

A photograph of a modern law firm workspace with a teal overlay. The space features a curved white bar with a textured back wall, a man standing on the left, and another man sitting at a table in the background. A television on a shelf displays a blue screen with a small figure. The text 'Legal Workspaces Reimagined' is centered in a white serif font, with a horizontal line below it.

Legal Workspaces Reimagined

THE EVOLUTION
OF LAW FIRM DESIGN

NELSON | INSIGHT SERIES



Legal Workplaces Reimagined

As the workplace evolves, the legal sector is no exception. This typically conservative industry has once again been forced to adapt quickly to maintain business continuity. The challenges developing around physical space, client service, and employee safety promise to reshape the legal workplace in both the near- and long-term future.

As law firms continue to modernize and explore trends that were long ago adopted by other industries, we're starting to see more progressive space concepts than ever before.



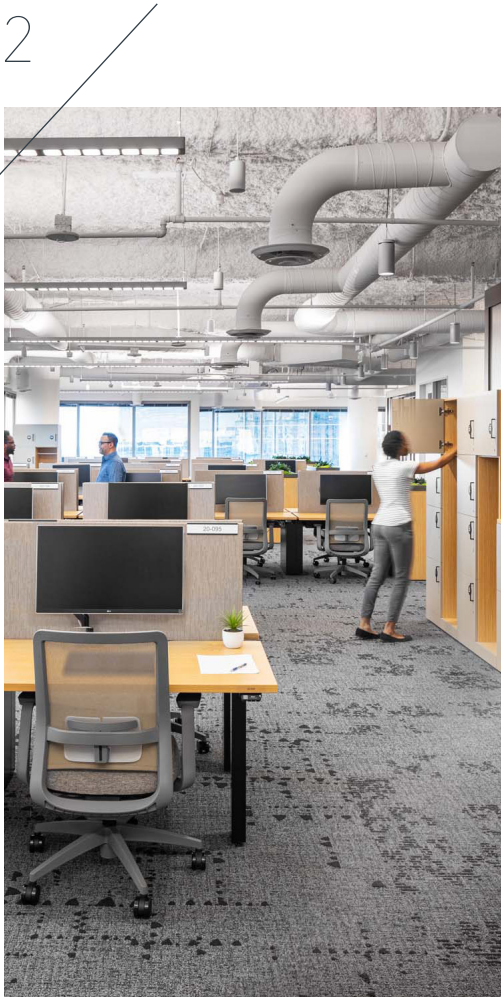
“The future of law firm design is about enabling the inevitable changes our society is faced with, making work-life more seamless for attorneys, finding creative solutions to occupancy issues, and designing with employee well-being at the forefront of it all.”

-Kristin Cerutti, NELSON Worldwide

TRENDS TO WATCH



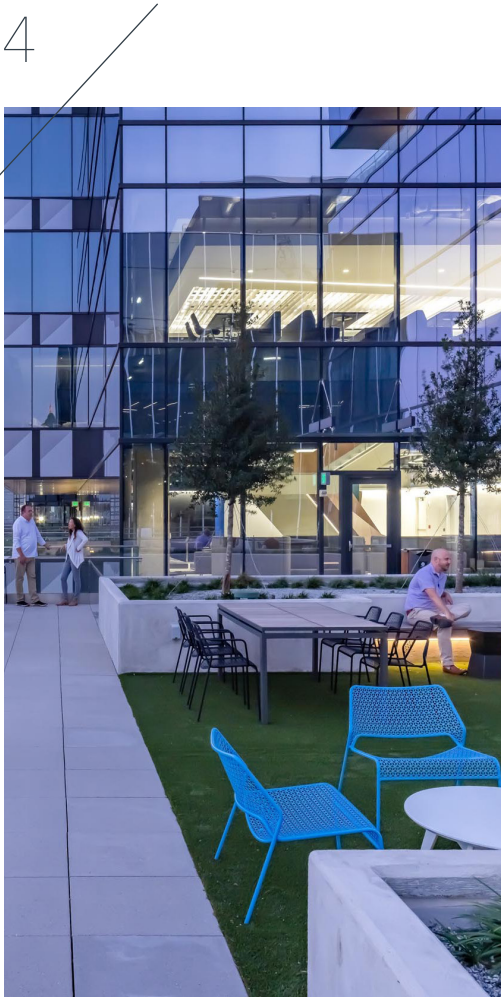
BREAKING TRADITION



MAXIMIZING MOBILITY



REPURPOSED SPACES



INTEGRATED WELLNESS



ESTABLISHED EQUITY



1 BREAKING TRADITION

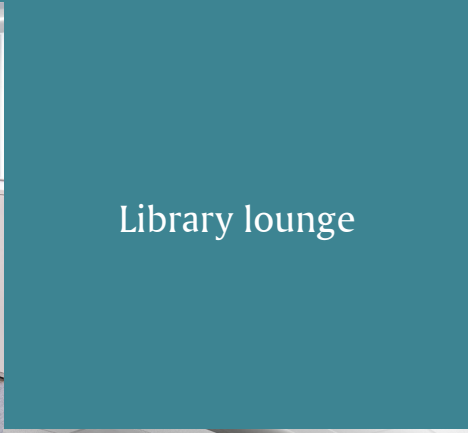
Inside the traditional legal firm office, culture is often centered on long hours, hierarchy, and space allocation as a sign of value; think private or corner offices. But, with a new generation of attorneys and staff entering the workforce and various external factors creeping their way into the legal workplace culture, will these traditions last? Should they last?

As the return to the legal workplace continues, smart firms will blur the lines to create environments that celebrate old traditions while embracing new cultures.

For example, we predict that the “trophy” office suites will dwindle and make room for new concepts or offerings that embrace new work styles while still motivating attorneys to continue reaching new milestones.



Picture this



Library lounge



Hands-on zones



Retiring the corner office



Clear sightlines





2

MAXIMIZING MOBILITY

During the pandemic, the legal workforce proved that staff and attorneys can efficiently work from home and/or beyond a dedicated workspace. As a result, smart firms are taking this as an opportunity to reset and implement new strategies to increase mobility and repurpose underutilized space.

Today we are seeing progressive and conservative firms adopt hybrid work schedules and hoteling models. The size of offices have reduced and we're adding more shared spaces than ever before.

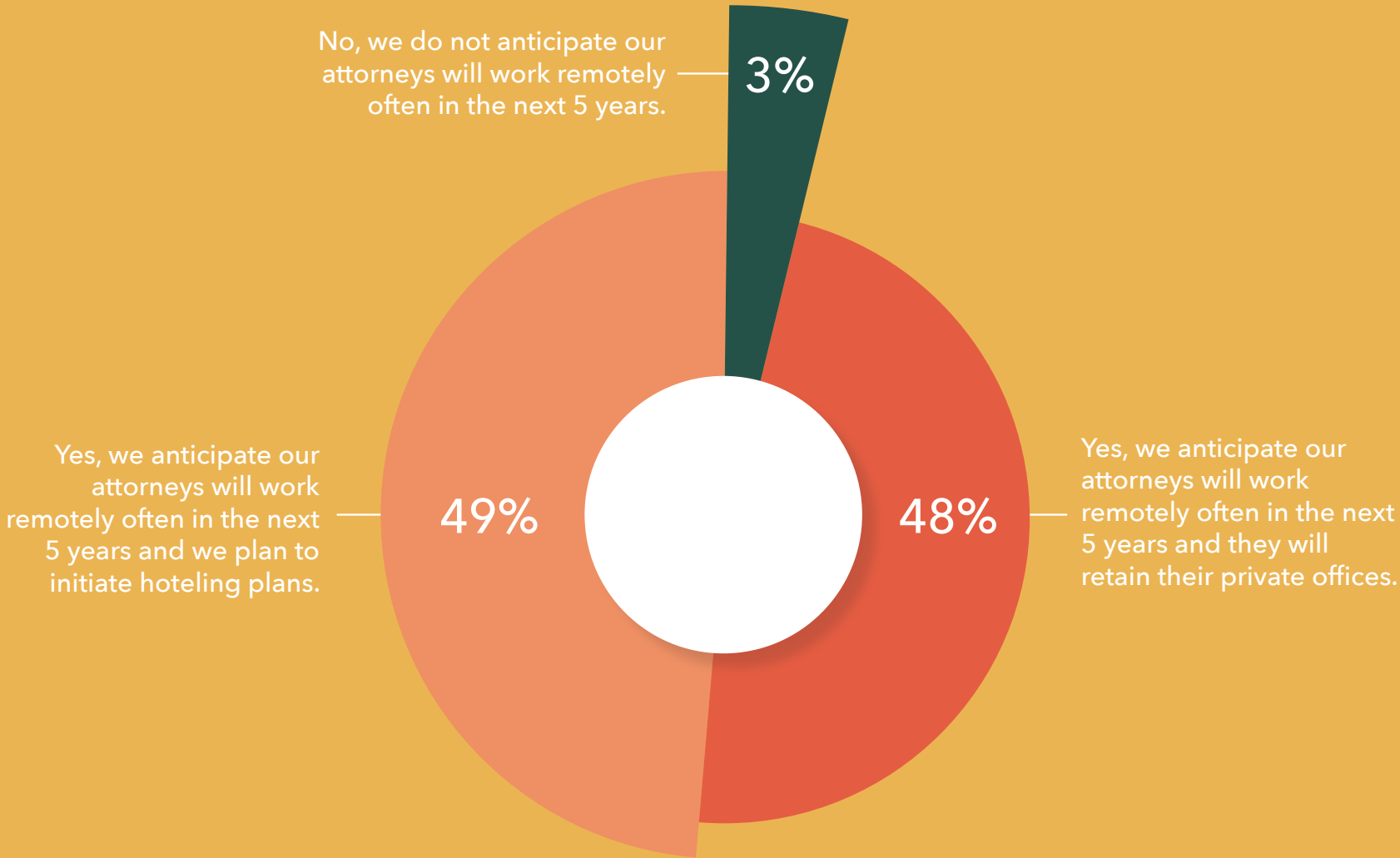
Firm owners and design of today are focused on finding new ways to maximize mobility and square footage—filing cabinets are being replaced by the cloud and reviewing contracts almost doesn't call for a human at all anymore.



INNOVATION IN ACTION
NEXT GEN LEGAL CONCEPT

For a recent legal office concept, NELSON Worldwide designed a unique floorplan that features four corner hubs. These spaces are not occupied by a single practice group or department and give all employees and teams access. Each hub features a variety of seating options and have direct access to a copy area, coat storage, collaboration space, conference rooms, etc. A centrally located socialization space encourages people to stop and connect. Even when the office is less populated, the heart of the office is still buzzing/thriving.

In the next five years, do you anticipate attorneys working remotely more?





3

REPURPOSED SPACES

As the role of the office shifts, spaces that can flex to work for a multitude of different uses such as happy hours, formal and informal gatherings, and internal all-hands meetings will become even more important.

Across the country, many court cases are still being held virtually making it easy for attorneys and staff to continue remote work. As a result, formal client facing spaces are less necessary and smart law firms are using this as an opportunity to reevaluate how they are using their square footage.

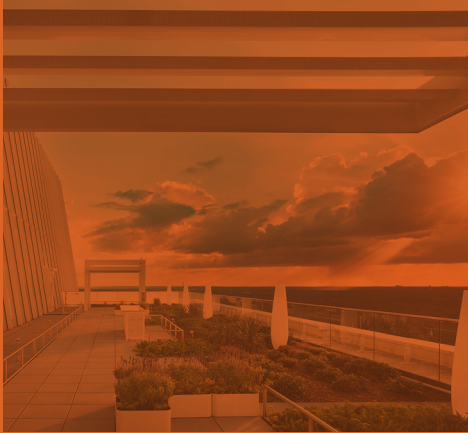
Now and in the future, converting underutilized space into new concepts will be the best way to spark human connection, employees will feel more comfortable and inspired to return.



Picture this



Larger cafes with various seating options



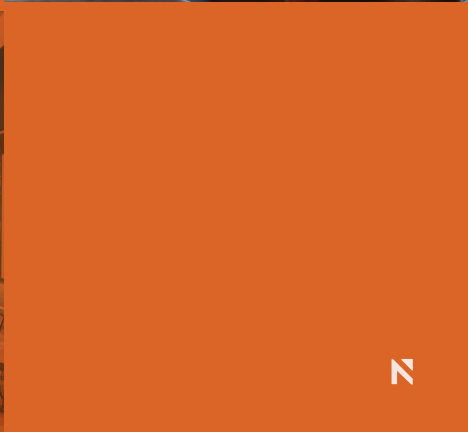
Outdoor space



More collaboration and social spaces



Decompression space





3

INTEGRATED WELLNESS

The legal industry is deeply rooted in apprenticeship and mentoring. Working in tandem with their senior colleagues, associates learn their trade through observation, hearken through hours of experience and execution.

With a renewed sense of wellness as we re-enter the workplace, getting everyone on board with creating an environment that prioritizes its' employees is key to the success for any law firm. This will not only attract employees back to the office, but help to attract and retain the new talent coming into the workforce.

To promote well-being, legal environments should prioritize air quality, acoustic privacy, and adding a variety of space types for movement.

59%

of employees attribute satisfaction to over all ability to easily move through out the office during the work day.

(NELSON Worldwide, 2021)



INNOVATION IN ACTION HOGAN LOVELL BEIJING OFFICE

Moving to a new, full floor space, Hogan Lovell's new offices have created a thriving and inclusive workplace environment that empower employees to succeed. Wellness played an important role in the design of the space to help their employees think, feel and work better in offices with more natural lighting, clean air, comfortable temperature, and lovely views of the outdoors. Sustainable design features have allowed the office to reduce energy and water consumption, introduce biophilic design, and improve air quality.



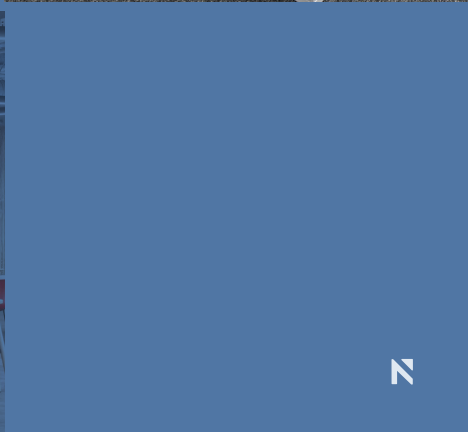
4

ESTABLISHED EQUITY

Coming out of the work-from-home experience, it will be important that the legal work environment provides a sense of comfort and security for all employees. This doesn't just mean physical comfort, but emotional comfort as well.

An office renovation/relocation is the perfect opportunity to reengage and reinvigorate your teammates across all departments. Many firms are gravitating toward floor plans that offer more transparency and foster collaboration across practices and departments.

From attorneys to paralegals to library staff, looking beyond the program numbers and tapping into a more equal culture will lead to even more success.



The background image shows two modern office pods. On the left, a woman with long dark hair is sitting at a desk, working on a laptop. On the right, a man with short dark hair is sitting at a desk, working on a tablet. Both pods have a desk, a chair, and a small lamp. In the foreground, there is a tufted armchair on the left and a potted plant on the right. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal color.

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