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FUTURE WORK

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> The Office Renaissance: Future of Work

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced our society to accept a new way of life, and these learned behaviors are causing a monumental shift in the workplace. Many factors are shaping the future of the office and the way we work. Still, corporations must embrace a renewed sense of energy in creating environments that are safe, efficient, and, most importantly, inspiring. At NELSON Worldwide, we strive to provide a holistic approach to strategic changes employers can make today, tomorrow, and in the future to make this transition back into the workplace as seamless as possible. The future of the workplace is here, and the renaissance of the office will allow us to emerge stronger than before.



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Shape-Shifting Environments

As the workplace evolves one thing is clear: flexibility is key. The office will need to become a shape-shifting environment that can quickly adapt to facilitate creative connection and renewed purpose. The space needs to be intuitive to solve user needs seamlessly. Offices of the future should consider implementing zoning and partitioning features that offer modular, freestanding screens to facilitate collaboration and socialization. In addition to spaces that increase interaction, there will be a strong desire for privacy and focus space for those unable to concentrate at home. This could include productivity pods or flexible divisions. From shared to private workstations,

solutions, and systems like these can offer a renewed purpose and sense of culture as employees return to the office.

Additionally, as work becomes more digitized and remote, everything needs to work efficiently and be easy to move, change, and adapt. People need to have some control, and this is where the concept of shape-shifting goes back to individuality. We have so much control over our own spaces at home, and this needs to translate into the office as an incentive that is attractive to employees. Rather than reconfiguring an entire workplace from scratch, however, offices should work with what they have and see what their

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employees prefer so that individuals can shift rooms and shift technology. Teams provide feedback so that when an organization is ready to refresh its space, the changes are based on a highly-informed process.

The Outward Office

For many years we've seen the big tech giants on the coasts provide their employees with every amenity they could imagine to the point where they never needed to leave the campus. We will continue to see this for larger companies that need to compete with that level of enticement, but it will look different in smaller campuses and office spaces. Employers will need to think about how they can create micro-communities within their suburban campuses or office environments that support its surroundings

to allow employees to experience a more holistic and flexible lifestyle. The shift is that employees will demand the conveniences that they've experienced while working remotely—from daycare to dog care, dry cleaning to healthcare. These types of assets along with the amplification of social and entertainment spaces will attract talent and work to build cultural connections through community.

Empathy Driven Environments

Creating a workplace that celebrates diversity, ideas of inclusivity, and empathy is crucial. After a year of adapting to new lifestyles, these behaviors will be ingrained in employees post-COVID while striking a new era of empathetic design that considers everyone's experience.

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Beyond the typical elements that are provided in an office space, ie. wellness rooms, what other areas can we include to signal the way employees perceive the world is supported in the work environment? Not many expressed their needs in the past, but today it has become widely accepted to voice that we're all different. Giving people the types of spaces they need to perform their best is something employers will have to embrace. This doesn't mean that every piece of furniture is different, it refers to working in a kit of parts that allows spaces to work for people when they need it. Shift from role to skill. When you look at an employees' skills, you can give them what they need to feel supported when they need growth. This is a more empathic practice to support employees rather than enforcing protocol. People want to be heard, and their point of view matters.

Rewired Communication

A recent study suggests that 87.5 percent of global employees have missed face-to-face social interactions since remote working was introduced and while the return to the office will satisfy this craving for most, new workstyles and re-imagined office spaces will prompt a new way of communication that integrates and better serves employees in and outside the office. While innovative technology evolves, companies should lean into virtual solutions that mimic casual employee interactions and provide a much richer experience than viewing a two-dimensional screen. Whether it's the technology for a virtual brainstorming session or a wearable device that allows employees to "tap" one another from a distance, the most significant opportunity in the workplace today marries virtual and face-to-face communication to create a better holistic experience. **MP**