Space for Diversity of Workstyles

Not everyone works the same, which is why there are different workstyles—the unique ways that people get their work done. A person's workstyle is affected by their personality, skills, role expectations, and preferences. Some knowledge workers do their best work in groups and others alone. Some are charged with long-term plans, while others execute in short-term sprints. The most enlightened companies support their employees' state of flow.

As work evolves to include hybrid teams across different locations, accommodating the rich diversity of how people accomplish their work is a business imperative. Leaders of thriving organizations not only embrace differences in workstyles for better outcomes, they also empower employees with a choice of workspaces where they can do their best work. By focusing on how work happens instead of where people are, leaders can build more durable businesses with more fulfilled team members.

How do you evolve your workplace to

1. Bring people together
2. Support them in their work, and
3. Keep the flexibility they desire?

Offer choice.

Workstyle Framework

As beneficial as workstyle assessments are, the end goal is not to put people into boxes. The key is finding what motivates and inspires employees, what connects their passion to their purpose, and then using their strengths to build a better workforce. To get started, the following framework can serve as a high-level guide:

- **Crew** – work in teams focused on tactical objectives and deliverables
- **Connector** – work in groups to generate new ideas and connect to them strategy
- **Specialist** – work alone focused on specific tasks and deliverables
- **Expert** – primarily work alone to develop and hone strategic concepts
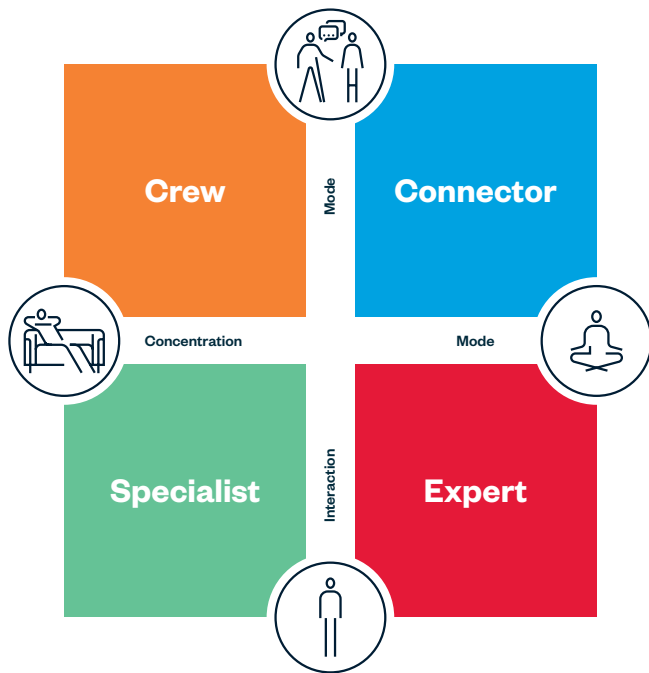
Offer Choice

Work varies from task to task, and by individual or group/team. For example, innovation requires a combination of focus and collaborative activities. Access to designed spaces that support deep thinking, rest, recharge, and collaboration at appropriate intervals is critical to high performance and well-being.

There are 7 types of spaces to support the ways people work:

1. Gig/Coworking Spaces
Good for: Community and Innovation

Co-locating diversity of thought and knowledge is often an incubator for insights, which can help generate a pipeline of creative ideas and innovative solutions, not to mention the human connection people crave.

2. Activity-Based Spaces
Good for: Focused Tasks

Activity-based spaces are designed legibly around individual tasks to create efficiencies that more general workspaces may not. Think circuit training at the gym: You move among stations doing targeted exercises using a variety of fitness equipment at each station. The same idea applies to the office for a better and more holistic outcome.

3. Multi-Use Spaces
Good for: Flexibility

Providing maximum flexibility and convenience on a large scale, multi-use spaces support work, play, shopping, dining, entertainment, and in some cases, living. Within the workplace, a similar concept of multi-use space can be executed on a smaller scale.

4. Social Spaces
Good for: Community, Connection, and Collaboration

When people are not engaged in work that requires intense focus, they tend to enjoy activity around them, even when they're not alone. Having the option to join in casual conversations, meet up with colleagues, or draw inspiration from a different locale happens in social spaces. Offering choice of destinations—indoors or out— to work, gather, socialize, or recharge is as important as task-orientated work.

5. Well-Being Spaces

Good for: Overall Employee Well-Being

Well-being spaces are becoming mainstream to support a happy, healthy workforce. Companies are revamping cafeterias or reimagining grab-and-go refreshments to support healthier choices. On-site fitness centers or meditation rooms with outdoor walking/biking/running trails and sports courts make well-being more accessible. Mother's rooms provide nursing moms with comfortable, dedicated spaces.

6. Mobile/Agile Spaces

Good for: Small Spaces and Employee Agility

Companies that support employees working on the go, at least part of the time, make it easy for people to touch down and plug in whenever they want or need to work. Mobile phonebooths with controlled acoustics offer spots for privacy and focus work. Outdoor spaces with Wi-Fi access offer a change of scenery for catching up on emails or taking video calls.

7. Virtual Spaces

Good for: Multi-Site Collaboration and Connection

Distributed workforces have a vital need to stay connected for communications, collaboration, and creating a sense of belonging. Virtual communities and workspace destinations benefit from online platforms, such as Skype, Slack, and Kitrix24, for team and real-time interaction through instant messaging. For remote collaboration there's Bluescape®, a digital tool that enables people to securely share presentations, ideas, and even brainstorm together on a near-infinite virtual canvas.

Create Legible Space

Legibility can be designed into office space so that people can not only orient themselves, but also understand the intention of a particular space to support a specific workstyle.

If the intended use of a space and its technology is ambiguous, people will avoid using it or waste time trying to figure out how to use the space and furnishings. Complex and "illegible" layouts can also hinder the desire for employees to move freely among workspaces.

Support Movement

Workspaces that support the human need for movement have an advantage when switching workstyles naturally occurs throughout the day. Because the human body was designed to be in motion to support physical and mental well-being, people feel better and think better when they change in one of three ways:

1. Posture
2. Position
3. Location

Workspaces that allow people to work on their own or with others rely on flexible space and furnishings that include:

- Unassigned workspaces
- Desks that allow for sitting or standing
- Places for focus
- Collaboration spaces
- Areas for rest, relaxation, and privacy
- Playful places
- Mobile monitors and digital screens
- Rolling whiteboards

Considerations

In summary, designing a workspace that can adapt to changing needs and diverse workstyles takes into consideration:

- Dedicated spaces that can be used for a myriad of activities
- Legibility around intention and use of space
- The ways people move
- Furnishings that allow people to reconfigure their workspaces as needed