TDA

11 . 2022

Give the people what they want

A guide to designing a workplace your people will love

TDA, Soho Studio

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The time for change is now

Like it or not, the world of work has changed, and these days employees are firmly in the driver's seat.

The pandemic may be behind us, but the war for talent wages on as businesses fight to fill positions from a talent pool that's not only smaller than the current number of UK job vacancies, but that's also pickier than ever.

While the UK may not have experienced The Great Resignation on quite the same dizzying scale as the US, studies have shown that job satisfaction in the UK has been impacted by events since 2020, and that this is giving many workers itchy feet.

For example, a PwC survey of 2,000 respondents published in May this year found that 18% were likely to change their job in the next 12 months.[1]

Experts have also commented that this is likely the result of a desire to derive more meaning and fulfilment from their working lives having been forced to confront their own mortality and re-evaluate their priorities during the pandemic.

What's more is that not only are UK workers on the move, but an emerging workplace trend known as "Quiet Quitting" is also causing issues for employers.

While not going as far as completely throwing in the towel, many younger workers are shaking off the hustle culture mentality and swapping late nights for doing the bare minimum and that illusive work/life balance.

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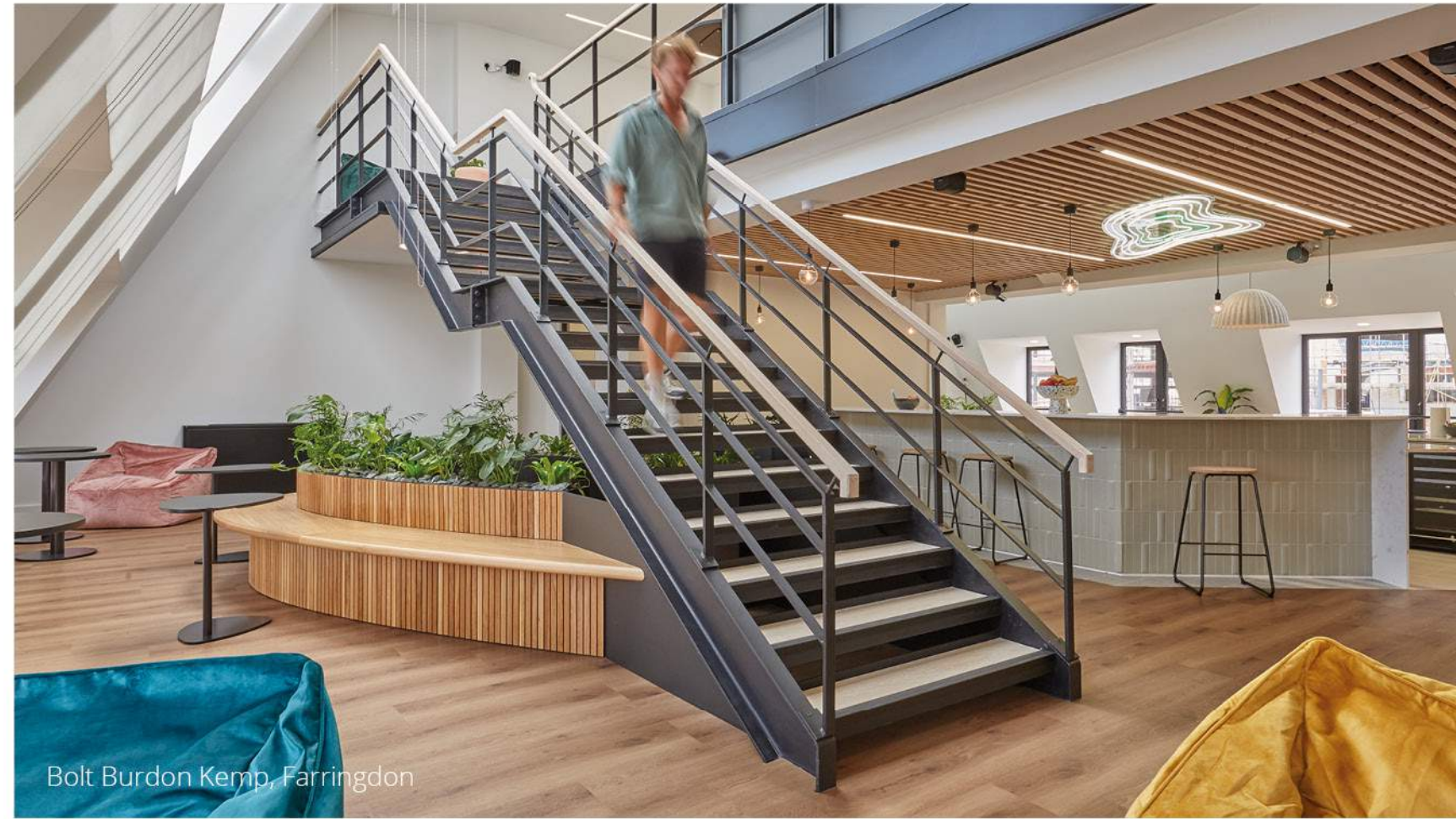
Bolt Burdon Kemp, Farringdon

Perhaps this is down to more shifting values and a need to find more personal fulfilment and meaning in their work. Or perhaps this newfound unwillingness to go above and beyond for their employer is workers' way of pushing back against ever intensifying workloads and stretch targets that never seem to lead to getting a foot on the property ladder.

Either way, it's never a good sign when the future of the workforce has already mentally checked out.

So, it seems that despite surviving the pandemic, businesses are not out of the woods just yet. In fact, they still have a big job on their hands to plug a skills gap by attracting and retaining talent that is not only in short supply, but that either has raised expectations, or that has become disillusioned and disengaged.

As workplace designers, we're passionate about enabling businesses to meet these challenges head on by creating workspaces that work for them and their people.

[1] https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2022/06/01/in-todays-labor-market-employees-are-in-the-drivers-seat-but-do-you-understand-their-needs/?sh=286ab19342fc

AND WE SAY,
IT'S TIME FOR A REFRESH.

According to our own survey of 1,000 UK office workers carried out in August 2022, less than 1 in 5 (19%) office workers surveyed said their business has revamped their office as a result of the pandemic.

And yet, 75% of respondents whose company has transformed their workplace said this has had a positive[2] impact on them, with over a third (35%) saying this has had a significant positive impact.

We think that's a pretty convincing reason to revamp your workplace so that it can better support your staff while giving you a fighting chance in the war for talent.

TDA, Soho Studio

Whether you're still on the fence or are ready to go full steam ahead with your workplace transformation project, we've created this guide to get you started.

Give the people what they want: A guide to designing a workplace your people will love is designed to set you up for success by getting you thinking about the key factors you'll need to consider when embarking on your workplace transformation journey, as well as providing compelling, research-based insights to help guide and inform your decision making.

We'll talk you through everything from the reasons people want to attend the office these days, the impact of flexible and agile working and catering to different personalities to ways to boost your recruitment strategy with workplace design.

We hope you find it useful and look forward to hearing all about your project.

[2] 'A significant positive impact' and 'A slight positive impact' responses combined.

TDA

GETTING STARTED

Why do staff attend the office?

A great place to start when planning your workplace transformation project is to consider the reasons why staff want to attend the office now that the option to work from home is on the table.

We're sociable creatures, so it's no surprise that the top reasons office workers want to come to the office are both to do with getting some much-needed face-to-face time with colleagues. And yet, fewer than 1 in 5 (19%) office workers from our survey said that there is more space for this in their office since the pandemic.

37%

of office workers surveyed want to come to the office to socialise with colleagues

30%

of office workers surveyed want to come to the office because it's easier to collaborate

43%

of female office workers surveyed want to come into the office to socialise vs 27% of male office workers who said the same

Facilitating social interaction should therefore be high on the agenda when designing your workplace. It just might give you an advantage when it comes to recruitment and staff retention.

That said, a quick look at the reasons that are less likely to draw your staff to the workplace could also provide an insight into key areas for consideration.

For example, just 16% of office workers said they want to go to the office because it's better for their wellbeing, while 15% said they feel more inspired in the office and only 13% feel more creative.

We think this clearly shows that some businesses out there are missing a trick when it comes to their workplace design. When staff feel inspired, creative, and that their mental and physical wellbeing is taken care of in the workplace, they are far more likely to feel engaged and fulfilled in their role.

Businesses looking to acquire and hold on to top talent at a time when it is in short supply should be paying close attention to these factors.

Why do staff avoid going in to the office?

Similarly, a look at some of the top reasons office workers avoid going to the office provides more valuable insights into what to prioritise when designing your new workplace.

Of course, the lack of the monotonous, stressful and increasingly expensive commute to and from the workplace is one major upside of working from home. 41% of office workers surveyed said their commute leads them to avoid going to the office, making this the top answer by a healthy margin.

However, the next most popular responses could give businesses further clues as to how to make sure staff are happy to attend the office.

21% of office workers find it easier to focus when working from home / are more productive at home

All that space for social interaction and collaboration may be all well and good, but it is important that this doesn't affect your people's ability to focus. A good balance between sociable and quiet spaces is therefore an absolute must.

22% of office workers find it easier to maintain healthy eating habits from home

Undergoing a workplace transformation is the perfect opportunity to shape a more positive workplace culture that will benefit staff wellbeing. Why not help staff to stick to good habits by providing nutritious snacks in a beautifully designed wellness area, or make sure your kitchen is well equipped enough for them to prepare their own healthy lunches.

21% of office workers have a worse work/life balance when working in the office

Finally, helping your staff to achieve that illusive yet all-important work life balance when working from the office is a great way of scoring you brownie points as an employer. Shifting your focus away from hours spent staring at a computer screen and looking at productivity as a measure of performance may well be the key. In the next section, we'll take a look at how flexible working and agile spaces can help.

Flexibility in the workplace

While flexible working arrangements were certainly not a new concept when the pandemic hit in 2020, the forced move to remote working became a catalyst for a dramatic rethink of what the physical workplace means to both businesses and staff.

Cue a much more widespread, flexible approach to office attendance, where staff were given more freedom to split their time between working from home and the office as the world made its tentative return to the workplace.

The question on everyone's lips was – would this new-found flexibility last once the pandemic was behind us?

For many, as it turns out, it has.

Our research shows that the percentage of office workers who have switched to a flexible working arrangement remains high even now that business as usual has resumed.

Pre-pandemic, just under a quarter (24%) of office workers surveyed said they were splitting their time between home and the office, whereas now 55% said their business continues to implement a flexible/hybrid working culture.

Meanwhile, just a quarter (25%) of office workers surveyed said they currently work full time in the office.

The Finance industry in particular has seen one of the sharpest rises in hybrid working, with less than a quarter (23%) of office workers in this sector saying they were working flexibly pre-COVID while over 6 in 10 (63%) said they have switched to a flexible working arrangement.

24%

VS

55%

of office workers surveyed had a flexible/hybrid working arrangement pre-pandemic

of office workers surveyed have a flexible/hybrid working arrangement post-pandemic

Nautica Law, City of London
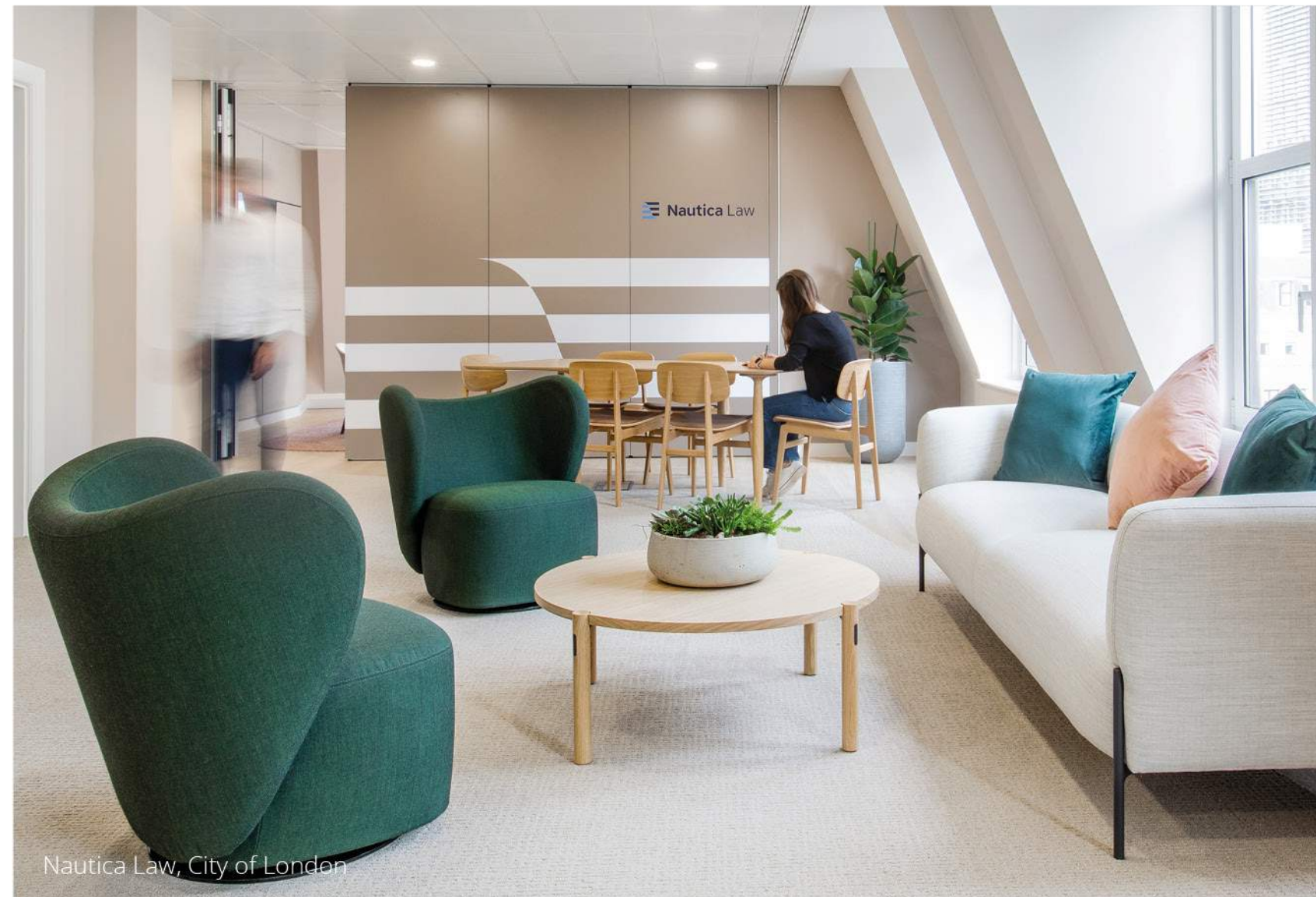
BENEFITS OF FLEXIBLE WORKING

TALENT ACQUISITION

SUPPORTING WORKING PARENTS

STAFF RETENTION

RESPONSIVE TO CHANGE

BETTER WORK / LIFE BALANCE

REDUCED REAL-ESTATE COSTS

IMPROVED STAFF ENGAGEMENT

REDUCED PRESENTEEISM

## IMPACT OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ON EMPLOYEES

The positive impact that adopting flexible working practices has had on office workers is undeniable.

Our research shows that almost 9 in 10 (88%) office workers surveyed whose company has adopted a hybrid working culture said that this has had a positive[3] impact on them, with 55% saying that it has had a significant positive impact.

This is especially true for female workers, almost 3 in 5 (58%) of whom said that the switch to flexible working has had a significant positive impact, while under half (47%) of their male counterparts said the same.

Furthermore, when asked what support their employer can offer to best support their mental and physical wellbeing, almost half (49%) of office workers surveyed said flexible working, making this the top response.

[3] 'A significant positive impact' and 'A slight positive impact' responses combined.

49% OF OFFICE WORKERS SURVEYED SAID THEIR EMPLOYER CAN BEST SUPPORT THEIR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING BY OFFERING FLEXIBLE WORKING

Bolt Burdon Kemp, Farringdon
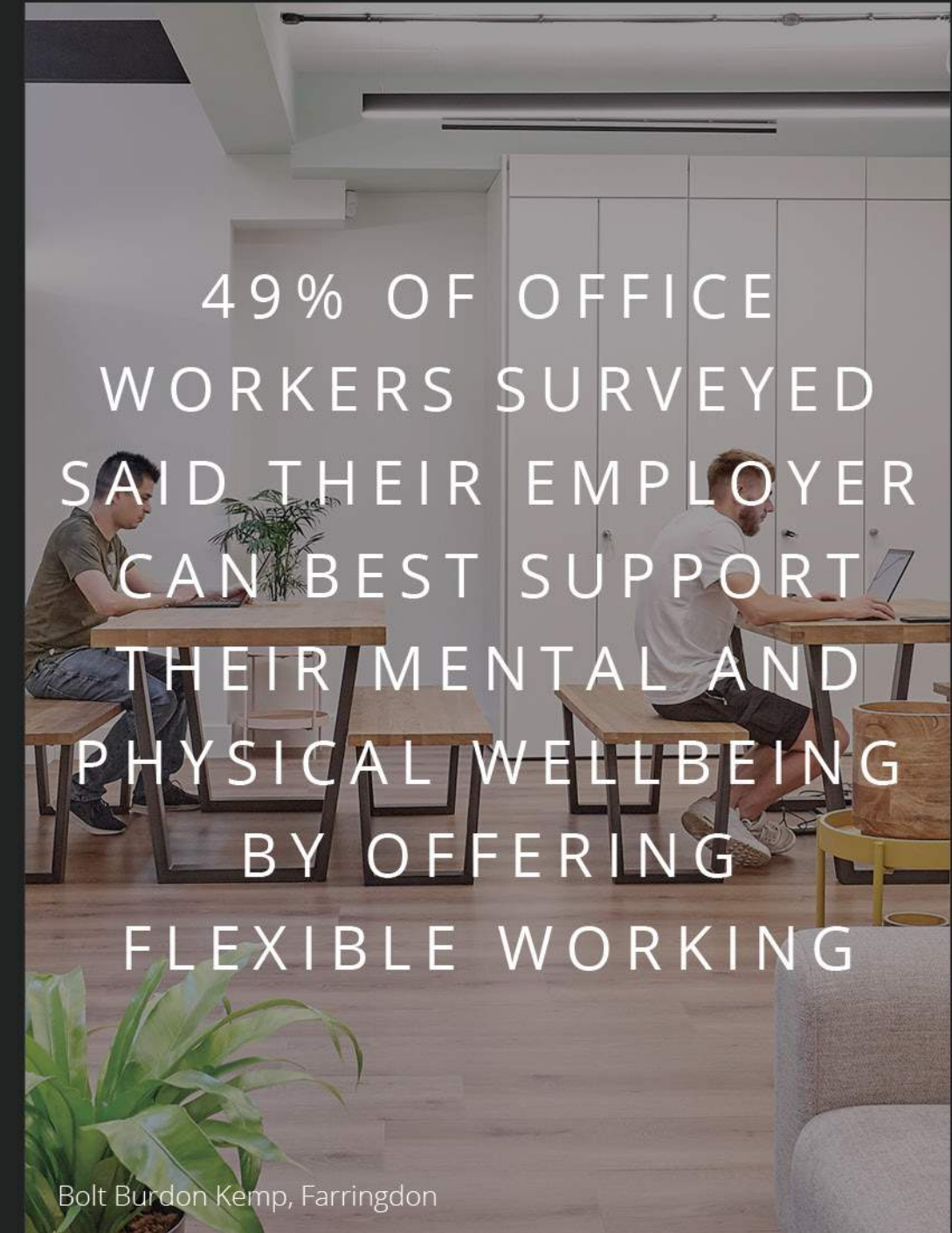
The rise of agile working

We're also seeing many businesses choose to adopt a more agile/ activity-based way of working, where staff can choose how, when and where they wish to complete a particular task.

Almost 3 in 10 (29%) office workers surveyed said their company has already done so.

This was a smart move by these businesses given that almost 9 in 10 (89%) respondents said this has had a positive[4] impact on them, with half (50%) saying adopting an agile working culture has had a significant positive impact.
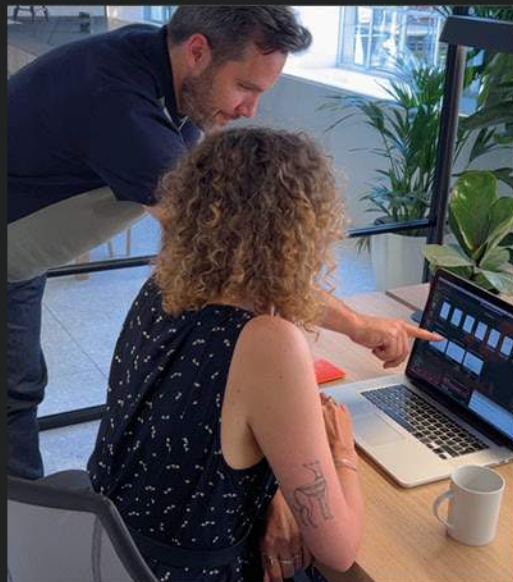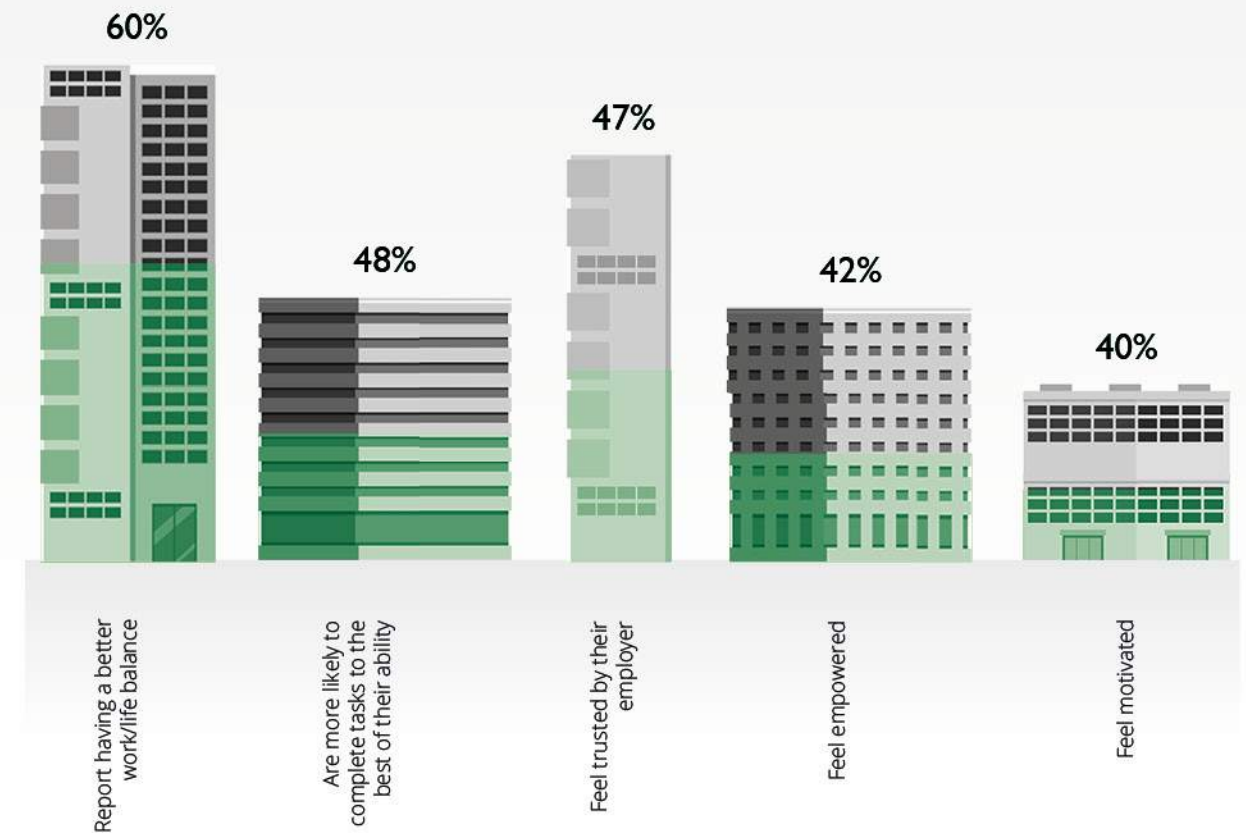
89% OF OFFICE WORKERS SURVEYED SAID THEIR COMPANY ADOPTING A MORE AGILE / ACTIVITY-BASED WAY OF WORKING HAS HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THEM.

And here's why:

REASONS TO GO AGILE

60%	48%	47%	42%	40%
Report having a better work/life balance	Are more likely to complete tasks to the best of their ability	Feel trusted by their employer	Feel empowered	Feel motivated

*Office workers surveyed whose company has adopted an agile working style as a result of the pandemic

Female office workers surveyed in particular are big fans of agile working. Almost 3 in 5 (58%) said switching to agile working as a result of the pandemic has had a significant positive impact on them. While 37% of male office workers said the same.

Similarly, female office workers surveyed are more likely than male office workers to believe that a switch to agile working has had a significant positive impact on them (58% vs. 37%).

# Even more reasons to let your staff be free to roam

Letting go of the idea that staff must be chained to the same desk in order to get their work done will also stand you in very good stead when it comes to recruiting and holding onto top talent.

In fact, our study shows that when on the hunt for a new role, over three quarters (75%) of office workers surveyed think it's important that the company offers a flexible working culture where they can split their time between working remotely and attending the office.

Similarly, almost three quarters (74%) said it's important that a future employer offers an agile working culture.

75%
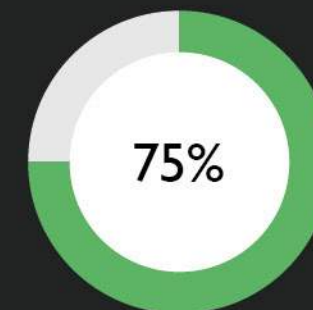
of office workers think it's important[5] that a future employer offers a flexible working culture

74%
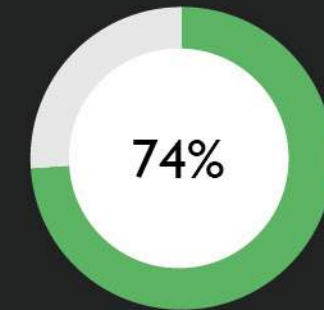
of office workers think it's important[6] that a future employer offers an agile working culture

[5] 'Very important' and 'Somewhat important' responses combined.

[6] 'Very important' and 'Somewhat important' responses combined.

Are dedicated desks dead?

Another office design trend we have seen taking off as businesses reduce their office space is making dedicated desks a thing of the past.

While it may be a tempting thought, it is worth considering that a decision to get rid of dedicated desks altogether may not be met by everyone's approval.

In fact, office workers from our survey were more likely to say that no longer having their own desk in the office has had a negative impact (37%) on them than a positive one (32%). This is especially true for female staff, almost half (46%) of whom said that no longer having their own desk has had a negative impact, while fewer than 1 in 5 (18%) of their male counterparts said the same.
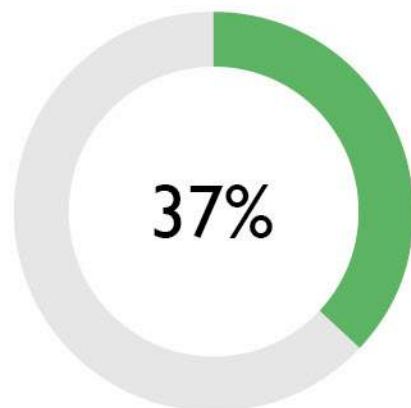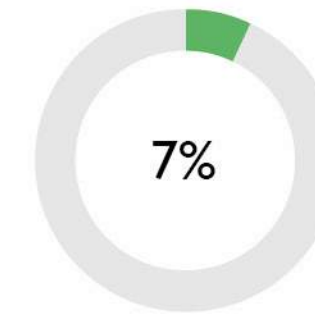
37% of office workers said no longer having their own desk in the office has had a negative impact on them
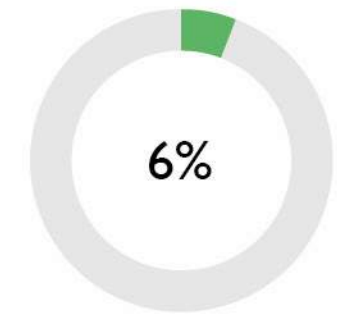
Meanwhile, there appears to be very little appetite for employers to make this change.
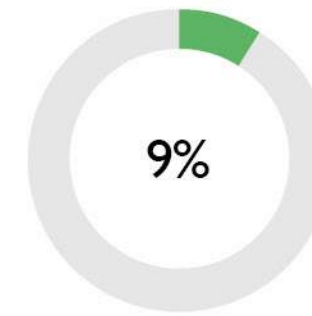
9% of office workers surveyed said they would like their employer to adopt a policy of fewer dedicated desks

7% of office workers surveyed said they would like their employer to introduce hot-desking

6% of office workers surveyed said they would no longer want to have their own desk in the office

When it comes to whose desk is whose, the fact of the matter is you may be dealing with some tricky customers.

Our study indicates that while staff are all for agile working, they're not quite ready to go the full hog and give up their own desk just yet.
The good news is that it is possible achieve a solution that's to everyone's liking.

For example, our client BBK decided to implement a fully agile policy across their business when they transformed their workplace earlier this year. However, they still recognised the need for traditional open plan desk space within their business. The client chose to provide this while sticking to their no-dedicated-desk policy and helped their staff to feel welcome in the space by providing them each with their own personal locker to store belongings.

[7] 'A significant negative impact' and 'A slight negative impact' responses combined.

This is one area where properly consulting with your teams throughout your workplace design journey could prove invaluable.

That said, the research shows that many businesses are overlooking this vital stage of the office design process. In fact, almost two thirds (65%) of office workers surveyed have never been consulted on their office design to determine what they actually want from their space.

Interestingly, this figure is also higher among female respondents than it is among males (71% vs. 53%).

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65%   **71%**   vs   **53%**
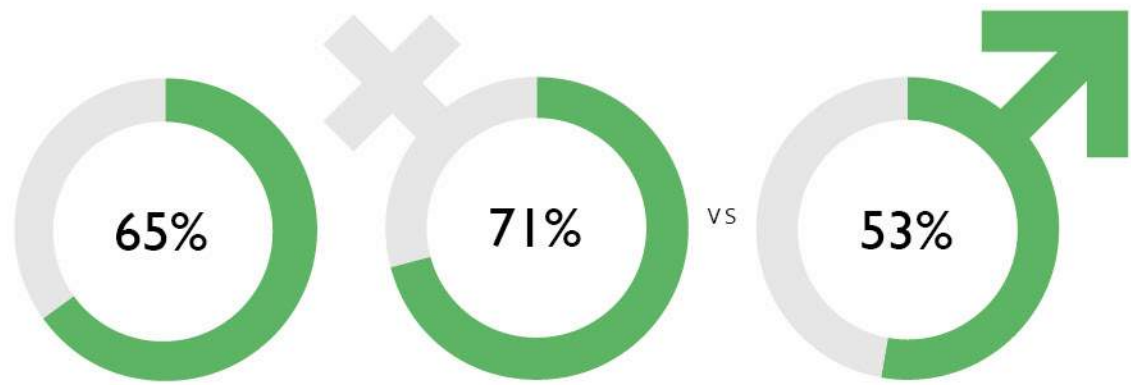
of office workers surveyed have never been consulted about their office design

Female office workers surveyed are more likely to have never been consulted about their office design than their male counterparts

As workplace designers, we believe that employee consultation is one of the best ways to ensure a successful project and urge all businesses to incorporate this vital stage into their workplace design journey.

TDA, Soho Studio
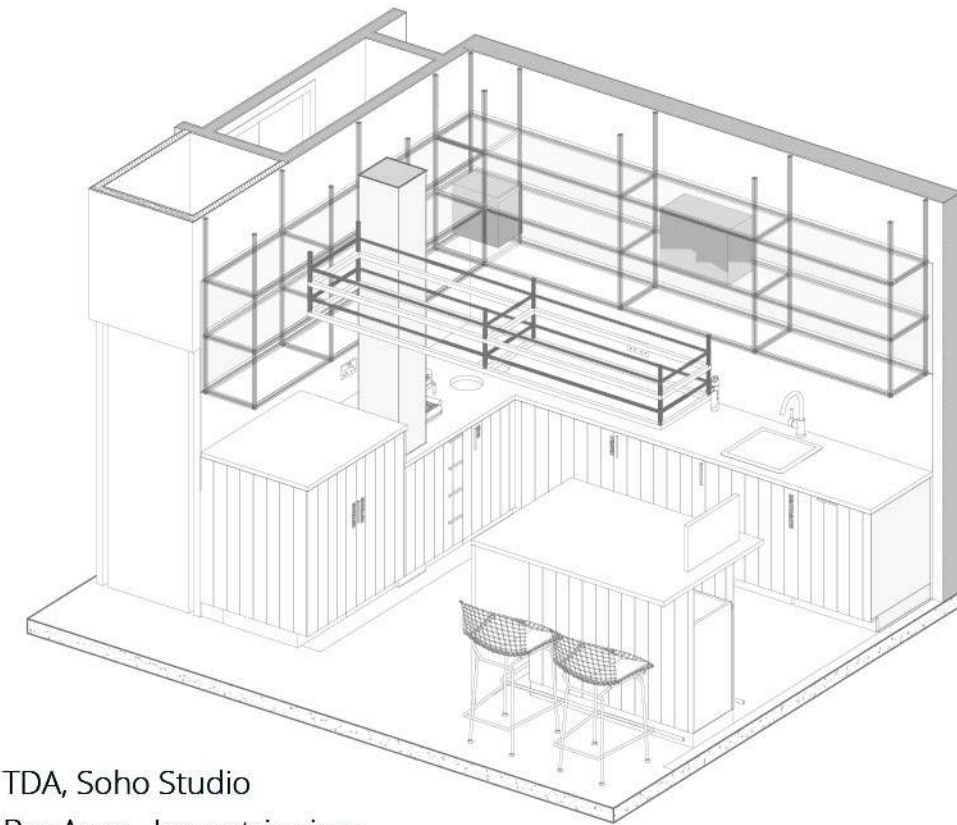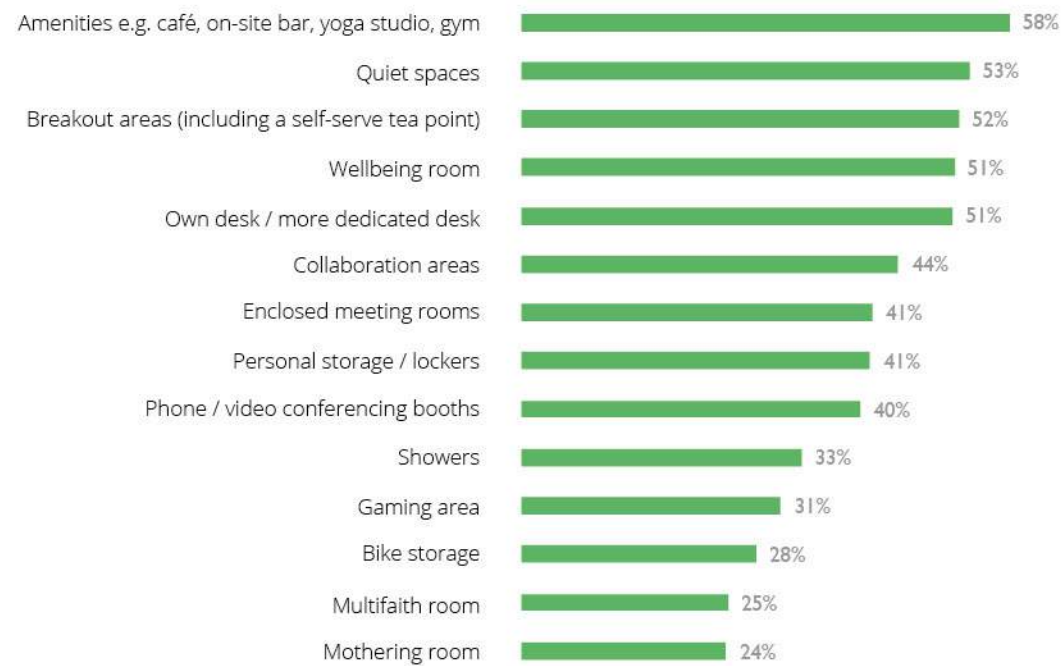
Planning your space

When thinking about the spaces you'd like to include in your new and improved workplace, it can be tempting to want to throw everything but the kitchen sink at your space plan.

But is it worth it?

To help guide you in the right direction, the graph below shows the percentages of office workers surveyed who said they would be more likely to attend the office if a variety of different spaces were provided.

TDA, Soho Studio
Bar Area - Isometric view

Q. IF YOUR OFFICE HAD THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF SPACES, HOW MUCH MORE OR LESS LIKELY WOULD YOU BE TO GO IN?

Space	%
Amenities e.g. café, on-site bar, yoga studio, gym	58%
Quiet spaces	53%
Breakout areas (including a self-serve tea point)	52%
Wellbeing room	51%
Own desk / more dedicated desk	51%
Collaboration areas	44%
Enclosed meeting rooms	41%
Personal storage / lockers	41%
Phone / video conferencing booths	40%
Showers	33%
Gaming area	31%
Bike storage	28%
Multifaith room	25%
Mothering room	24%

TDA, Soho Studio, Bar Area
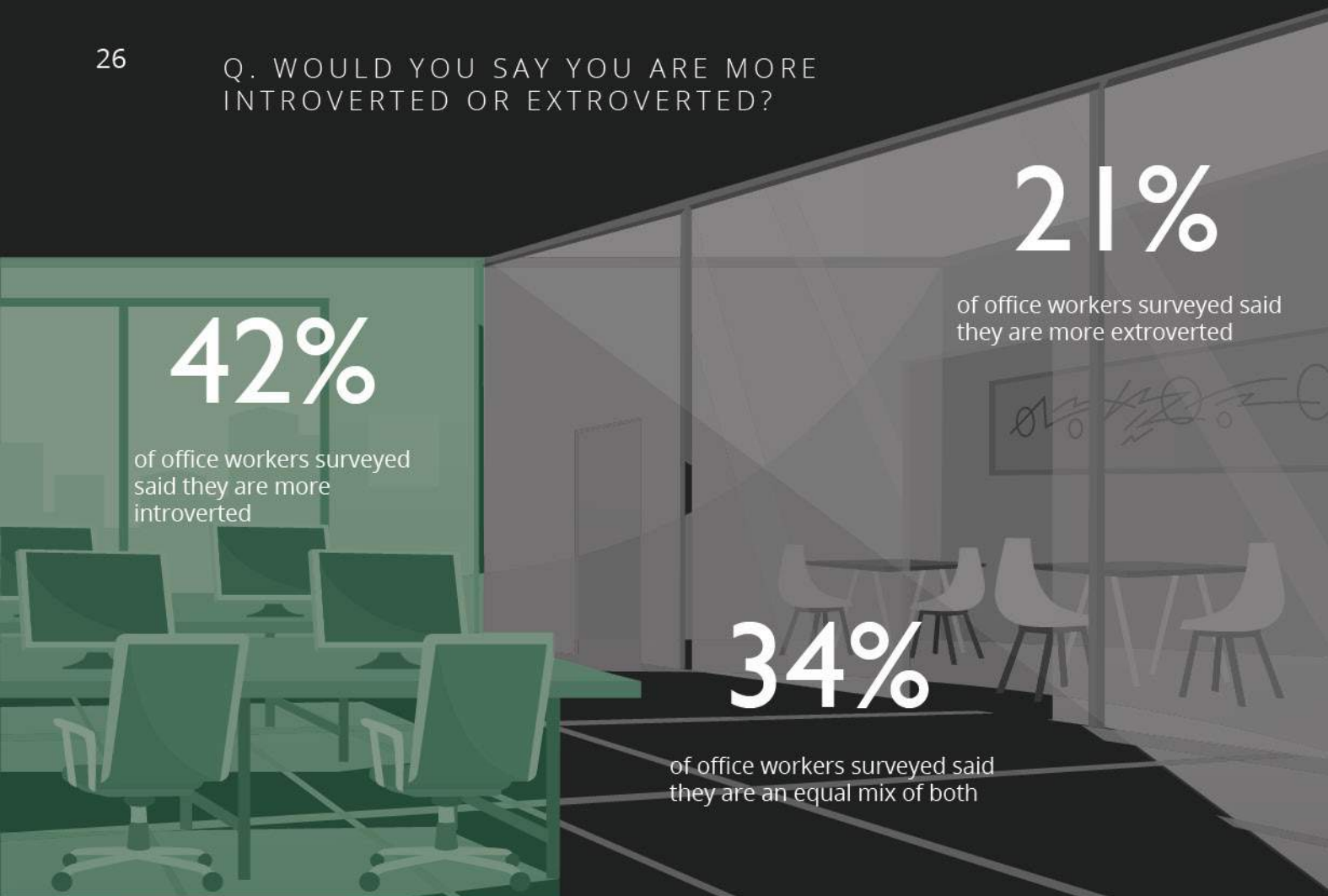
DESIGNING FOR DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES

As we've discussed, socialising with colleagues and collaboration are both key reasons why your people might choose to brave the dreaded commute and head to the physical workspace.

Ensuring ample space is dedicated to this will therefore be crucial if you want to keep staff coming back. After all, **44% of respondents said they would be more likely[8] to attend the workplace if it offered collaboration areas.**

However, it's also worth remembering that not all personalities within your team will want to spend all of their time in the office socialising. In fact, our research shows that office workers are more likely to consider themselves to be introverts than highly sociable extroverts.

Q. WOULD YOU SAY YOU ARE MORE INTROVERTED OR EXTROVERTED?

21%

of office workers surveyed said they are more extroverted

42%

of office workers surveyed said they are more introverted

34%

of office workers surveyed said they are an equal mix of both

Bolt Burdon Kemp, Farringdon

Dedicating too much space to social interaction and collaboration may well cause your more introverted staff to feel burnt out and avoid coming to the office. So, it's always a great idea to balance these high energy areas with quieter spaces where all staff can go to focus on their own work, or simply recharge their batteries.

In fact, over half (53%) of office workers surveyed said they would be more likely[9] to attend their office if it provided quiet spaces.

53%
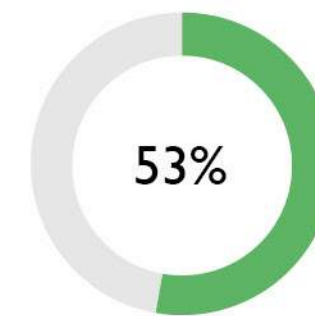
of office workers surveyed would be more likely[10] to attend the office if it provided quiet spaces

8 'Much more likely' and 'Somewhat more likely' responses combined.
9 'Much more likely' and 'Somewhat more likely' responses combined.
10 'Much more likely' and 'Somewhat more likely' responses combined.

Incorporating Sustainability & Wellbeing

When planning your workplace transformation, it's vital that sustainability and wellbeing are high up on your agenda. The stats speak for themselves:

THE IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY & WELLBEING


0%   50%   100%
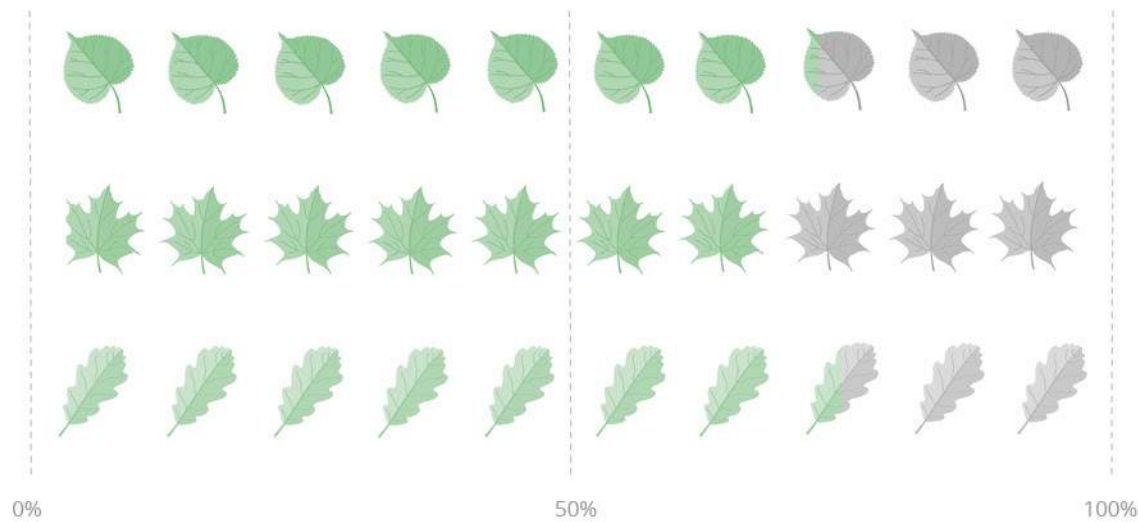
72% of office workers surveyed who said their employer's **sustainability or wellbeing** efforts are good said this has had a positive impact on how engaged on how they feel
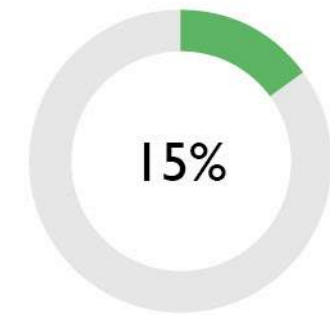

70% of office workers surveyed said it's important[11] to them that a future employer is making efforts to adopt **sustainable practices**

75% of office workers surveyed said it's important[12] to them that a future employer **prioritises wellbeing**

And yet, our research shows that few employers have chosen to incorporate sustainability and wellbeing strategies into their workplace since the pandemic.
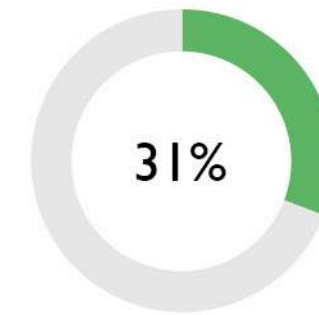
31%

of office workers surveyed said there is more focus on staff wellbeing in the office as a result of the pandemic

15%

of office workers surveyed said there is more focus on sustainability in the office as a result of the pandemic

Those that are yet to incorporate sustainability and wellbeing into their workplace are likely missing out on the many benefits their business and staff could be experiencing, including:

- Improved brand image
- Improved productivity, creativity and innovation
- Becoming more attractive to employees, investors, clients and consumers
- Better employee engagement
- Better staff retention
- Reduced operating costs
- Reduced sickness, absence and presenteeism

Don't let that be you.

[11] 'Very important' and 'Somewhat important' responses combined.
[12] 'Very important' and 'Somewhat important' responses combined.

One Roundwood, Maidenhead

What to consider

The good news for our clients is that we get them thinking about sustainability and wellbeing from the get-go and ensure that they never end up as an afterthought, or worse, forgotten entirely.
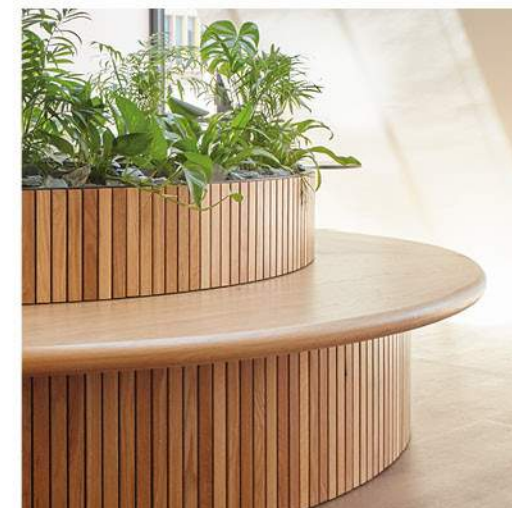
Here are some areas it's always good to consider.

AIR QUALITY   SOUND

LIGHT   WATER

MATERIALS   COMMUNITY

MIND &   PROJECT
BODY   LIFECYCLE

IDA

Embracing quiet quitting

As mentioned in our introduction, a new phenomenon dubbed quiet quitting is sweeping through the post-pandemic workplace.

Unlike its predecessor the Great Resignation, which saw workers throw in the towel altogether and move on to pastures new, quiet quitting instead denotes a shift in workers' mindsets. They may not be willing to go as far as handing in their notice, but they are calling time on long hours and an ever-increasing workload in favour of prioritising their own wellbeing over their company's bottom line.

48%

27%
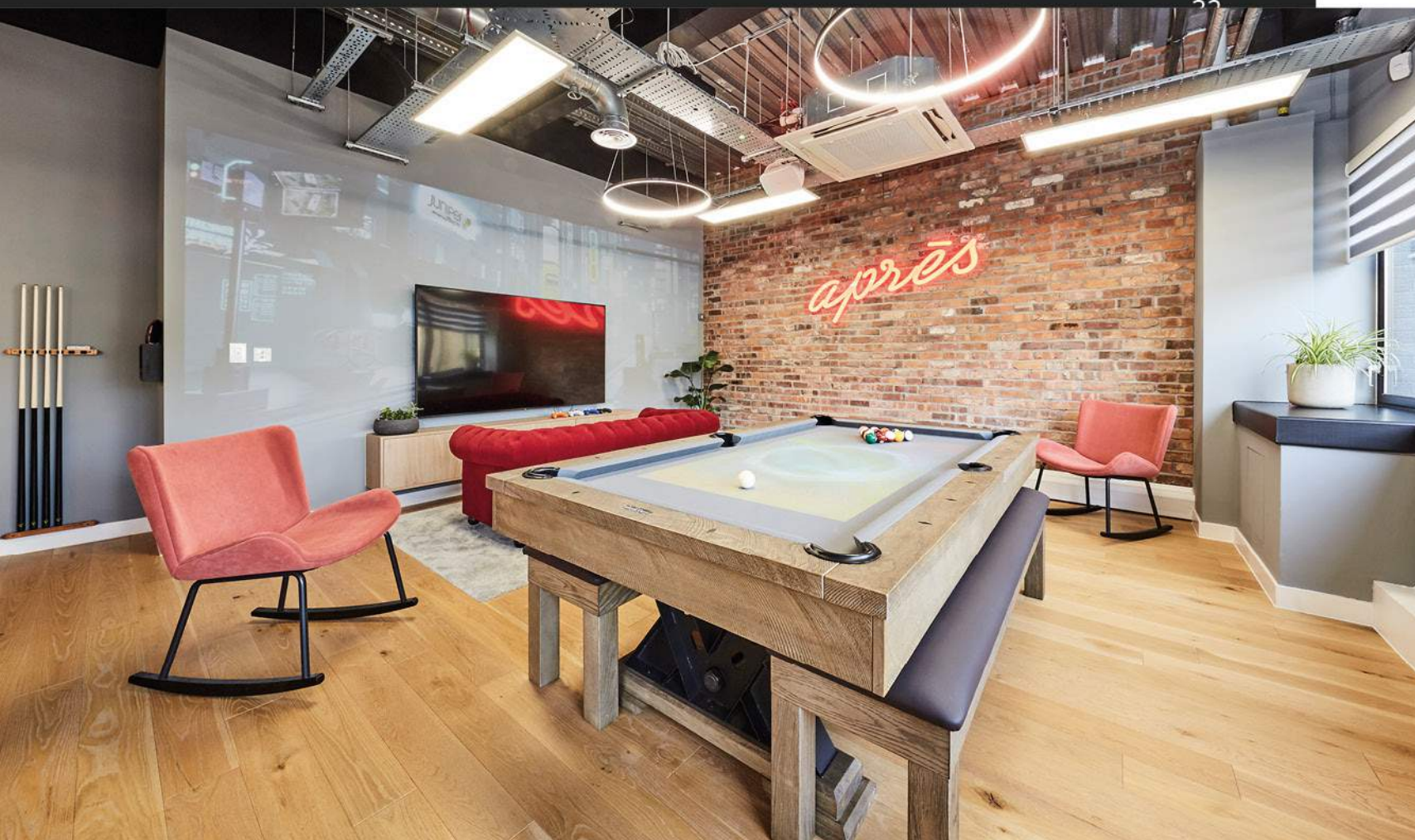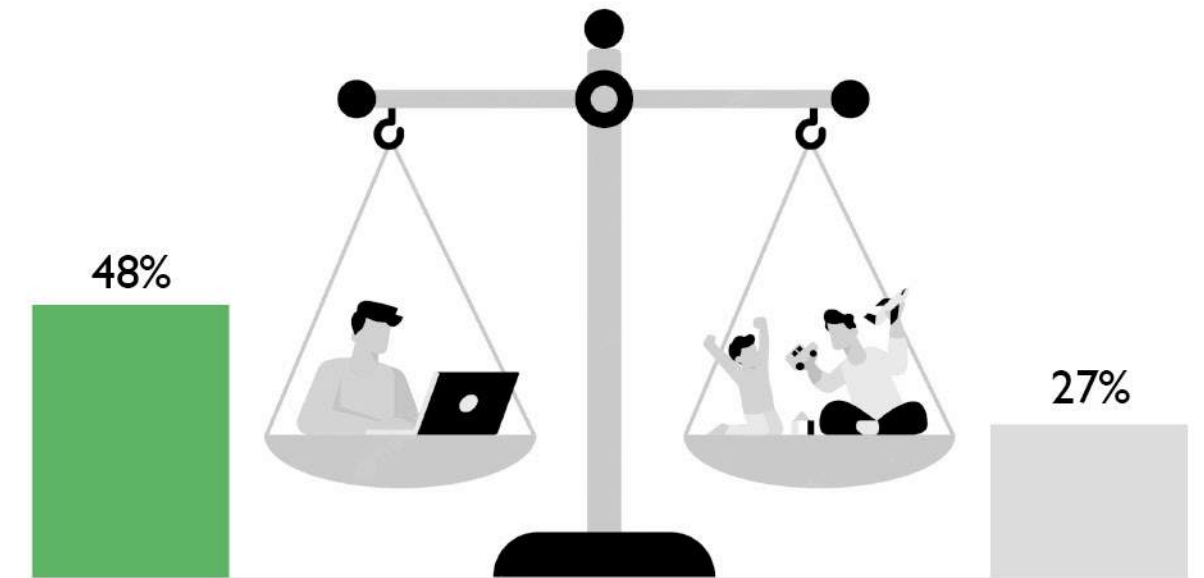
of office workers surveyed said improved work/life balance would best support their mental and physical wellbeing

of office workers surveyed said their employer currently offers improved work/life balance

Many employers that have come to rely on their workforce's willingness to go above and beyond to get the job done, albeit to the detriment of their own health and happiness, may well denounce this new approach as laziness. However, it's clear that adopting that attitude is unlikely to help anyone in the long run.

Instead of driving staff further into the depths of despondency, smart employers will learn from the quiet quitting trend and choose to view it as an opportunity to up their game when it comes to workplace wellbeing. Helping staff to banish burnout once and for all by implementing strategies to improve work/life balance is a good place to start.

Our findings show that when asked what support they think employers can offer that would most support their mental and physical wellbeing, a significant 48% said improved work/life balance. And yet, just 27% said that their employer is currently offering this.

Not only will taking your cues from quiet quitting staff and implementing strategies like this to support them make them more likely to feel engaged and to deliver their best work, the promise of a healthier, happier working life will also be a major asset as you seek to attract talented new staff.

Wrapping up

To finish up, let's take one last look at the key takeaways that will help you as you begin to design a workplace you and your people will love.

Your competitors are probably missing a trick

Our research showed multiple instances of how businesses may be failing to move with the times and offer workspaces that truly cater to the needs of their employees. Very few have taken the opportunity to revamp their office space, make it more geared towards social interaction and focus more on sustainability and wellbeing, despite the fact that doing so would positively impact staff. Smart businesses who do decide to transform their workplace will gain a significant advantage over these employers when it comes to attracting and retaining the best talent.
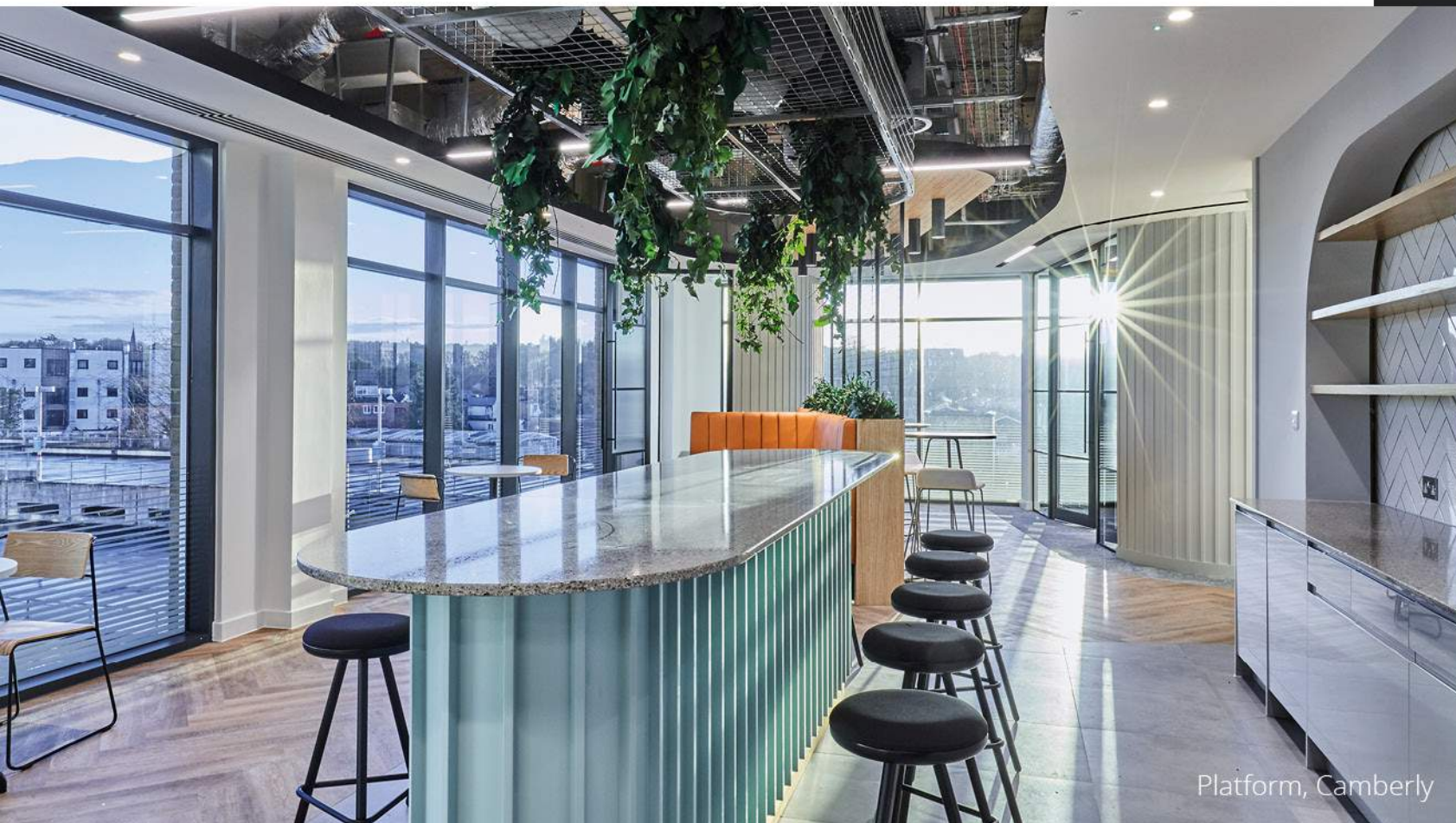
Platform, Camberly

BALANCE IS A MUST

Giving your staff plenty of opportunity to socialise and collaborate with colleagues is a sure-fire way to get your staff excited about coming into the office and should be high on your design agenda. But it's important to remember that not everyone is an energetic extrovert and that even the most sociable of butterflies still need to get their heads down and work.

GO AGILE FOR THE WIN (JUST MAKE SURE YOU CONSULT YOUR TEAMS FIRST)

The findings showed some compelling evidence as to why facilitating an agile working culture in your new workplace is well worth considering. Not only do many workers whose companies' have already done so report having a better work/life balance, a significant proportion are more likely to complete tasks to the best of their ability, making agile working a great way for employers to get their quiet quitters back on side. That said, before going full steam ahead and doing away with dedicated desks entirely, it's always a good idea to check in with your staff so that you can compromise where necessary. The study shows that this is something that the majority of businesses don't seem to be doing, so it's also important that whoever you choose to partner with to carry out your new workplace design and fit out can help you to manage this vital part of the process.

SUSTAINABILITY & WELLBEING MATTER

The study highlights that any business that views sustainability and wellbeing in the workplace as little more than a nice to have is very much mistaken. In fact, these key aspects of office design should be carefully considered and incorporated from the outset of every project. Not only will doing so have a positive impact on your current employees - even those pesky quiet quitters - it will also give you a major advantage as you work to secure new talent.

CHANGE NOW FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

There's no denying that we're in for a bumpy ride over the coming months. No sooner had we emerged from the pandemic than a major cost-of-living crisis began to take hold of the nation. Businesses have a duty of care to help support their employees through these stressful circumstances and we think providing them with a happy, healthy and safe place to work is a great way to achieve that.

Give your people what they want with a positive workplace transformation now and not only will they love you for it, but the improved engagement, creativity and productivity you'll get in return will help your business to stay strong and resilient during challenging times ahead.

Ready to take the next step?

All it takes is a conversation.

We hope you've found this guide useful and that it has given you some food for thought.

If you're ready to get the ball rolling on your workplace transformation, get in touch and let's talk it through today.

Ralph Ord
Project Director

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T: 0207 016 0200

TDA, Soho Studio

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

TDA partnered with market research company Censuswide to carry out a survey of 1,000 UK office workers aged 18+ between 18.08.22 - 22.08.22.

Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles.

TDA