

# Haworth HQ Living Lab - Marketing Department

January 2024

Known as 2 West, or 2W, a section of the second floor at Haworth HQ is home to several groups within the Marketing department. In a planned refresh of the space, we designed new individual workspaces, as well as updated group meeting spaces, individual touchdowns, and individual and group restoration spaces to support 36 individuals across six teams. Haworth's Interior Design Studio designed the 2W space around our five themes for the Future of the Office:

- Immersive Technology
- More Collaboration
- Focus and Restore
- Space Shift
- More Human

Using these five themes as a guide, we aimed to create a Work from Anywhere ecosystem that demonstrates Haworth's knowledge and inspires our customers who tour the space. To further our Future of the Office research, our Workplace Research and Insights team utilized the 2W space as a living lab, exploring the five themes, which could validate our hypotheses around the benefits of providing spaces that address these themes.

We began our study in May of 2022 by conducting two pre-project surveys. The first went to all occupants of 2 West, including both those who would and would not get a new individual workspace. Questions were around the importance of and support for in-office activities, the availability of spaces other than their assigned workspace, and satisfaction with current space features. The second survey was only sent to those who were to receive a new individual workspace and sought to assess a baseline of satisfaction with features of their current assigned workspace.

Along with the pre-project surveys, our research incorporated multiple methods, including Freespace utilization sensors, QR code pulse surveys, three days per week of observations, three focus groups, and post surveys.

Data collection ran from February to May 2023. All space utilization analysis is based on data collected Tuesday–Thursday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

In addition to furthering our research about the five themes, we set out to elevate our understanding of (1) work behavior patterns and preferences, (2) Freespace space utilization technology, and (3) how space changes impacted member performance and well-being.

## The Five Themes for the Future of the Office – Application and Results

### 1. Immersive Technology

Updated technology was added throughout the space to support more seamless connections. This included Microsoft Teams integration, touchdowns with external monitors, new or updated cameras and lighting, screen sharing in open collaborative spaces, and updated room-booking technology for touchdowns and meeting rooms.

Our study found that integrating more and better technology throughout the space resulted in a marked increase in satisfaction with the availability of AV conferencing technology and increased feelings of support for key on-site activities, like learning from others and collaborating on focus work.

Still, technology caused some pain points, and we learned there is more work to be done. Some members reported experiencing poor network connections, inconsistencies with connecting their computers easily, unclear user interfaces, and room booking issues. Additionally, remote members calling in from home reported feeling awkward, knowing their faces were filling large-screen monitors—particularly when they were the only remote participants in a meeting.

## 2. More Collaboration

Group work settings, meeting rooms, and project rooms were added to support the increased collaboration happening in the office. Team-focused workstations were also added to encourage collaboration at the workpoint.

The increase in collaborative settings improved satisfaction with the availability of group spaces, as well as feelings of support for important collaborative activities like learning from others and informal social interactions. Collaboration is also widespread at the individual workpoint, with 148 occurrences of collaboration observed over three days. This showed the importance of having the face-to-face conversations that being in the office brings.

80% of respondents felt the meeting spaces support group activities very well to extremely well.

## 3. Focus and Restore

A variety of new spaces was created to support both focus work and restorative activities to enable mode-switching, in other words, being able to shift rapidly and dynamically between tasks. This enhances creativity and well-being. Space types included six individual touchdowns, three individual retreat spaces, and a new work café.

In terms of supporting focus work, the results were mixed. Members said that individual focused work at the desk is the number-one most important activity at the workplace. While this activity is supported moderately well, support still falls short when compared to its importance. This indicates more needs to be done to ensure focused work at the desk isn't sacrificed for the sake of open collaboration.

The good news is that individual focused work away from the desk is very well supported. Spaces that support this activity showed peak utilization of 65%, with 11 of 17 available spaces in use at the same time.

The topic of restoration at work is unsettled. Survey respondents reported that group restorative activities like informal conversations were more important and better supported than the individual restorative activities of relaxing and taking a break. Focus group participants reinforced these sentiments, saying they “feel awkward taking a break.” There was also ambiguity around what activities the retreat spaces were supposed to support. One member questioned the purpose

of one room furnished with only a lounge sofa and table, “What do I do? Do I sit, lay down, take a meeting?” The resistance to taking individual restorative breaks in the office could be due in part to the culture and perception, or it could be due to lack of support from the spaces designed to support these activities. It is worth more investigation to uncover these reasons.

## 4. Space Shift

To support the shift in activities that we now know are important to in-office work, 2 West was updated to include more applications that support a variety of collaborative modes, more open spaces with easy access, and a variety of postures.

We wanted to know if the shift in space types resulted in increased satisfaction with a variety of in office activities, so we used Leesman's hybrid work insights to guide us. Leesman specializes in workplace experience research and has a global database of over 1.5 million data points from which we benchmark. We measured satisfaction for support of the activities Leesman's research has shown to be important for an enhanced in-office experience. Key in-office activities include:

- Learning from others
- Informal, unplanned meetings
- Collaborating on creative and focused work
- Individual focused work
- Informal social interactions
- Large group meetings or audiences
- Spreading out paper or materials
- Hosting visitors, clients, or customers
- Relaxing/taking a break

We found the shift toward more variety in space types (including reservable and non-reservable group spaces and individual focus spaces) and furnishings resulted in increased satisfaction from members for all these activities.

## 5. More Human

Supporting human performance and well-being means focusing on health, safety, and service. For this reason, attention was given to materials that would create a timeless aesthetic, reflect Haworth's brand, and express hospitality. This includes the addition of more retreat spaces and a work café that supports both individual and group work as well as restoration.

We measured “more human” based on members' feelings about elements like legibility, ambient qualities, stress, and performance. We also studied their sentiments around social support resources, such as trust in leadership, flexibility, and trust and support from their team.

Satisfaction increased markedly in most categories. We found big jumps with two ratings in particular: (1) variety and choice of space types to control external stimuli, and (2) ability to use spaces I need to support a variety of activities. Lastly, we found that self-reported job performance stayed relatively steady between the pre and post survey, with members feeling their quality, quantity, and accuracy of work is above average.

Scores dropped slightly when it comes to creativity of work and the ability to focus, but these ratings remain above average.

## Space Types and Utilization

### Group Spaces – Meeting and Project Rooms

The average utilization for meeting and project rooms is 50%, with medium and large rooms used a bit more at 55%. However, the efficiency of rooms (the number of users compared to the number accommodated) is low at 1.9 users per meeting. We heard from focus groups that they are unsure what meeting room size to book when they organize a meeting because they don't know how many people will attend in-person versus virtually. We believe efficiency is low for this reason, and until we have a tool to help solve this issue, efficiency will likely remain low.

According to focus groups, one new room (236W) stood out as the most preferred group meeting space. One member described it as “the Swiss Army knife of rooms” because it's good for both small and large group sizes, it's comfortable, and it looks good on camera. The room is not without pain points, though; acoustics being one of them. Since the room has single-pane glass, the workstation occupants that sit outside the room are often disturbed by the noise coming from the room during meetings.

The least preferred group meeting space is another new space (230W). Members remarked that it “feels like a fishbowl,” and the orientation of the monitor—toward the glass wall—feels awkward. They are also not fans of the lacking power options or the chairs with tablet arms because the surfaces are not big enough. That said, the space continues to be utilized when a group space is needed. To improve the experience of this room, the orientation of the monitor can be changed, and better power options should be provided, so users do not have to scoot chairs to the wall in order to plug in.

Some of the most-used non-reservable group spaces are the project and team areas embedded within the new 2W zone, including the interior design studio project space, and the informal lounge.

### Individual Spaces – Workpoints

The study found that satisfaction with workpoint features increased for almost all categories. The biggest increases are attributed to the ability to control the surrounding external stimuli and utilize screens/panels to block views. The only categories where satisfaction declined slightly were with the amount of storage and spacing between workstations. However, the levels are still within target levels and overall, users are still satisfied with these elements.

Individual workstations were mostly used for periods of between 30 minutes and two hours, with the average dwell time being 29 minutes. This indicates that users are moving through the 2W space quite often—likely for meetings or doing focus work in an enclosed space—rather than spending the majority of their day at their workpoint.

The average peak occupancy for the 36 individual workpoints that were measured was 58%.

Between the dwell time and occupancy, we recommend considering going to some form of unassigned workpoint, even if it's not for all the members. The space gained from removing workstations could be reallocated to more single touchdowns and 2–4 person meeting spaces.

### Individual Spaces – Touchdowns

Individual touchdown spaces were used an average of 50% of the time. Touchdowns were mostly used for 30–60 minutes (31%), followed closely by less than 15 minutes of use (28%). When 2 West is at its busiest, 4 of the 17 touchdown spaces are used, with an average of 7 going unused daily.

The most preferred individual touchdown (233W) has a 39% average occupancy rate. This room is a favorite because it has good lighting, a good conference call setup (with a camera, lighting, and Microsoft Teams), and it feels warm and cozy.

The least preferred individual touchdown (231.1W) was reported to feel uncomfortable and too dark. We also heard that it does not support video calls well. However, as a short-term space, it continues to add an option for focus work.

### Restore – Group and Individual

Restore spaces are used relatively little, with the café seeing peak usage between the hours of noon and 1 p.m. but an overall average utilization of 8%. This does show the acceptance of group restorative activities, for which members feel they are very well supported, but it implies that this type of restorative activity is only acceptable during designated lunch times. Since our survey, however, the atrium coffee bar at One Haworth Center has reopened, which could prompt increased usage of restorative spaces during other times of the day, going forward.

Individual restoration is an unsettled topic, with 88% of survey respondents reporting they use the retreat spaces for individual focus work and AV conferencing as opposed to a restorative activity like relaxing and taking a break or reading.

The most preferred individual restore space (243W) is favored because it's comfortable and good for personal calls. Utilization for restoration is low at 7%, but relative to other restorative spaces, it's moderate. It is also important to note that this room is often occupied for use as a touchdown space, which could be a factor in its availability for restorative activities.

The least preferred individual restore space (231.1W) is the same room that is least preferred for use as a touchdown space. Utilization reflects the dislike for this space, as it's only at 1%.

## Supporting People with Spaces They Want

Our study revealed that providing the right types and quantities of spaces for key in-office activities resulted in increased feelings of support for these activities. Members also felt more supported by social resources. They are happy with the ratio of spaces and the relaxed residential feel that supports both professional and personal activities.

Overall, we saw satisfaction increase across all areas of the workplace experience, but the space changes did not solve all the pain points. Haworth has a flexible work policy and there is no mandate, but three days per week in the office are encouraged. While overall occupancy is relatively steady at an average of 45% workstation utilization Tuesday–Thursday, it does drop to 35% when Monday and Friday are factored in. However, observationally we saw that while workstation utilization was less than 50%, that didn't mean people were not in the office, rather, they were spending little time at their workstations and more time in meetings with coworkers. There are times when occupancy is low (like on Fridays) and members report the lack of “buzz”, which is reflective of what we heard from our customers during our 2023 Customer Hybrid research.

One challenge that stands out is how to make decisions on right-sizing rooms. The average efficiency across all meeting spaces was just 1.9 people in the room per meeting. Members reported it's hard to know what room size to book when you're not sure who will be in the office. One survey question asked if members were willing to use a third-party app (other than Microsoft Outlook) to assist in wayfinding, room booking, and coordination of on-site activity. Of respondents (N=40), 53% percent reported that they would use an app like this, indicating there is a desire to utilize more technology to aid in selecting the right space types. Once we have a tool that will help, we can then get to the root of understanding what quantity, sizes, and types of spaces are most valuable.

Another consideration is whether or not to continue assigning individual workpoints. Based on utilization data we can see the benefit of reverting at least some spaces to unassigned workpoints in order to free up space for additional meeting rooms or individual touchdowns.

Overall, our comprehensive study of 2 West revealed many of the same issues our customers are grappling with. While we have done a good job of addressing the importance of providing a space centered around the five themes of the Future of the Office, there are still opportunities for growth. We will continue to address space challenges through our research around the Future of the Office and how to best support employees when they are in the office.

### Contributor

**Kristin Reddick** is a Design Research Consultant on Haworth's research team. She is a certified Interior Designer and Design Consultant who focuses her research on culture, workplace performance, and well-being. Kristin believes that learning about people, making connections, and having empathy can translate into more thoughtful design outcomes. She enjoys gaining insights through research and using lessons learned to develop design concepts and best practices that create and support effective workplaces.

# HAWORTH

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