield new insights and to help us drive more efficiency in our buildings and workplaces. Work has become more mobile, with connectivity enabling us to operate as we move

around, with the connected car (and soon the self-driving car or helicopter) being the latest place for us to be immersed in the digital world, even as we move between meetings, or between home and our workplace.

The end result is that the quality of our workplace experience and of our personal productivity is directly related to the level of connectivity within and between these spheres.

### TREVOR MILES

Smarter Buildings Consulting Lead,  
IBM Global Business Services

# J

## JUXTAPOSITION

The juxtaposition of old meeting new has long been a go-to theme in the building design world. Whether it's a subtle nod to a building's rich heritage or preserving the original features of a site when carrying out extensive renovations, marrying the past with a building's exciting future is often the perfect way to create a unique, fresh look.

And, as the competition to attract – and retain – the best talent continues to soar, creating bespoke, sought-after workspaces has never been more

important. This doesn't mean simply adding a couple of beanbags to create an office lounge area or introducing a lone hot desk; instead, it's about viewing a building as a whole and considering what makes it stand out from the crowd. What is its personality? What makes it different to its neighbours? And, importantly, why should people want to work there?

This year, we kicked off a major refurbishment programme, focusing on selected buildings across our North West portfolio. The £50m Pioneer scheme

will see many of our landmark sites transformed and given major overhauls, taking inspiration from each building's surroundings, its customers and, of course, its heritage. By paying tribute to its individual character – whether that be through a 1920s-style living room in reception or creating a living wall to reflect neighbouring gardens – businesses can be confident that their environment will play a key role in their future growth.



**CIARA KEELING**  
CEO, Bruntwood Works

# K

## KINDNESS

**CHARLES BRAMWELL**

Product Designer, Sixteen3



With the state of the world as it is, the concept of kindness has become far more valuable to us in all facets of daily life – and this includes the workplace. Creating spaces that foster teamworking and encourage collaboration is key, as well as incorporating environmentally friendly materials, products that can be easily recycled and sustainable design solutions. Biophilia has been a huge trend over the past few years and, at its core, is the idea of bringing the outside in, to calm and care for the mind and body. The concept of wellness in the workplace – being kinder to employees – has become so important to the attraction and retention of talent that it is definitely here to stay. We have also seen businesses investing

significantly in on-site facilities such as yoga studios, roof gardens and cycle hubs to ensure they are supporting a healthy work/life balance – but things are already moving on. Corporate kindness is now stretching further than the workforce and workplace; it's all about being kind to the environment as well. Commercial decisions are now being consciously made to show kindness to the planet and an awareness of a company's carbon footprint. Rationalising real estate, procuring sustainable resources, recycling, re-using and investing in products that are manufactured in a more sustainable way are practices that are becoming far more widespread, and this trend looks set to continue in 2020.

# L

## LOCALITY

As homogenous high streets and big business loom, we increasingly hone our designs to draw out what is unique about localities, and strive to support home-grown entrepreneurs. Our design concepts always start with location – the heritage, industries and character of a particular neighbourhood – as well as the history of the building or site itself. Meaningful connections with community engender a sense of pride and belonging, and support the growth of neighbourhoods. This applies to the tenant base of a workplace, as well as the wider community in which it sits.

At The Department Store, a former retail destination turned design studio in Brixton, we created areas of display to showcase work undertaken within the building, as well as providing public event and social spaces for the local creative community. Bespoke

desks were provided by south London joinery company, Opus Magnum, and a series of patterns were commissioned from Brixton-based designer, Eley Kishimoto, to be used in various applications.

For The People's Mission Hall in Whitechapel – x+why's purpose-driven workspace – the former Salvation HQ inspired a concept based around social action and the arts to offer multiple gathering spaces for the sharing of ideas. Artworks are sourced from local creatives on a rotating basis, and decorative objects within the space were curated from east London markets.

We believe that, for a workspace to flourish in its community, it should tap into the character and essence of its locality.

**JAMES HALLIDAY**

Associate, Squire & Partners



# M

## MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE

We see a growing trend in the workplace for more flexible, multi-purpose areas that are specifically designed to promote interaction and social connection, with breakout zones and third spaces that encourage collaboration between teams, idea sharing and social interaction.

Café culture now permeates the workplace and translates to higher productivity, collaboration and increased creativity. Embracing this culture in the workplace, particularly by creating a dedicated space for employees to take a break, have a coffee and grab a bite to eat, is a great way of encouraging interaction and conversation between employees and, by providing a first-class experience in-house, encourages staff to stay on site in the workplace community.

It's all about creating a really memorable experience that helps to attract and retain the best talent, as employees now expect their workplace to cater for, and enhance, their working day with hospitality-inspired spaces that create a sense of community,

help promote health and wellness and improve staff morale and engagement.



**SIMON BRACKEN**

Managing Director,  
Scanomat UK & Ireland

# N NEURODIVERSITY

We are living in a time of increased numbers of neurodivergents and awareness about ADHD, Dyslexia, Autistim and other neurological states. In fact, one in eight people are considered neurodiverse – however, fewer than 50% are aware. Neurodivergents tend to be high energy, out-of-the-box thinkers, excel in a crisis, and be bold problem-solvers, yet navigating the modern workplace can be a challenge. Not only is designing space to be inclusive the right approach, there is a compelling business case for this as well. Space today needs to reflect the diverse make-up of organisations to set everyone up for success.

Designers have an opportunity to influence the physical and cultural adaptation required to make workplaces

more inclusive. All aspects of the space – colour, lighting, materiality and sensory stimuli – need to be designed with purpose and intent. There is no single solution for designing space that best accommodates everyone. When achieved within an organisational culture of respect and inclusivity, attention to design elements that consider the needs of the neurodivergent, whilst providing choice, can reduce the adverse effects. The neurological differences can potentially take full advantage of the many benefits, and support broader organisational values and goals.



**BEATE MELLWIG**  
Practice Leader-Operations,  
HOK

# P PURPOSE

It's been more than 25 years since John Elkington coined the term 'triple bottom line' and 10 years since Simon Sinek delivered his now-viral 'Start with Why' TED talk. Yet 'purpose' is still a growing buzzword in the workplace, with more businesses demonstrating a genuine desire to do things better – aiming to enrich rather than exploit the world.

Fundamental to 'better business' is a dedication to people and planet, as well as profit, and an onus on businesses to live and breathe their purpose in everything they do, not just what they make. It's here that the workplace itself becomes a hindrance or a huge enabler in actually fulfilling your 'why'.

Live what you preach: if you have set about to accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy, you need to ensure that nothing you're doing is unintentionally undermining



**PHIL NEVIN**  
Co-founder, x+why

that. Residing in a sustainably/ethically built and run workspace is a non-negotiable.

People, people, people: by far the most cited advantage of being mission-driven? They should not only feel inspired and informed, but also supported to do their best work. Biophilic design, outdoor space, wellness and meditation studios, cycle stores, and good health and childcare all create the required culture of care.

Knock down walls: physically and metaphorically. The opportunity to find others who share your vision, and to be able to easily collaborate with them, allows everybody to move faster.

The workplace is no longer a place to put your laptop and hold meetings – it's an important reflection and expression of your purpose and intention.



# OCCUPANCY

The design occupational density of office buildings in the UK is typically one person for every 10 sq m. The limiting factors are fire strategy, WC provision, cooling, power, lift capacity and ventilation. Whilst life safety systems are often over-specified and other constraints may have some headroom, there is almost always a hard deck somewhere between 8 – 10 sq m per person.

The problem is that, in these days of max-packing, agility, intensive coworking and activity-based design, there are normally many more seats shown on a space plan than the base build specification would allow for if each chair represented an occupant, often down to one per 4.5 sq m.

Will that number of people ever show up on the same day? Almost certainly not. But how should we judge diversity of occupation? What controls should be put in place to limit occupancy? Should we be worried about people numbers or air quality? Are short periods of over-occupancy okay? Is it right that we blindly pump a litre of fresh air per sq m into offices, all day long, regardless of occupancy?

The use of office space has become more intensive and variable in the last few years and we urgently need to review our building regulations and base build specifications to suit.



**TOBY BENZECRY**  
CEO and Founder,  
Workplace Futures Group

## Q

## QUALITY OF INDOOR AIR

Clean air has been high on the political and media agenda throughout 2019 – and it's not just outdoor air pollution that's worrying people. In a recent study of 4,500 European office workers, we found that indoor air quality was cited as the number one concern for many territories, including the UK.

In many cases, this issue was placed above excessive noise – another current hot topic in the workplace sector – with employees craving greater control over their office environments. The emphasis was on people wanting to feel that

workspaces are tailored – if only in some part – to their individual needs. This could translate into being able to adjust their climate, open a window or have access to outdoor space.

As we rapidly approach 2020, manufacturers and commercial designers alike are tasked with considering how best to address these increasing concerns, with some already blazing a trail in providing innovative design solutions to better satisfy employee needs.



**BECKY POLE**  
Design Manager, Tarkett

## S

## SUSTAINABILITY

As interior designers, our role 'in simplistic terms' focuses on the client's functional needs and the aesthetic that enables these. As an interior design professional going into 'the 20s' and beyond, there is also an increasing emphasis on designing sustainably, being environmentally conscious and the importance of user wellbeing. This is not a trend; sustainable interior design is not a new term, but with the wide reach of social media and rising global environmental issues, sustainability is coming to the forefront of business agendas and is gaining momentum. With socially conscious Millennials looking to dominate the global workforce by 2020, the environments they work in and company they work for has become more vital. This generation better



values the sustainable credentials of their employer and the carbon footprints of their workplaces. We have the power within our design selections to guide and educate our clients on sustainability, whether on product materiality or how it can galvanise the workforce and enhance a brand's green credibility. In previous decades, a limitation on the type of products available in the marketplace, which had true sustainable credentials, had limited aesthetic choice. Often these products would also come at a premium cost to the client, meaning 'good intentions' would often, unfortunately, fall by the wayside. The products available to designers now are much vaster, and the strong stories behind them are clear. Sustainable design will continue to grow to become a firm part of the workplace of the future.

**RACHEL WITHEY**  
Associate Director, Spacelnvader

## R

## RECYCLING

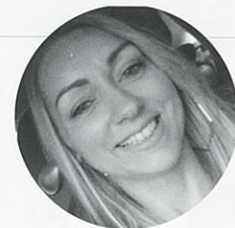
'The war on waste' is a phrase heard almost on a daily basis. One of our clients is helping lead the way in recycling as part of their bed and mattress scheme. Bensons for Beds has seen around 40,000 beds taken for recycling; meaning 1,800 tonnes of mattresses have been saved from going to landfill.

As designers, we have a responsibility to be conscious of the impact we may be having on the environment. It is now becoming easier to supply good quality furniture that is either recyclable or has been made from recycled materials.

Japanese studio, Nendo, has created a collection of stackable chairs from recycled household plastics in the shape of the N02 Recycle Chair for Fritz Hansen.

Fashion and textiles have a huge impact on the environment and Nike GRIND is doing its bit to combat waste from trainers. The Nike 're-use a shoe' scheme has collected 28 million shoes for recycling since 1990. The shoes are transformed into Nike Grind; a material used in creating athletic and playground surfaces.

The medals for the upcoming Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics have been designed by Junichi Kawanishi from old electronic devices, donated by the public. Hopefully, with a recycled product taking centre stage, it will showcase to the world how something recycled can be beautiful.



**ROSIE FLYNN**  
Senior Designer, John Evans Interior  
Architecture and Design



## TECHNOLOGY

Discussing technology applied to interiors can evoke thoughts of sci-fi movies, full of unlikely gadgets and gizmos, but some of these have already moved into the real world. Bear in mind, in my lifetime (and I'm not that old), drawing boards have been upgraded to computers and virtual 3D goggles are almost pedestrian now. But in the excitement of all these shiny toys, it's easy to forget that technology is here to be our servant and not our master.

As such, we believe the best current uses for technology in interior design are

those that are invisible, yet beneficial to the user.

We're seeing this in a recently developed range of paints, which uses nanotechnology to control thermal conductivity. This means that the paint itself can reduce the amount of insulation needed inside the walls and, furthermore, if connected to a low current, can transform any wall into a radiator.

We're also working with low voltage LED lighting systems that feed from network cables, both reducing the high voltage use in our buildings and also

allowing for enhanced control of each luminaire. Lighting can be programmed to follow circadian rhythms or customised with a mobile app. The next step is Li-Fi – utilising light to transmit data wirelessly, making Wi-Fi equipment redundant.

In short, good technology can and should simplify human interaction with spaces and we're looking forward to seeing more advances in this area (and perhaps the occasional robot and lightsaber).



**ENRIQUE SOLER**  
Head of Interior Design,  
Willmott Dixon

## UPCYCLING

Unlike recycling, upcycling drives materials back up the supply chain without needing to break down the original material. Imaginative repurposing within construction and in the workplace is on the increase, transforming by-products and waste material into new and often unique solutions of a better quality and environmental value. In a world rightly focused on reducing our carbon footprint and improving environmental responsibilities, it's a positive step to see our industry embrace and promote upcycling.

With clients challenging the norm and embracing less corporate workplaces, furniture and material trends are more varied, opening the door for alternative solutions. Knowing no boundaries, designers have embraced this opportunity, merging an eclectic mix of new and upcycled products. Away from the workplace, one of the most iconic upcycle considerations is the sea container. Not only does this offer considerable flexibility on how it can be reinvented, it is also serving as an intrinsic tool, contributing to affordable modular housing solutions. The benefits are clearly there to see.

With the government introducing a transformative Bill to Parliament to tackle the biggest environmental priorities of our time, the challenge is to acknowledge our industry's positive interventions and maintain the momentum. Equally, better recognition and integration of upcycling into environmental accreditation assessments is surely a good starting point.

**NEIL THOMAS**  
Head of Design,  
Denton Associates

## VALUES

As a graphic design agency, we work at the intersection of branding and architecture. So, from where we are sitting, the biggest trends in the workplace are all feeding what is now being recognised as the aorta for all businesses – values and culture.

Where businesses have previously focused purely on finance, then customers, what is now being realised is that, if you want to gauge the temperature (and ultimately profitability) of a business, speak to their employees.

Businesses are now bending over backwards to understand what their people really want, and the general consensus is that the values and mission of the business outweighs the wages and benefits. People are driven more by inspiration, connection, flexibility, wellbeing and learning.

Businesses are now looking to deliver all those things in order to get the things they want – productivity, top talent, innovation

and collaboration. The most used words in all our interactions with workplace professionals are 'human' and 'experiences'

Enlightened companies recognise that a well-designed hub that encourages collaboration and interaction is essential for them to transform into culture-first enterprises – and interior designers and architects are currently doing great work to deliver this.

Our passion is brand, of which values and culture is an integral part. We find (too often) that this is forgotten in the built space, or is applied in a heavy-handed way. Now that agile working is becoming the norm and people have the option of where they want to work, the workplace should become a creative and engaging space that captures the values and culture of the business for its staff.

It's our mission to get clients and designers to consider brand and values earlier in the design process.



**DAN MOSCROP**  
Founder, Them

# W

## WORKFORCE ISOLATION

Working for a large corporate company, I've witnessed the decade-long transformation from command and control working practices right through to the more recent agile design and delivery environments. Throughout this transformation, a culture that promotes and supports a choice-based style of working, that benefits individuals' needs whilst ensuring a better work/life balance, has become much more prevalent. Home working has exploded rapidly over a fairly short time period and the tech developed for it, which allows us to work securely anywhere we want, is improving all the time. The result for our strategists and asset managers has been a charge to offload office buildings, which are no longer deemed necessary. However, the result for colleagues is an increased long-term effect on wellbeing. With the number of student mental health problems rising, as they prepare to enter the workforce, they can find themselves bereft of human interaction, instead enrolling in a fully made up, pyjama-clad army, bonding ever closer with their pet or, more worryingly, their virtual friends. Creating buzzing, interactive destinations as spoke hubs all over the country, where people live and socialise, and aren't just the local coffee shop, should be a focus and aspiration in the developing times. Why can't the high street evolve to support in this way? (See X)



**SHARYN WHEELER**  
Lead Design Manager,  
RBS Group

# X

## XENOLOGY

If you were to splice workforce isolation (see W) with the death of the high street, what could you grow out of the ruins? This greenhouse experiment picks up two distinct design disciplines – retail and workplace – and plants them forcibly into the same plot: our great British high street. Long the domain of retail design, the time has come to reconsider its future use for society.

Let's examine the high street losers at the sharp end of the technology slash and burn over the last decade: bank branches, travel agents, bookies, toy stores, music and DVD stores, plus some very famous brand department stores...the list is endless, and shows no sign of abating. In 2018, almost 4,500 retail units were added to an ever-increasing empty list. So what is to be done? What will fill the void being created across our towns and cities? Where will agitated landlords turn as they sift around the ever-increasing debris of their business models?

I'm hoping that, like me, you have had your fill of nail bars and chain restaurants, and agree that a new sense of social purpose should be injected back into these time-honoured locations, where people get together and cultivate communities.

Technology, of course, has been the disruptor for driving this change – but

it is not to be regarded as the great evil here. It has, on many occasions, made peoples' lives much easier and has delivered products and outcomes at a much more rapid pace. It can also play its part at the heart of the high street renaissance. This being the case, how do office designers of the future embrace this opportunity to play a part in leading the way and acting as a catalyst to bring working literally into the shopfront? How do they work with retail designers, planning authorities and clients to convince them that a movement of energy into the high street will pay dividends for all?

Creative co-operatives with a requirement for visibility and accessibility are already beginning to spring up around the UK as the potential of a truly creative gig economy takes off. Other industries will follow suit. It's the beginning of a migration away from branded ivory towers dedicated to the sole purpose of a singular entity, towards a culture where the new office sits in a traditional retail space shared by workers from across the spectrum. Ask yourself this: would your client's workforce rather travel to their office today or meet their friends in their local community,

urban or rural, and use technology to get their job done in that location? What would that space be? Is it an office? Why not?



**BARRY MACKAY**  
Innovation Design Lead,  
RBS Group

# Y

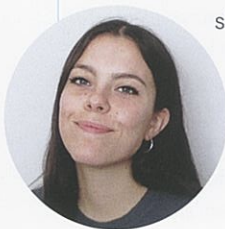
## YOUR SOFT TECHNOLOGY

Technological devices are an intrinsic part of our everyday life. From daily social interactions to complex workflows, technology has become ubiquitous in both the home and work environment. As a society we have become used to the rigid and cold surfaces of the tech that permanently surrounds us, but in recent years there has been a shift in customers' demands. As this digitised future becomes more apparent, society is

seeking a less invasive and more personalised relationship with technology. Tech companies are exploring softer materials and warmer colour palettes to integrate technology into our everyday surroundings. By working with textiles and seamless interfaces, the technological devices of the future will encourage more intimate and smooth interactions with them.

From Microsoft's Surface Line laptops to Ikea's SYMFONISK collaboration with Sonos, tech companies around the world are

promoting softer approaches to technology. Coined by trend forecaster Lidewij Edelkoort in her 'Softwear' exhibition for Google during Milan Design Week in 2018, the term 'Softwear' explores the transition between hardware devices to 'softerwear' devices. Through the use of softer design approaches, future devices will be seamlessly integrated into our surroundings and will feel like an extension of our home and life, rather than an intrusion.



**MARTA GIRALT**  
Designer in Residence, Design Museum

# Z

## ZONING

Zoning is a fundamental building block in the way we benefit from space. Separating, segregating, simplifying, servicing, protecting, organising; the benefits of classifying space are many. But balancing these benefits against the rising cost of space has never been easy. In recent years, we have made huge strides in understanding how the use of space can benefit organisational performance, and this has heralded a renaissance in the topic. So, what are our clients interested in and what does the future hold for zoning?

Space is becoming specialised. We are seeing a move towards creating spaces that are highly effective at supporting specific activities, be it highly customisable co-collaboration spaces or calming quiet rooms for deep, uninterrupted focus. So what's next? Some see a future where expensive city centre offices become collaboration hubs. In this scenario, individual focused work is undertaken at home or in local coworking spaces.

Space is more connected. Connecting staircases and strategic circulation are now zones in their own right, supporting unstructured collaboration. And why not take this concept a step further by designing connecting routes that could change, depending on which teams need to connect. Think the moving Grand Staircase in Harry Potter! ♦



**STEFFAN WILLIAMS**  
Director, Scott Brownrigg

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