

The destination office

Designing an ideal
workspace for the
future of work



An expert guide

hbreavis



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Introduction

What you will get from this guide

Understanding the future of work

It wasn't long ago that if you worked for a company, it was in a full-time office. For many, this space led to a repetitive, day-to-day experience that felt consistent and familiar. But it was also in need of bold changes to improve the employee experience – even if people just didn't know it yet. But before employers could make these changes, the world moved to remote working. Though remote working was used by some companies, it was rare, and hybrid working was almost unheard of.

Today, the old way of doing things is almost forgotten. Over the last two years, hybrid working has fast become the norm and has proven the office is no longer the only place to conduct

business. But while this has boldly changed the world of work, these changes haven't all been for the better.

This is because hybrid working is a trade-off. On the one hand, many people enjoyed the extra flexibility hybrid working gave them. It helped them tackle many issues they'd had with remote working. But, at the same time, people recognised they missed things from the traditional office. As a result, even though hybrid working has become 'de facto' for many businesses, it hasn't lived up to their expectations.

This has raised a lot of questions. For employers and employees alike, there is now uncertainty about what role the 'traditional office' now plays. Can a return to the office replace hybrid

working? When employees work both at home and in the office – which tasks should be done where? Can new working models ever be as productive as older ways of working?

Introducing the destination office

All these questions prove one thing – nobody is sure what benefits a dedicated workspace can and should provide. With hybrid working not meeting everyone's needs, it is becoming clearer that the world of work still needs to change. For hybrid working to unlock its full potential, businesses need to rethink how they use the dedicated office.

Above all, the dedicated workspace needs to become somewhere people can do their best work, focus on their

wellbeing, and come together as a community. It must be a workspace designed for the best possible employee experience.

This expert guide will help you to:

- Understand what the destination office is – and why it's essential to the future of work.
- Learn how the destination office can increase employee productivity, wellbeing, and community.
- Address the challenges of designing a destination office.



What is the destination office?

The destination office is a dynamic, flexible, and inspirational workspace designed for the specific needs of its users. It's full of data-driven solutions and collaborative opportunities.

Forget sitting at an isolated, cramped, and badly equipped desk at home - this office is built around the employee experience. It's an exciting and supportive environment that promotes wellbeing and community. Above all, it highlights all the best things about working in the office.



The new office must become more than just a workspace. It needs to be a destination. The office is the physical heart and soul of a business, and it reflects your company's brand, values, and culture. In a world where employees can choose whether to work from the office or at home, they'll only want to work in an office that gets this right.

Where does the destination office start?

If you want to transform your workspace into a place employees want to be, a good place to start is by focusing on the employee experience. By figuring out what employees want from the office, you can set goals for your destination office.

As a starting point, here are the [six hybrid working headaches](#) we identified using insights from our recent Wellbeing 2.0 whitepaper. Surveying hundreds of white-collar workers from across Europe, their answers tell us a lot about the challenges of hybrid working and what people have been missing from the office.

So, what have these challenges been?

1. Collaboration

[Collaboration](#) problems stem from disjointed communication, tech fatigue, and siloed teams. It's harder to spark innovation between screens. It means that 37% of employees are becoming worn out by how long they spend on video calls.



2. A breakdown of community

For 37% of employees, remote working has negatively impacted their sense of [workspace community](#). Employees feel they are less connected to their colleagues, which has left them feeling less productive, more isolated, and less committed to their employers.



3. Professional isolation

One-third of employees say they lack 'connection' in their professional lives. This has not only affected workspace communities but has negatively impacted [employees' moods](#) in the office and outside of work. As a result, 30% of employees say their mental health has suffered due to remote working.



4. Work-life imbalances

This has played a big part in remote working struggles. In fact, 29% of employers have recognised a decrease in the [work-life balance](#) of their employees. Returning to the office will allow these individuals to separate their work and personal lives better.



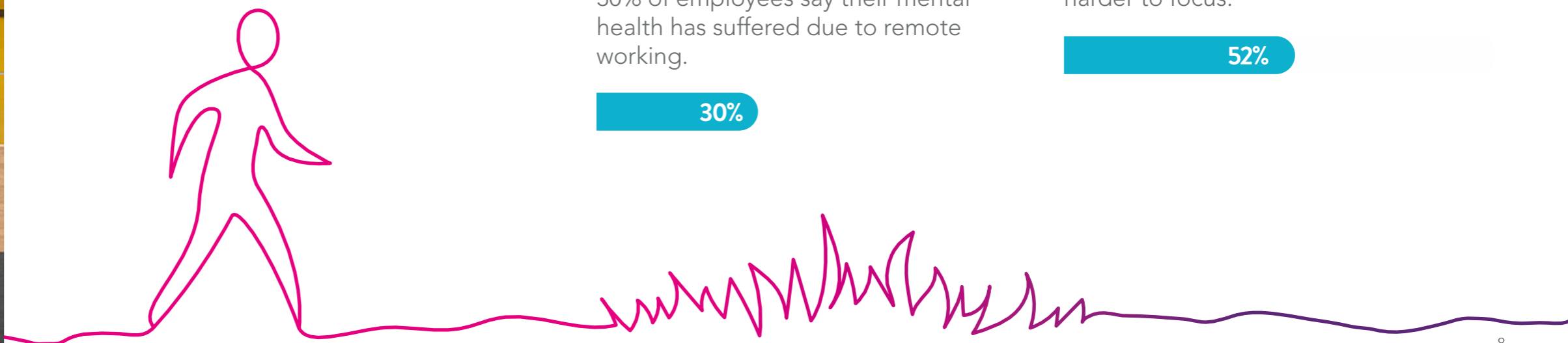
5. Leadership hurdles

[Leading your employees](#) in changing circumstances can be tough – employees can feel they haven't been supported enough, and managers can struggle to develop an e-leadership style. And 15% of employers are already seeing an increase in employee turnover.



3. Inequality

Not all remote workspaces are created [equal](#). And this means that many employees do not enjoy hybrid working environments as they find it hard to be productive. 52% of people without a dedicated at-home workspace find it harder to focus.



Building a complete employee experience

If businesses are to design the ideal workspace and allow employees to prosper under hybrid working models, they need to consider how the office can tackle these issues.

For companies that have already returned to the office – or those still planning their return – this creates an opportunity. By designing a destination office, they can make a workspace where employees genuinely want to be. Employees will want to work there not just because it supports their specific needs but because it is the best place to work.

A better way of hybrid working

There are some tasks that employees may prefer to do from home. But the reality is that not everything is suited to remote work. Collaboration, for example, is much harder. In fact, **57% of employees say they've lost a sense of connection with their colleagues**, which has a detrimental impact on productivity and performance.¹

Employees who now only see their colleagues two or three days a week need to make the most of the office's collaborative opportunities. This means more collective spaces and better workspace design to support deeper interactions.

While moving to hybrid may have partially fixed the problems with remote working, it isn't the complete answer.

¹ Research by HB Reavis, "[Wellbeing 2.0: What's Next for Hybrid Working](#)" whitepaper, 2022



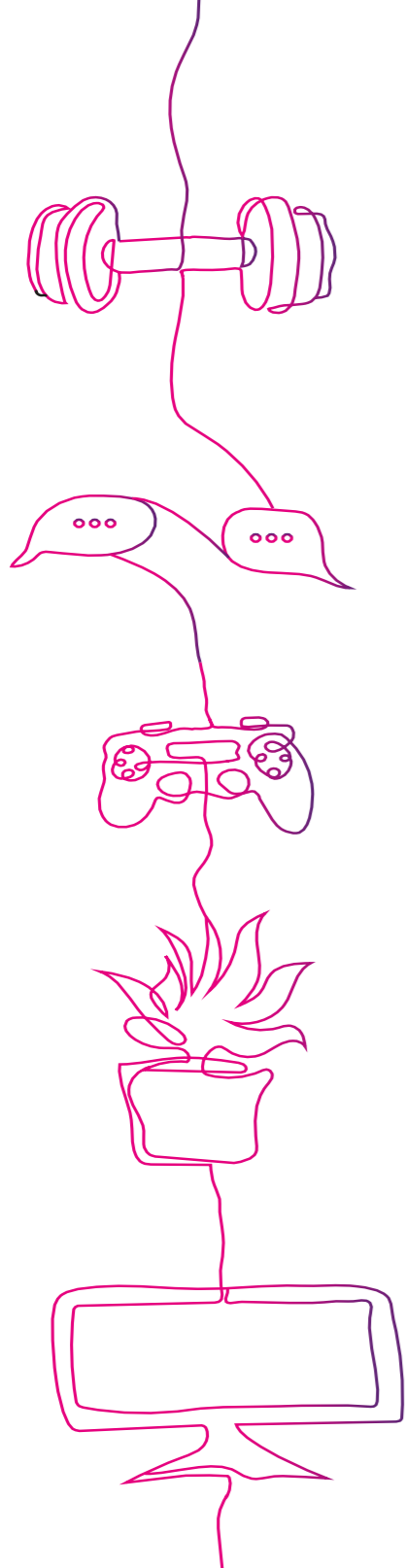
The way employees choose to work has changed. Now the office needs to adapt to match this.

A workspace that employees want to be in

The flexibility of hybrid models has changed how people think about "work". It's no longer a place you go, but a thing you do. As a result, "presenteeism" is no longer an incentive to go back to the office. People won't want to return to the office just because their employers say they have to. Instead of forcing employees to return to work, you should be creating a workspace that they choose to be in because they prefer it.

This is where a destination office is important. It provides a positive influence for your employees to come back to the office. They won't just be in the office as they think it looks good. Instead, they'll be there because it's rewarding working in an environment that they want to be in.

To provide this 'rewarding experience', you need to offer things that employees missed while working remotely. You should also consider what they didn't like from their previous offices before the pandemic. The key here is that the destination office experience needs to be new and offer value. It must provide opportunities that can't be found anywhere else, with standout amenities and the convenience of having everything under one roof.



36% of respondents stated they had taken any measures to foster interactions and community in the office

One office for every need

The destination office must also consider that employees all need different things. Those who want to come in and focus on individual work need a quiet space where they can concentrate. For those who want to share their ideas and learn from the rest of the team, open plan communal spaces are a must. Flexibility, therefore, will be a big part of creating a dynamic, multifunctional space where employees can choose how they work.

Yet while some needs are unique to every employee, there are values they all share. Namely, almost all employees want the office to support wellbeing and community. Behind the destination office, then, there needs to be a strong backbone of social interactions and mindfulness.

Yet, in our latest wellbeing survey, only 36% of respondents stated they had taken any measures to foster interactions and community in the office. While this is only part of the solution to promoting wellbeing and community, it's clear that not enough is being done to address these key areas within the workspace.

Overall, the office must become a dynamic place that is more than a match for remote working. By helping employees feel their best and be their most productive, the destination office will be their preferred place to work. It will deliver a complete employee experience where productivity, wellbeing, and community always come first.





How to design the destination office?

To ensure that the destination office fully delivers on employees' needs, there are fundamental features it will need to have. Though the needs of employees are unique, there are some aspects of the destination office that employees will expect by default.

We've broken these into three key sections: wellbeing, community, and productivity. While these areas overlap, and you need to give equal attention to all three, they can help you find some good places to start when designing your destination office.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing covers physical as well as mental health. As these are linked, the destination office's design and technology can be the key to enhancing both at once.

Social hubs

The office already offers the chance to connect with colleagues, but this cannot only be at their desks. Part of the destination office experience must include the opportunity for employees to come together, relax, and have fun in social hubs. This could take the shape of communal terraces, like one at our London workspace, Worship Square.

Active design

Those wanting to lead an active lifestyle can see a day in the office as a hurdle to their goals. But a workspace that offers opportunities for physical activity will support the integration of exercise with everyday life. For example, you can provide on-site fitness studios or host yoga classes in the mornings. Providing cycle-to-work initiatives alongside bicycle storage will only enhance these benefits. Employees will boost their cardio fitness, breathe in the fresh air, and contribute to sustainable commuting.

Biophilia

Bring the outdoors in to create a thriving, colourful environment in your workspace - it's known to positively influence wellbeing and stress reduction.

Amenities

Providing amenities is about addressing employees' concerns about the office day. Will they have time to do a food shop? Can they fit in exercise classes or training workshops? Are the facilities accessible to them? At Bloom, employees can easily access the building's amenities via an app. Housing everything under one roof assures employees will have everything they need to minimise stress and demonstrate care beyond their work performance.

Workspace design is a crucial part of the office. It directly impacts people's overall satisfaction at work. Rather than just following the newest trends on the market, it should be people-centric and reflect their needs and preferences.

Only this way can it nurture the company's culture and bring the best out of its people.

Designing the destination office is important for employees, but it has just as many wellbeing benefits for employers too. Healthy, happy employees are less likely to take time off sick and perform better at work.

How we build community in Germany



Smart space planning is important for promoting wellbeing. In Germany, one of our buildings has three green inner courtyards and an expansive rooftop terrace where employees can meet and relax. Then there's the boulevard area, with benches and green spaces open to everyone, including the public. The boulevard also features an impressive art collection that captures visitor interest and sparks conversation.



Community

Community is just as crucial for people's wellbeing. So much so that 47% of people say their connection to their team and company is the main thing they need to feel good at work. The destination office of the future represents more than a place to go and do work. It's a collaborative and social hub that extends beyond the traditional office's four walls.

Networking

Collaboration at work is often held back by disconnection. By this, we mean that people who don't usually interact are missing out. It could be because departments are divided by walls or floors. But by providing opportunities for chance interactions with colleagues, such as social hubs, coffee spots, and communal spaces, your employees get to build connections with new people outside of their usual social circles.

Team collaboration

One of the added considerations of creating your destination office is who needs to be in the building – and when. Some tasks need members of the same team to be in the office at the same time; otherwise, the collaborative benefits of the destination office will be lost. This is where smart services such as the Symbiosy desk booking app come in handy. Employees can view availability in the entire space, let others know when they are in the office, and ensure they are booking desk space next to the people they need. It's also great for cross-team collaboration.

Celebrating employee success

Championing employees' hard work is vital for consistent productivity and positivity. But some people, especially those who consistently perform well, may feel their hard work goes unnoticed. Showing your employees they are valued by organising group activities will inspire them to continue doing their best work. It will transform the office into an environment of mutual support.

Internal communication

Effective communication is as much about the space itself as the tech. While having the right online platforms for employees is needed, the office's physical layout must also support communication. It's about making it easier for employees to communicate openly. Think about where employees can talk away from their desks, such as the kitchen, canteens, and chill-out spaces.

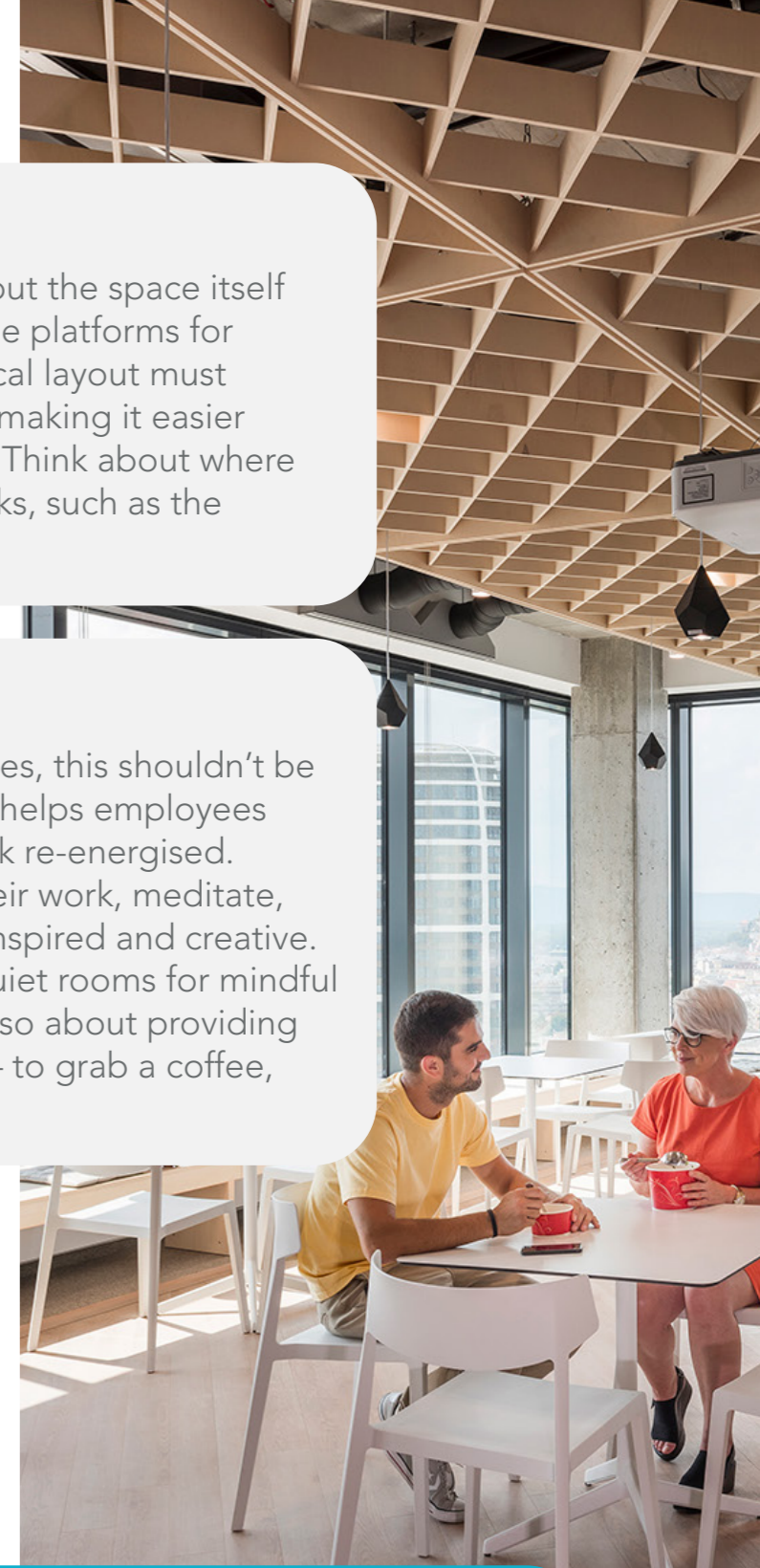
'Downtime'

When employees take time to themselves, this shouldn't be seen as missed productivity. Downtime helps employees to recharge and come back to their work re-energised. Providing space for people to pause their work, meditate, and reflect is the key to keeping them inspired and creative. Rooftop terraces, outdoor areas, and quiet rooms for mindful reflection help support downtime. It's also about providing space for employees to relax together – to grab a coffee, take in the view, or sit and talk.

Encouraging new bonds, celebrating success, prioritising internal communication, and supporting downtime are vital for a feel-good destination office. It builds a space for positive actions, support, respect, and happiness.

How we build community in Poland

In Varso Place, we have a ground floor area designed to be full of restaurants, cafes, and shops open to the public. There's also a rooftop terrace for tenants. Soon we'll be opening Varso Tower, which will include a green lobby lined with trees and two public observation decks. Blending business with leisure in this way allows us to create a building that becomes part of the fabric of the local community and makes a true destination office for those working there.



Productivity

Wellness and productivity have a symbiotic relationship: when people feel good, they do their best work. And when people feel more productive and engaged with their work, they feel happier and have greater wellbeing. Productivity is ready to soar when you have wellbeing and community in place together.

Layout

Situating related departments at a distance can be inefficient. This is why it's more productive to sit them closer together. But it can also be surprisingly productive to place unconnected departments together – you never know what perks a new connection could provide. Try to balance both goals.

Noise levels

With layout in mind, it's also important to consider background noise. [Especially when 83% of people say that noise levels in the office are highly important to get right. Worse still, the average office worker has only 11 minutes between each interruption.](#) Proper soundproofing is important for private spaces, high-priority meeting rooms, and individual workspaces.

Meeting locations

Whilst it's important to optimise meeting rooms for the most productive outcomes, these spaces don't need to be static. Change up meeting room locations to help employees get into new headspaces and be inspired by new surroundings.

The right technology

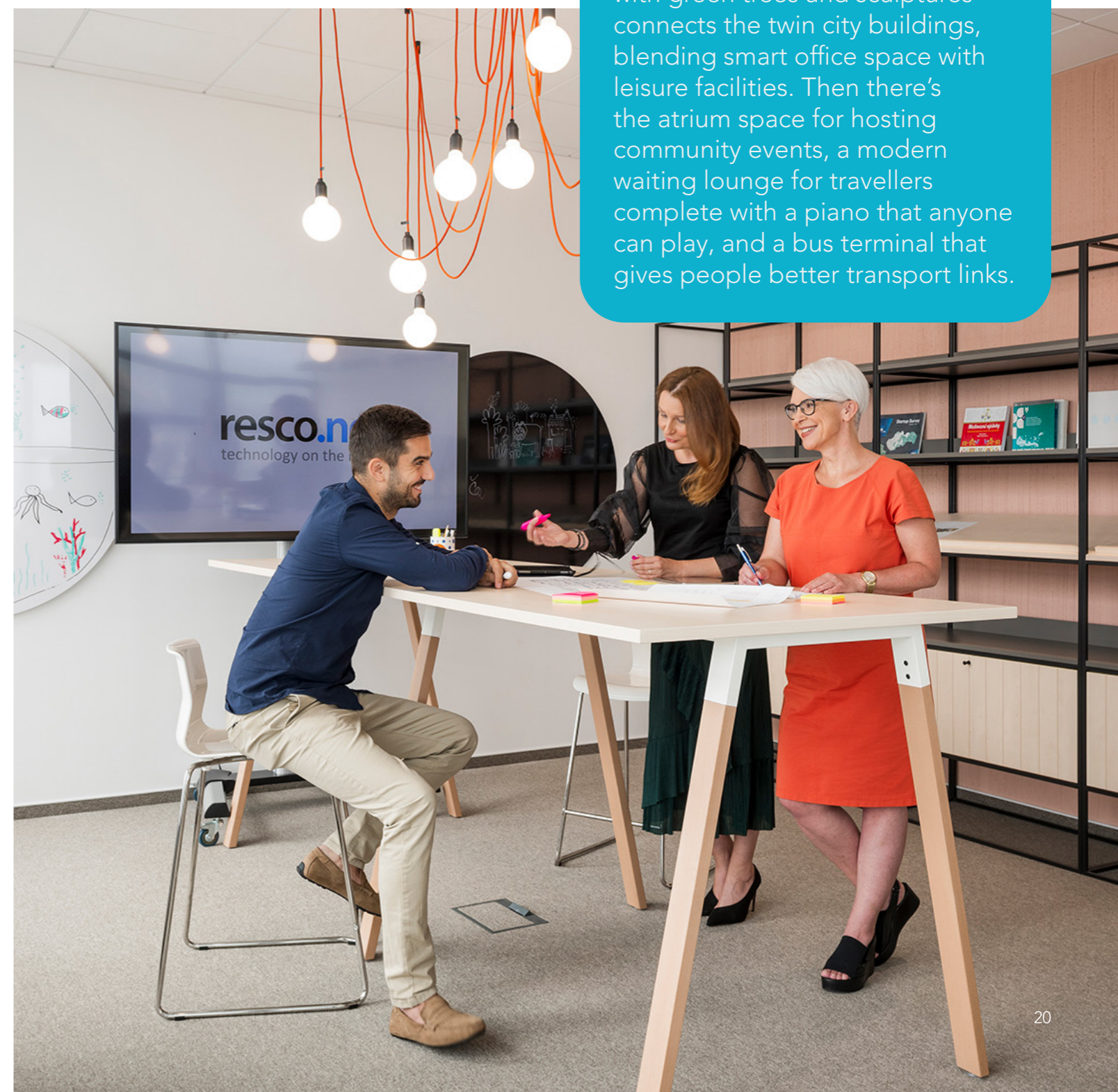
Some people will still choose to work remotely, at least part of the time. To keep these employees connected, you need to account for them in the destination office. You can do this by ensuring all employees (including the virtual ones) are on an equal footing in the workspace. Install a proper AV setup in meeting rooms and provide the right supporting tech to virtual attendees. Tech can also be used to optimise your physical space. For example, sensors combined with data insights can track office space usage in real-time to maximise efficiency.

Bringing together design decisions that address wellbeing, community, and productivity needs will be essential to designing the ideal destination workspace. Starting with the design, you can create a thriving community where wellbeing and productivity flourish and employees are committed, engaged, and able to do their best work.

How we build community in Slovakia



The spaces we design need to support the community around them. At Nivy in Bratislava, we've combined modern city functions with an environment that encourages connection. A boulevard filled with green trees and sculptures connects the twin city buildings, blending smart office space with leisure facilities. Then there's the atrium space for hosting community events, a modern waiting lounge for travellers complete with a piano that anyone can play, and a bus terminal that gives people better transport links.



Good design starts with listening

Overall, designing the destination office is about understanding what your employees need on an individual level to do their best work. This means you cannot take a 'cookie-cutter' approach. Nobody's working preferences are identical, and the destination workspace needs to be flexible to adapt to individual needs.

To get this right, you need to listen to your employees and get their insights before you start designing. This helps you reflect their needs in the destination office. Above all, listen to your employees who seem the least engaged – they usually provide the most valuable insights into urgent fixes.

Listening attentively needs three steps:



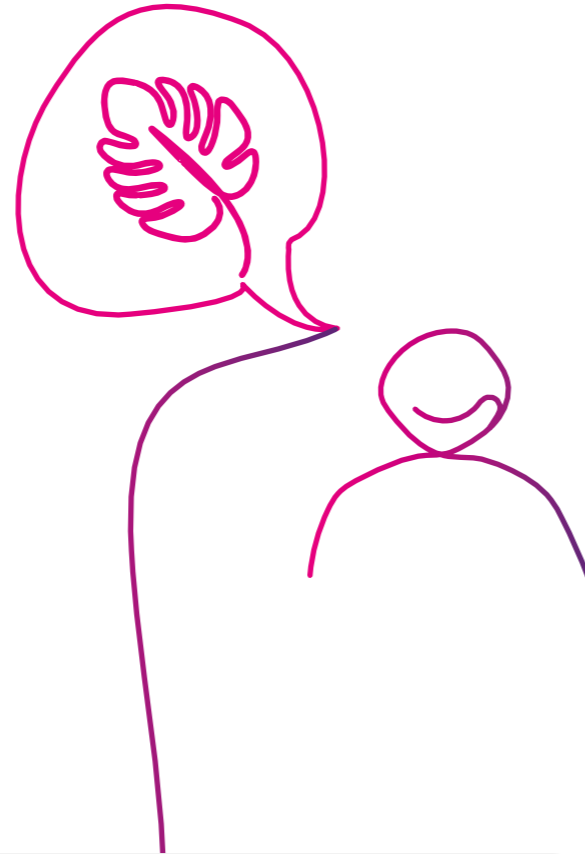
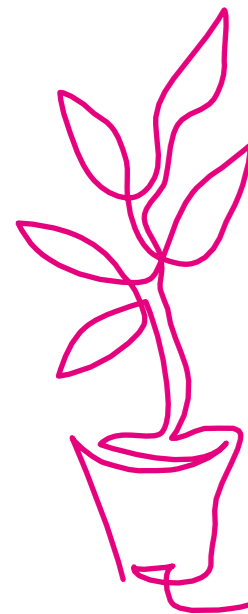
1. One-to-one conversations with individuals to understand their needs.



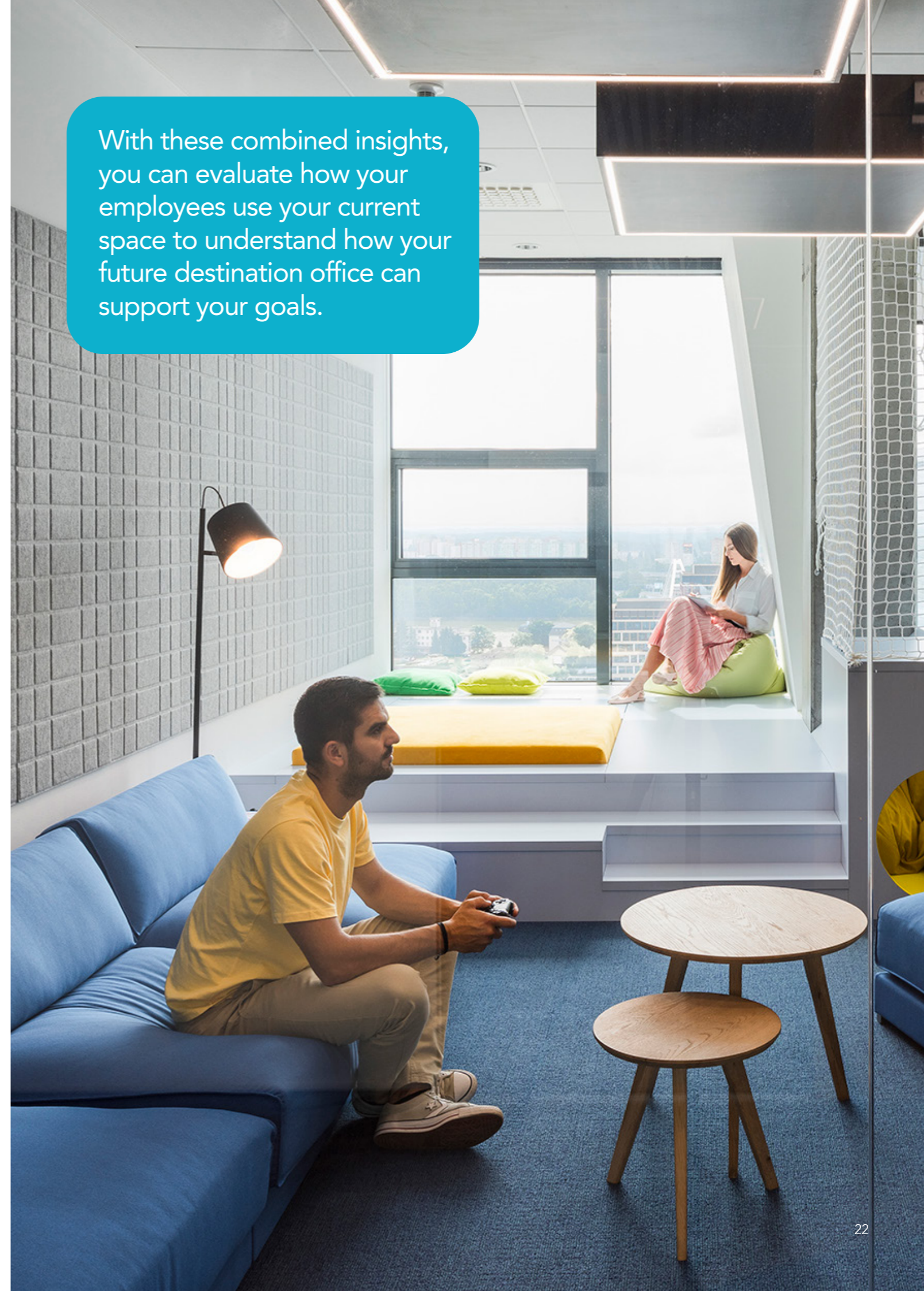
2. Workshops with groups of different seniority to gauge differences in opinion and what is necessary for every level of your organisation.



3. Combine human insights with data. You can achieve this by using workspace sensors or bringing in experts, both offered by our workspace consultancy service, [Origameo](#).



With these combined insights, you can evaluate how your employees use your current space to understand how your future destination office can support your goals.





Engaging employees with the **destination office**

For the destination office to be a place where employees genuinely want to be, they need to be engaged with the idea of the office. And while 33% of employees are looking forward to returning to 'standard operating procedures' or pre-COVID working practices, a significant number of employees aren't so sure. In fact, 38% of employers want to continue working remotely as much as possible. But why is this?



A lack of engagement with the office can stem from several factors:

- Working remotely offered a better employee experience than their previous office.
- Employees are unaware of the benefits of a destination office.
- Employees like being able to choose where they work, even if they prefer the office.

So, while many welcome the return to the office, employers face obstacles in making it a place all employees want to be. This needs to be handled carefully. To re-engage employees with the office, employers can't just address the perspectives of people who want to be in the office. They need to pay equal attention to the pain points of those who aren't entirely engaged as well. Ultimately, for a destination office to succeed, it has to offer value to everyone.

Employees make the destination office

The best way to engage all employees with the destination office is to involve them from the start. While understanding the broader needs of employees will go a long way in addressing their workspace needs, this isn't enough to deliver value to everybody. To address the needs of your employees specifically, speaking to your people will give you the most accurate insight. Aside from helping you build a more closely tailored destination office; it makes employees active participants in the design process.

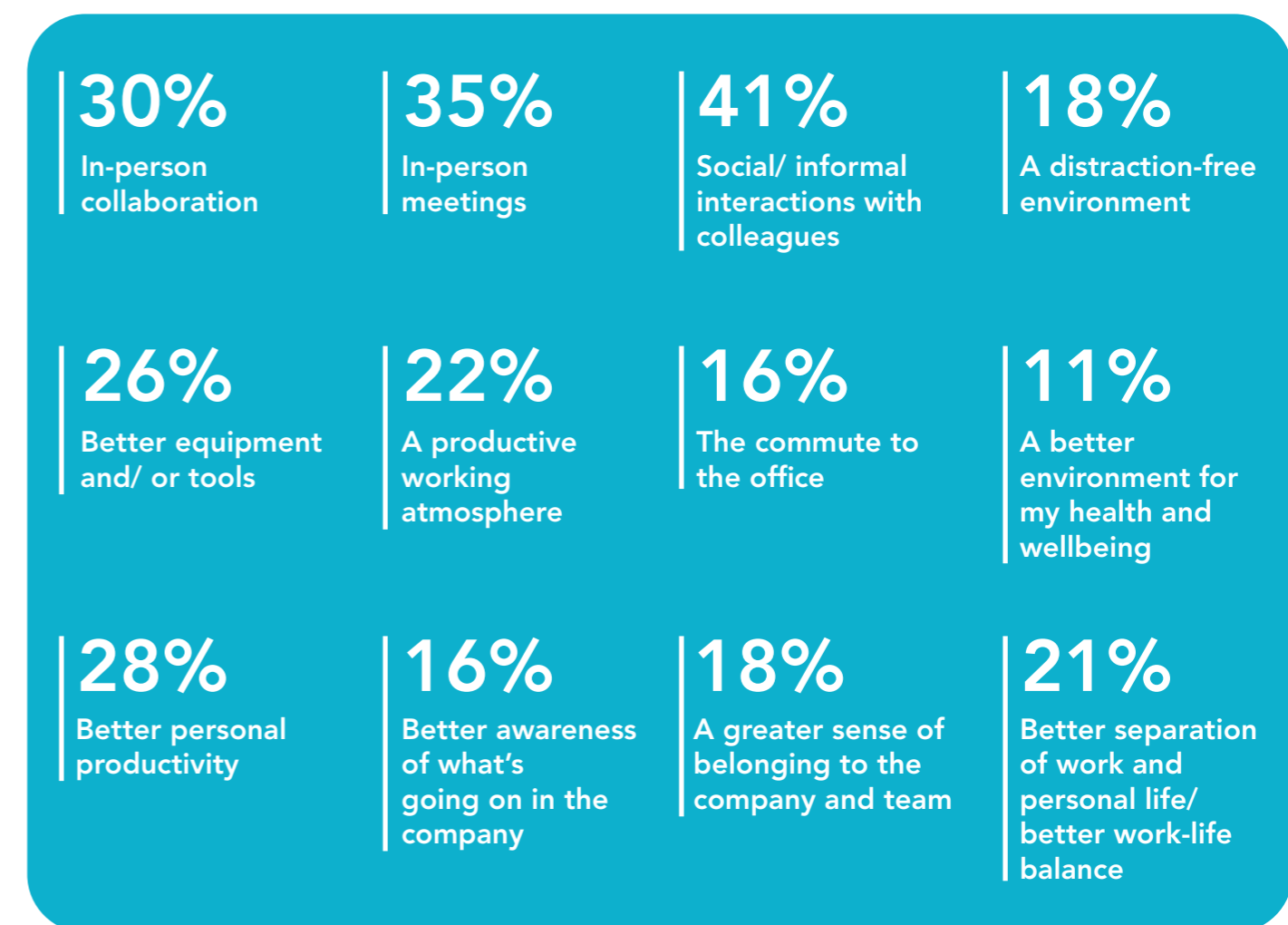
This is where it's helpful to bring data analytics in, combined with insights from your employees. By working with our workspace experts at Origameo, you can understand how space is being used day-to-day and the employee perspective on enhancing it. We interview employees from different teams at all levels, comparing insights and using smart sensors to analyse how your current space is used.

This kind of understanding will be crucial to engage these employees. Even if they love remote working, they will have

some pain points. But you won't be able to uncover what they truly want from a dedicated office without using the right solutions and practices to find out.

Including employees at this stage will stop them from feeling the destination office is being forced onto them. Instead, it becomes part of a process they have been actively involved in. As they are the primary users of the space, this is invaluable for employees who have previously had unengaging experiences with the office or are devoted to remote working.

Given your experience of remote working, which aspects of the return to the office are you most looking forward to?





Best practice for creating an office employees want to be in

Hybrid working is the future of work. But simply offering a split between remote and in-office work isn't enough. The data from our Wellbeing 2.0 whitepaper suggests returning to the office is welcomed by employees and employers alike. But employees will need a good reason to return to the office and won't just do it because it's expected. This means it's important to take the right approach and design a destination office that encourages them to return.

This last section has everything you need to begin the journey to the destination office.

Here are our top tips:

1. Define your goals

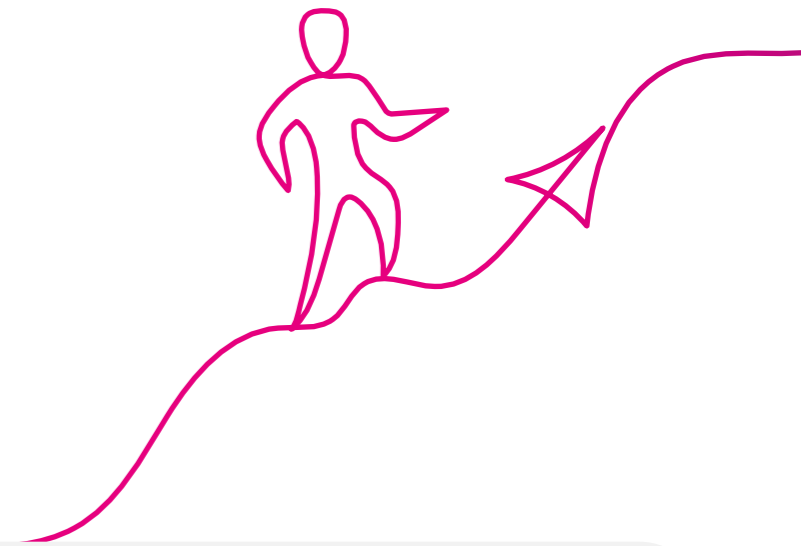
Before starting the design, establish what your destination office needs to achieve. What are your goals? What information do you need to make the experience more purposeful for employees? What types of spaces and technologies do you need to improve wellbeing, community, and productivity?

2. Focus on the experience

Think about giving people the things they can't get at home. (And things they can get but are more convenient to access when at the office.) You can find this out through speaking with your employees.

3. Don't underestimate the details

Small changes to the office can make a big difference – especially when it comes to physical wellness. This includes prioritising fresh air, natural light, clean food, and more. It can even be about providing touch-free surfaces to prevent the spread of infections.



4. Get the right balance

Design is integral to supporting the balance between collaborative work and focused work. It needs to have social spaces inspired by the hospitality world as well as quiet areas for dedicated work.

5. Support the change

Redesigning the workspace may require some help with change management. This can include educating and supporting leaders to get their buy-in and engaging employees to build positive sentiment around the change.

6. Cater for virtual participants

As remote working has increased inequality biases, ensuring virtual participants attend the office on equal footing is more important than ever. For these people to reap the destination office's rewards, it must be designed to support both virtual and in-person attendees to ensure the experience is seamless for everyone.

7. The importance of flexibility

Flexibility is the key to responding to changing employee and market requirements. For this reason, it plays a large part in our approach to supporting the businesses using our workspaces, which can scale their space as needed. Office design can follow suit - with agile, open spaces and multi-use desks that support a variety of collaboration tasks.



Our London workspace, Bloom, shows how this looks in action. By offering a space with an unrivalled employee experience, the ability to scale organically under one roof over time, and supported with innovative technology, we were able to build a meaningful partnership with a global company, helping them reach their destination office in the height of the pandemic.

We achieved ground-breaking flexibility by dividing the space into three zones: a core space, a co-working space to expand into, and a fully fitted and managed space available to other companies for no more than five years. It means that our client can grow organically by 30% in five years, a rare promise for a commercial lease.



8. The role of smart technology in creating the destination office

Technology needs to be seamlessly integrated to support workflows and provide an environment where people genuinely want to be. It must also be tailored to individual preferences to streamline specific working practices and enhance productivity.

It means that people can view where space is free based on real-time sensory data. Attendees can see where the air is becoming built up in an overstuffed meeting room and move to a refreshed location. You can even track your building's emissions footprint and action reduction strategies. Most of all, smart technologies help you boost efficiency.

By listening to what your employees need and actioning solutions appropriately, the right technology can harmonise with your employees' working habits to enhance overall performance.

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Conclusion

The destination is just the beginning

The destination office is an involved and constantly evolving process to get right. It requires a deep level of insight to ensure that it's a guaranteed success. But businesses that do get this right will boost productivity, support wellbeing, and lead the way for future workspaces. Securing the destination office is especially valuable in attracting and retaining top young talent. They're in search of space that recognises their value, boosts their wellbeing, and stimulates their work ethic.

It doesn't need to be complicated or time-consuming to start today. Our workspaces are pre-built destination offices where businesses can move in and enjoy these benefits from day one. But we know better than anybody the destination office isn't the same for everyone – it depends on your individual needs. This is why we tailor our workspaces to help our partners continue to hit their goals – from fit-out to building management.

Discover more tips on how HB Reavis can work with you to achieve your dream destination office

Visit: <https://hbreavis.com/en/>

Learn more

