

The Workplace Reset

A new minimum viable office

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01 Foreword



Calculate
1985 – ET 55 Control LCD

Return on experience investment

by Tim Oldman, Leesman Founder & CEO

Workplace is suffering an identity crisis. Caught out by the homes employees were sent to at the start of pandemic lockdowns, when it turned out those domestic settings were as good if not better at supporting employees' focused work than the corporate places they had been tethered to before.

Now, return to office plans are stalling. Why? Because offices too often fail to accommodate the detailed needs of the users. Design has lost touch with what employees do and the infrastructures they need around them to do it well. The form is not being derived from the functional requirements. But also, because too often, employers are not clear on why they have workplaces or what they want their employees doing there. It is time for employers to better define their workplace purpose.

My frustrations peaked in 2008. I'd read everything of quality available on the theories of office design and still there seemed to be a critical component missing: what was the true value to an organisation of its physical places?

There were lots of glossy 'look-books' to show what thought leaders were doing aesthetically. There was plenty on the concept of 'place making'. There was even more on how offices could reinforce the individuality of a brand. There were heaps of speculative material on the future of the office, but virtually nothing that justified the huge capital and operational costs involved in creating and running offices that staff were expected to turn up to and use most working days. It seemed to me that clients were essentially trusting a system that self-certified this was a good system.

This wasn't a new observation: others were debating the lack of formal evidence of value. But no one had proposed a solution that would properly report on the return on workplace investments. Their proposed next best option was to shift the focus to an equation centred around the productivity of place, not people. Where productivity was accepted as a measure of output over input, this meant higher space productivity was achieved by fitting more people in less space. That didn't feel right.

From 2005 to 2008, I had been both spoiled and challenged working at Swiss furniture manufacturer Vitra. Spoiled by its array of beautiful and fulfilling spaces, many designed by Turkish-born interior architect Sevil Peach, but challenged by not having a way of measuring or proving what made these spaces better.

I wanted to evidence the difference these spaces made to my colleagues and me. If I could capture it, I could explain it more accurately to others.

Sevil had an ability to create working spaces that seemed in perfect tune with both the architecture in which they sat and the employees who then inhabited them. They had a lightness of touch and a reverence for air, space, sight lines and views, and a quality to the finishes and materials that was tactile and immersive and that played with colour, shade and tone. They were open, frictionless. They created moments that mattered. We felt cared for and respected. Days working there felt special, valuable.

Sevil's work looked incredible and photographed impeccably. And indeed, the countless number of visitors to the offices photographed every minute detail. But when I worked in those spaces, it wasn't just the aesthetic that made it an amazing place to work; it was something else. The interrelation of spaces perhaps. In some places the calm, in others the energy. The way they supported interaction one minute or solitude and depth of thought another. In a conversation with Sevil some years later, she said she saw herself "more a curator than a designer", telling a story of an organisation through its people and space.

I wanted to evidence the difference these spaces made to my colleagues and me. If I could capture it, I could explain it more accurately to others. So, when I left Vitra in 2009, I turned to the management theorists' models and strategies for optimising organisational structures and bottom-line performance. I was hoping that in there I would find a way of capturing what was different about those spaces. But still, there was no methodology that would empirically link the quality of place to the performance of people and thus to corporate outputs.

Leesman was the direct result of these explorations. If I couldn't find something that captured the evidence I needed, then I decided I'd build something. By summer 2010, we had developed a methodology, created a platform that would capture and process the findings, and over the next decade build an unparalleled industry resource. And even in those early results, patterns started to emerge. We could see statistical linkages between the things people do and the things they need to do them, some obvious, some less so. But more importantly, we could see the impact on key corporate outcomes when organisations got those things right and when they got them wrong. And by pointing both out, organisations could fix the bad ones and appreciate the investment in the good ones.

Over the next decade, as an increasing number of organisations adopted the use of the Leesman Workplace Experience Assessment to better understand the relationship between their places and their people, we started to be able to link that directly to organisational objectives. By 2018, almost half of our assignments were working with large global corporations, such as Standard Chartered Bank, Johnson & Johnson and Unilever, to measure the effectiveness of their entire portfolios. These clients came to us with differing objectives, but all came with a strong appetite to better understand how their spaces supported their people. And in doing so, demonstrate the value of those workplaces against organisational performance. An idea that had started by trying to explain what made Sevil's Vitra workplace in Weil am Rhein on the borders of Switzerland and Germany so special had taken us across 91 countries and 3,494 workplaces.

But in March 2020, employees left their offices, forced home by the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic. The impact it unleashed on our everyday lives was immense and its impact on the historic reliance on offices irreversible. Within weeks the 'hybrid genie' was out of its lamp. Hybrid working had been let loose on the world. Employees previously confined to a 40-hour corporate office and desk-based week were handed a laptop and sent home. Hybrid was released.

And almost immediately it revealed a startling fact: the average home was supporting the average knowledge worker better than the average office.

Leesman's crisis response to the pandemic saw six months of research and development compressed into six weeks. We designed, built, and powered up a new parallel methodology that would appraise the ability of employees' homes to support their work. And almost immediately it revealed a startling fact: the average home was supporting the average knowledge worker better than the average office.

This was not good for offices. Spaces designed and built for the purpose of everyday domestic living were supporting work better than the spaces designed solely for working. Where previously we had merely compared offices against other offices, now we could compare the performance of hundreds of thousands of homes against the offices those employees would otherwise have been using.

The early diagnosis highlighted a single point of failure: almost any work activity that benefitted from acoustic privacy was better supported at home than it was in the open plan office. While most offices were good at supporting 'we work' that was done with others, they fared consistently less well than homes at supporting 'me work' that was done solo.

Leesman's Research & Insights unit has published a series of papers that expand on these issues, and almost all have this unavoidable challenge for organisations at their core. Corporate offices have progressively lost sight of their need to support concentrative, individual, deep tasks. They have chased higher productivity of place at the expense of the wellbeing and productivity of their teams.

What has happened between March 2020 and today is quite simple. Employees have adapted their homes to better support their work. Meanwhile employers have scratched their heads wondering how to get employees back to offices that they haven't changed. While employees modified their homes to provide a better space to support their remote working, employers procrastinated, tussling with the intuitive gut instinct that employees pursuing a single organisational purpose were better doing that physically gathered with their colleagues. Meantime, they refused to acknowledge that the failings of those offices were central to employees' unwillingness to rush back.

At the same time, some in and around the real estate industry who got metaphorically fat off a system that has remained largely unchanged for decades deny any need for redress or change. And designers pitch eye-catching schemes in the hope that we'll believe workplaces will be the collaborative saviour of business.

Yet from a data perspective, it is absolutely clear that a full system reset is needed. The functional purpose of the workplace has been allowed to slowly and somewhat unnoticeably drift off course from supporting what employees are going there to do. Work has not become more collaborative, more collective, more combined. If anything, as advanced automation progressively strips menial tasks from our everyday, it heads in the other direction. Knowledge work is becoming more complex.

Employers and their designers have lost sight of a defining requirement: that the form something takes should be derived from the function it is required to support. And for almost all employees, individual focused tasks are a critical part of their functional work day. And if the corporate office can't support the concentrative work needing to be done there, then the employee has a compelling reason to stay at home instead.

Yes, offices should serve to reinforce community and collective endeavour. Yes, they should attract individuals to spend time together collaboratively solving problems. But they absolutely must support the ever more deeply concentrative tasks that employees are increasingly being tasked with. This expanding complexity of knowledge work has crept up on us. As intelligent systems take away more of the menial, what is left is increasingly complex.

Employers must also recognise that many employees have changed the way they work. The growth of video-first communication and the pandemic hangover of days with block-booked back-to-back schedules is part of the problem. Days devoid of time to walk to the next interaction are creating their own new pandemic: that of sedentary Zoom days, where you interact with an impressive array of different individuals and teams, but you never actually move from your home or office-based desk.

It is also a call to arms. A challenge to re-establish the 'why' of the workplace. What is the office ultimately there to achieve? What is its supreme purpose?

Our latest research aims to reset this post-pandemic workplace operating system. With analysis of the work patterns and workplace needs of over 157,880 employees gathered between Q3 2021 and Q4 2022, pinpointing what they do and what infrastructure they need to do it, we have established the basis of a new minimum viable office. If we are to re-establish a compelling need for the corporate workplace among employees, then their corporate workplaces must successfully compete with their homes for the best place to be. This research study has uncovered those hygiene factors for the post-pandemic knowledge economy workplace.

It is also a call to arms. A challenge to re-establish the 'why' of the workplace. What is the office ultimately there to achieve? What is its supreme purpose? We believe the workplace reset needs to start here, not with design but first with clearly stating what role the office is playing in achieving organisational objectives. Define the purpose of the corporate office and you can more easily schedule the functional requirements. Once function is determined, then the aesthetic form can flow from there.

Much of this reset is based on a belief that building a strong and positive corporate culture is easier when colleagues value the time spent together, but that they will only value time together when that time feels well spent. Our reset does not call for office attendance to be mandated or in any way contest the notion that greater location autonomy is a good thing. We are merely fighting for recognition that places of work must better understand the nature of the work that is intended to be done there.

We are calling for the form a workplace takes to be a direct and measured result of the functional requirements of the employees it accommodates. And that those functional requirements are derived from a clearly communicated rationale for what the employer wants from its employees when they are together in those spaces. Form should follow function. Function follows purpose.

This is a manual to help you do just that.

Citizen Office, Vitra, Weil am Rhein

- 01 Multimedia room
- 02 Focus room
- 03 Non-territorial working
- 04 Quiet work 'pit'
- 05 Open-air patio
- 06 Meeting box
- 07 Work box
- 08 Sample library
- 09 Library
- 10 Café
- 11 High-level soft meeting
- 12 Copy area
- 13 Archive store
- 14 Main entrance
- 15 Project room
- 16 Bathrooms/W.C.s
- 17 View across orchard
- 18 Goods lift to factory
- 19 Secure archive
- 20 Private office
- 21 Quiet room
- 22 Meeting room
- 23 Suspended canvas panels
- 24 Lockers
- 25 Semi-enclosed meeting
- 26 Fire escape stairs
- 27 Structural columns
- 28 Curtain enclosure

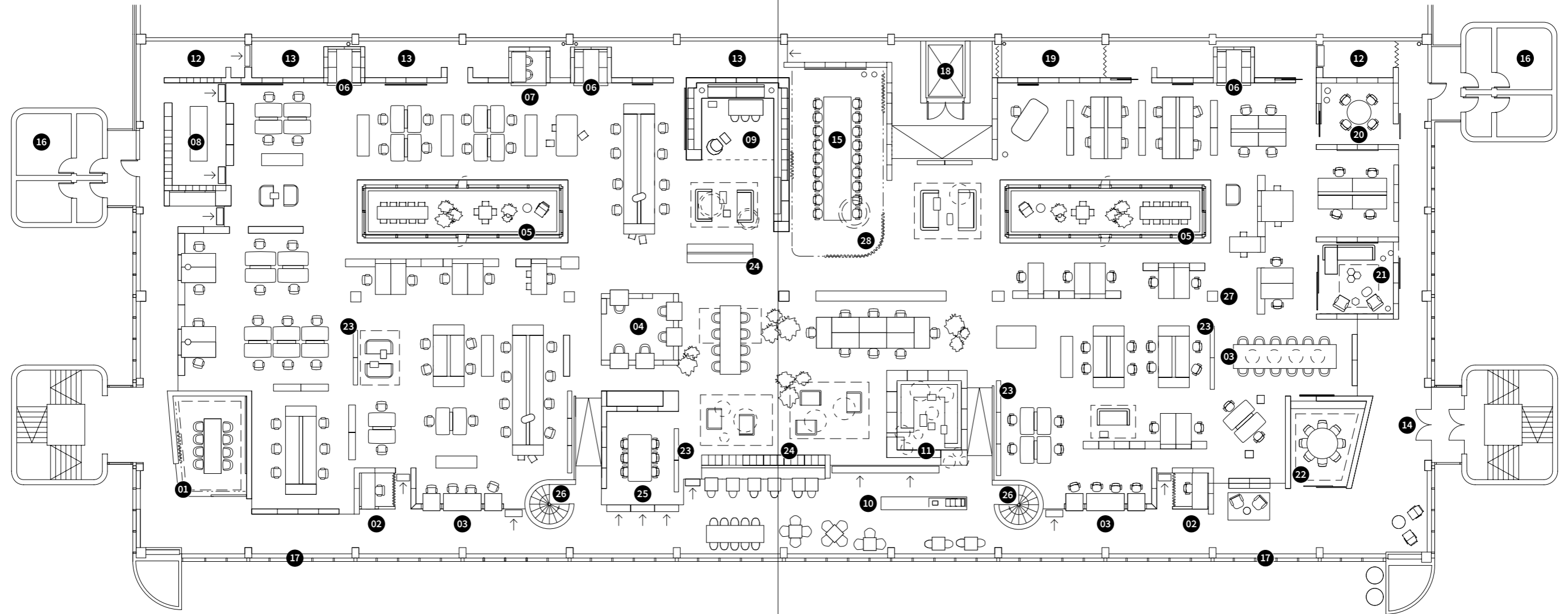
In 2000, Turkish-born London-based designer Sevil Peach of London-based design studio Sevil Peach Gence Associates worked with renowned Swiss furniture manufacturer Vitra on the transformation of their own office based on the manufacturing campus in Weil am Rhein.

The space, then named The Network Office, had around 120 territorial seat positions and was located on the first floor of a prefabricated warehouse designed by British architect Nicholas Grimshaw around 20 years earlier. The core space, a concrete structure wrapped in corrugated aluminium cladding, was unremarkable. Its saving features were its ceiling heights and elevated views from the front windows across cherry orchards and vineyards beyond. The aim was to create a workspace that reflected the pioneering spirit of the company.

What is astounding, some 23 years later, is that the key design elements and planning of that original scheme are still very much in place today and are in no way dated. According to Vitra “the idea was so strong and compelling that, with some adjustments over the years, it remains just as relevant and vital to this day. The office...is proof that a high-quality interior which ignores trends and allows for change is a sustainable investment in a company’s DNA.”

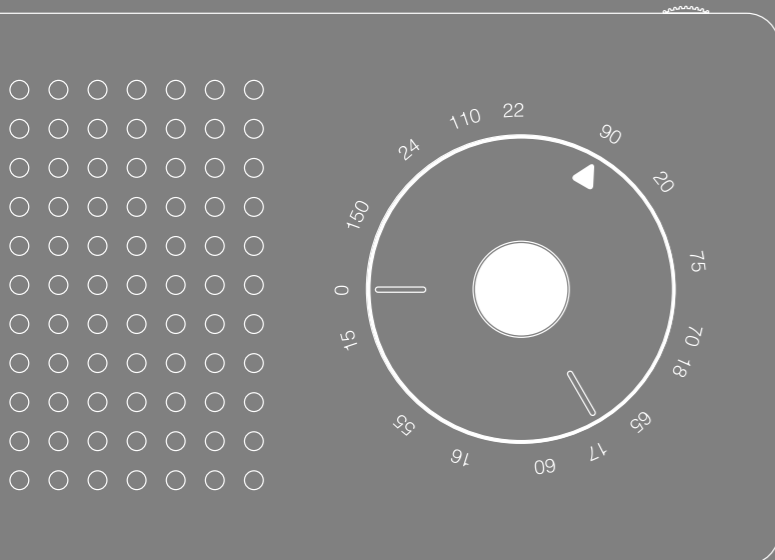
Sevil Peach has collaborated on updates to this office in 2006, 2010 and 2018 when it was renamed the Citizen Office.

Vitra, Weil am Rhein. General arrangement plan c 2005 reproduced by kind permission of Sevil Peach.



Approx 2,000sq m (21,525sq ft) c 150 work-points = 13sq m (140sq ft) / work-point.
Building envelope by Nicholas Grimshaw 1981.

02 What employees want



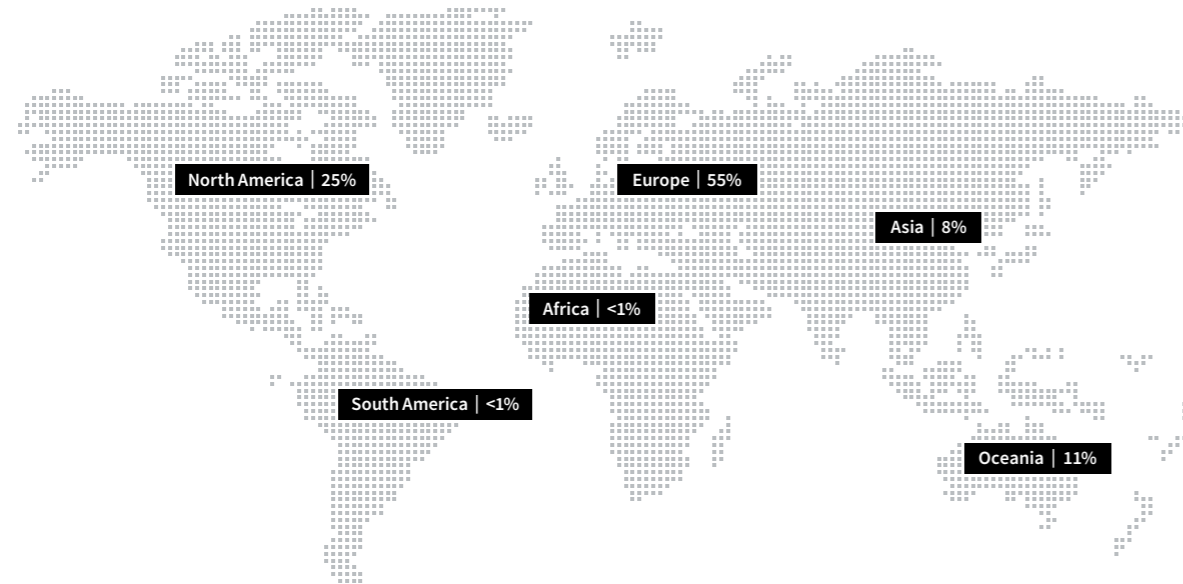
Tune-in
1958 – T3 Pocket Radio

The minimum viable office

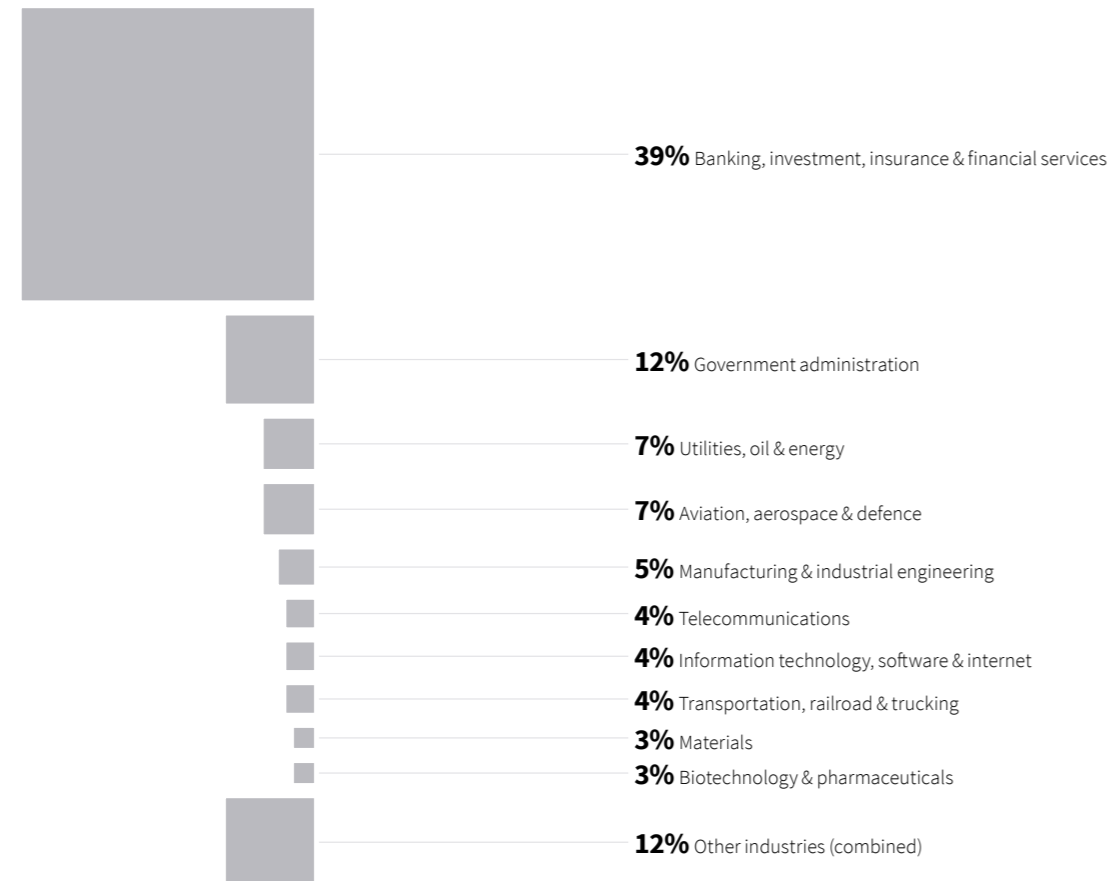
The pandemic did not materially change the work employees do. But we did witness an unparalleled acceleration of what was previously an inordinately slow shift: the realisation that 80% or more of knowledge workers could complete much of the work previously tied to the office from another location.

From a research perspective, this significant shift has allowed us to understand the impact on employees' experience with an array of alternative work arrangements that few were familiar with. As a result, we now have a better understanding of the non-negotiable elements needed to create an appealing, supportive and efficient corporate workplace. What we call the new minimum viable office. Employers must now tune into these new needs.

6 regions:



23 industry sectors:



This investigation focuses on employee workplace experience data collected over the 18 months up to the end of 2022 from:

157 880

unique employee responses

1 315

workplaces

114

organisations

62

countries

Homes that were never designed for working turn out to be pretty good places for many employees to work. The data in that respect is unequivocal. Within most organisations, employees' sense of personal productivity is highly likely to be greater for home-based working than it is for office-based working.

The reasons for that are relatively simple. For nine out of ten employees, 'Individual focused work, desk-based' is an important work activity. For around two out of three, this type of work will dominate their workday. We know that work that requires concentration benefits more from environments where employees are satisfied with the noise levels, but most offices are poor at managing noise. Furthermore, the data shows that any work activity that benefits from acoustic privacy is likely to be better supported in an employee's home than it is in their office.

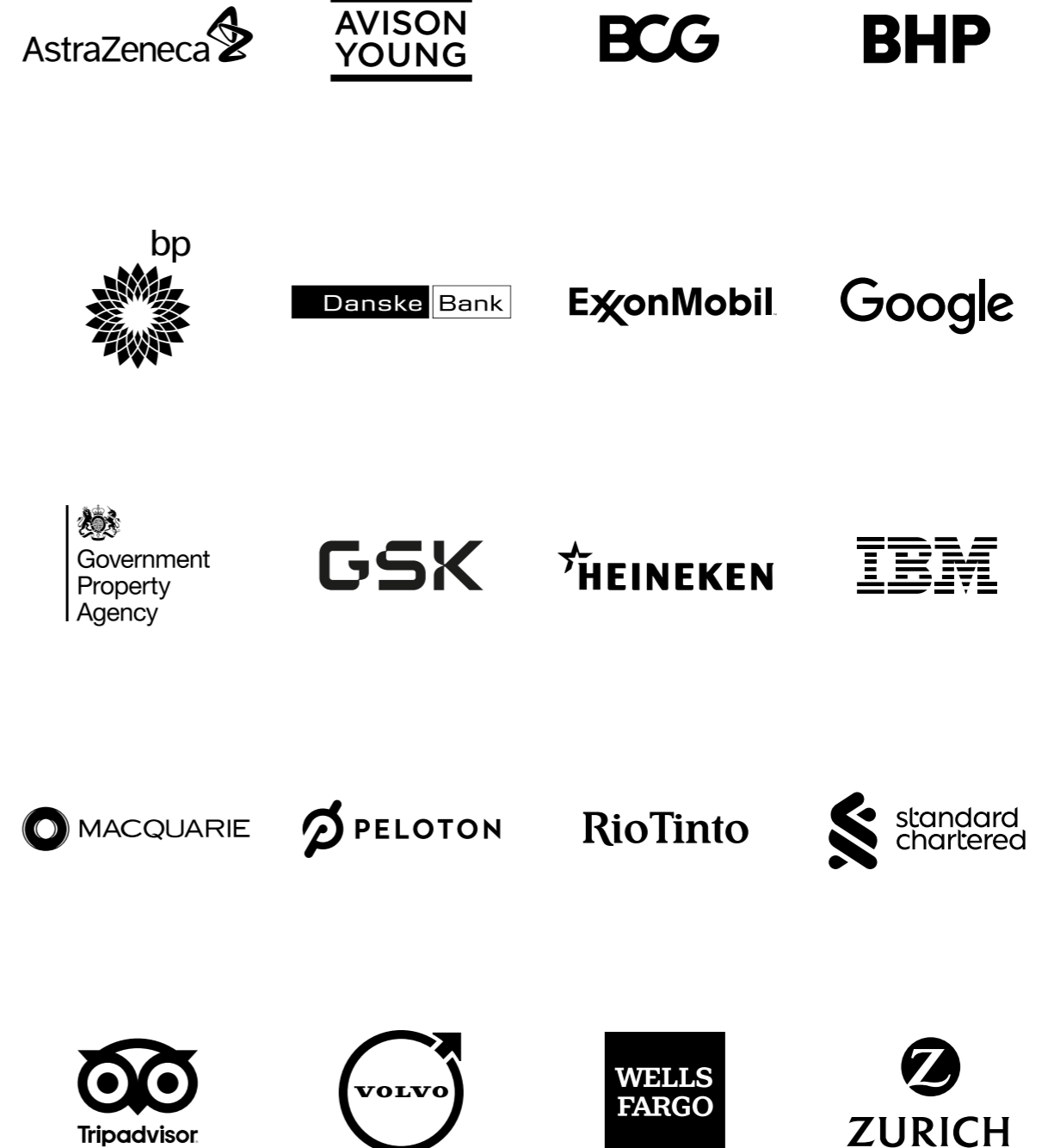
In addition to this, our research has shown that work has become more planned, with a fall in the importance attached to 'Informal, unplanned meetings' in favour of 'Planned meetings' and 'Video conferences'. It is then no surprise that employees' sensitivity around things like acoustic privacy and access to quiet rooms has moved up the agenda.

Our research examines our most recent post-pandemic data, capturing the experience of 157,880 employees globally from 114 diverse organisations. The findings highlight how certain workplace features statistically link to particular work activities. It also shows how these work activities align with groups of corporate outcomes.

Flip that around and it means that employers who are clear in what outcomes they want from their workplaces now know which activities should be prioritised. Once those work activities are defined, then we can prioritise those infrastructure features that are critical in superbly supporting them. Preferential investment in these specific physical and service features is likely to deliver a greater return on experience investment.

By providing clarity on what organisations want, and then giving employees the environments they need, the value of the office can be better understood.

Leesman supports some of the world's best known organisations create better workplaces. 114 organisations' data is incorporated in this research study, including those shown here:



The findings from this study offer a new set of non-negotiable hygiene factors. These are the essentials for effective workplaces in a post-pandemic era. They establish an architectural and service level baseline that will help build an affinity between the employee and the office. Once these essential needs are fulfilled, extra amenities beyond the hygiene factors can further amplify the experience.

But herein lies risk. Delivering any of the embellishment at the expense of these hygiene factors will directly impact the ability of the corporate workplace to support employee outputs. It will also further accentuate the sense of employees' homes being better places to base themselves for core work activities. The research has uncovered 8 critical workplace activities and 23 physical and service features that form the fundamental foundation blocks for a new minimum viable office.

Several of the work activities and workplace features listed on the next page are delivered well in most workplaces. Items like 'Desk' or 'Computing equipment, mobile' consistently meet with the approval of most people who say they are important to them. But equally, there are items that habitually get ignored but are critically important to employees, such as 'Quiet rooms for working alone or in pairs', 'Noise levels', and 'Temperature control'. It is common to see less than a third of those who say these are important to their work actually satisfied with these features and the support they provide. These items are hard to get right, but that is no reason to stop trying as it just feeds the reasons why employees are reluctant to willingly rush back to their offices.

Therefore, our research has identified a process that will support you in ensuring the workplace does not continue to fail its user. Firstly by clearly defining the overarching purpose. Then you can prioritise and address the functional needs of your employees. Only then can you begin to develop your physical form. This framework is sequentially dependent and each chapter dives into each stage in more detail.

Owner	Employer	Employee	Supply partner	
Sequence	01 Purpose	02 Function	03 Form	Expand beyond the minimum viable office
Deliverables	<p>Outcomes</p> <p>The reasons why an organisation has workplaces: what they want employees to achieve when there.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity • Meeting & collaboration • Community & culture • Pride & enjoyment 	<p>Outputs</p> <p>The range of activities that employees look for the workplace to brilliantly support when they are there.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual focused work, desk-based • Planned meetings • Telephone conversations • Collaborating on focused work • Informal, unplanned meetings • Relaxing/taking a break • Video conferences • Informal social interaction 	<p>Inputs</p> <p>The features and services that buildings and spaces offer to superbly support what employees do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk • Chair • Tea, coffee & other refreshment facilities • General cleanliness • Temperature control • Meeting rooms (small) • Meeting rooms (large) • Toilets/W.C. • Noise levels • IT Help desk • Natural light • General tidiness • WiFi network connectivity in the office • Restaurant/canteen • Air quality • Computing equipment, mobile • Quiet rooms for working alone or in pairs • Office lighting • Parking • Printing/copying/scanning equipment • Desk/room booking systems • Security • Remote access to work files or network 	

The Workplace Reset checklists

The three checklists opposite will serve as your guides throughout the three steps of defining your 'workplace why', understanding the activities employees will use your workplace for and lastly, the infrastructure needed to support them. You must start with the purpose of your workplace first and be able to define exactly the need for it. From there, can you describe what employees will be doing in the workplace to support that purpose? Once you have established a purpose and what activities employees are doing, then you can safely determine what features you need to prioritise.

Purpose checklist

- 01 —**
What is the overarching purpose of your workplace? What is it there to do?
- 02 —**
Is that purpose static for 3-5 years or is it likely to be more fluid?
- 03 —**
Have you considered variation in the purpose across different teams or lines of business?
- 04 —**
Do your employees understand how being in the office contributes to desired outcomes?

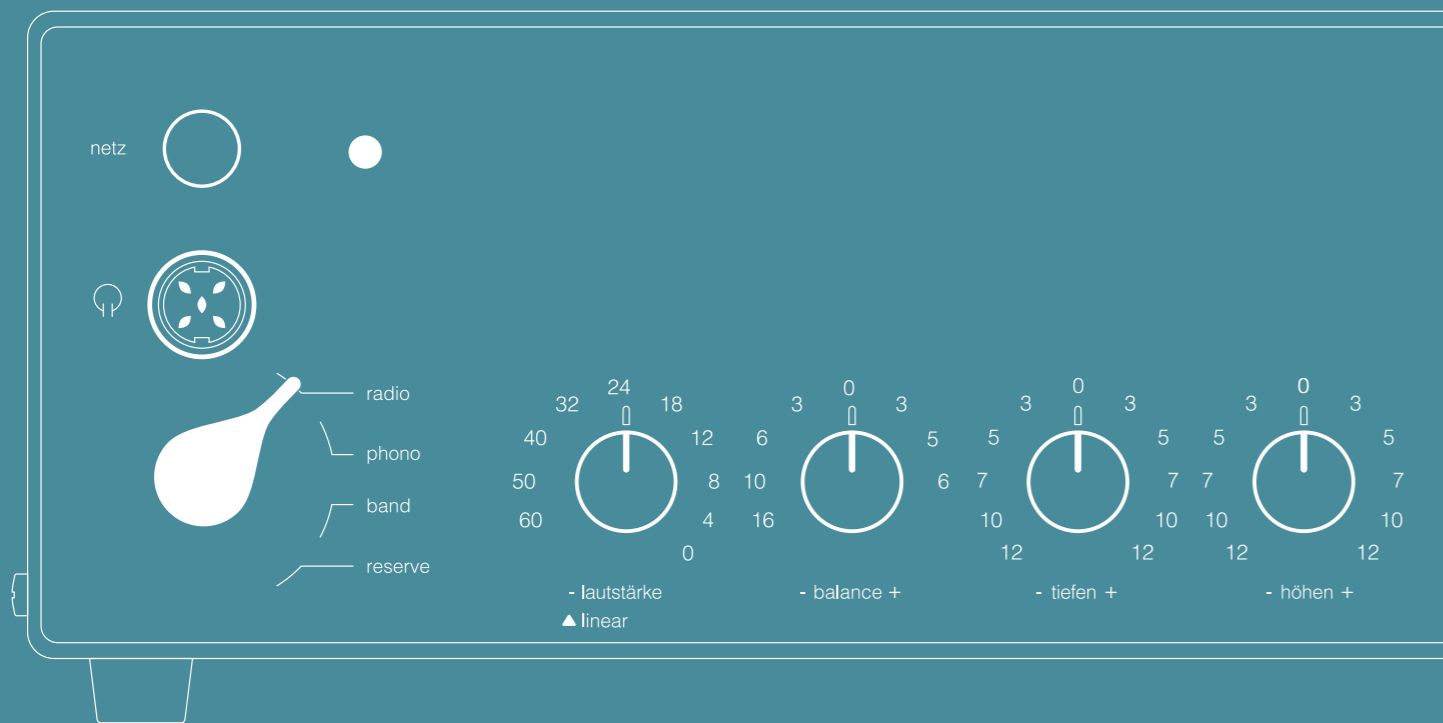
Function checklist

- 01 —**
Which activities must your workplace support?
- 02 —**
Do you know how well these functions are supported at your employee's homes?
- 03 —**
Which activities make up a typical working day for employees and require the presence of others?
- 04 —**
What will you do to attract employees to use the workplace over their homes?

Form checklist

- 01 —**
Do your workplaces meet employee expectations?
- 02 —**
Do you know how often prioritised functional activities will occur?
- 03 —**
Are your acoustically private spaces designed for outstanding experience (in person & remote)?
- 04 —**
For video-first teams, do you have enough private spaces available?
- 05 —**
Do you have room & desk booking technologies to plan office days in advance?
- 06 —**
Do you offer food & beverages and an environment that encourages informal social interaction and/or unplanned meetings?

03 Purpose



Select & balance
1966/67 – CSV 250/1 Amplifier

Organisational impact

The various dictionary definitions of ‘purpose’ vary little and can be typically characterised as such: *the reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists.*

To design and operate an outstanding workplace, employers must be clear on its overarching purpose. Offices do not exist simply for employees to occupy them. The first purpose-built offices in the 18th century may have done as gestures of organisational wealth and stature. But in the 21st century, the corporate office needs to be clear on why it is there and what specifically it is aiming to support.

Today, when most employees have demonstrated that they can fulfil much of their role working remotely, organisations must be clearer in stating their reasons for wanting employees in their corporate spaces.

In very simple terms, it's the response a member of the executive leadership would offer if an influential external stakeholder asked the question, "so, why do you need workplaces anyway?". Only once that 'workplace why' is defined can you identify the functional requirements from which you can accurately develop your physical form. This framework is sequentially dependent.

In the context of this research project, purpose refers to the principal commitment of the corporate workplace to the employee. What it is there to do. Is it there simply to support output productivity, or rather to reinforce brand? Or perhaps to accelerate knowledge transfer or facilitate greater innovation? Could it be to attract and retain the right talent?

If your workplace supports a large population, there may be more than one requirement. But in that case, what are the defined objectives for each line of business? Organisations must understand themselves and clearly communicate the role the physical workplace is expected to play in supporting organisational performance. In very simple terms, it's the response a member of the executive leadership would offer if an influential external stakeholder asked the question, "so, why do you need workplaces anyway?". Only once that 'workplace why' is defined can you identify the functional requirements from which you can accurately develop your physical form. This framework is sequentially dependent.

And because this is the starting point for any design of a workplace, progressing to design without first defining the objective means that the chances of success are dramatically diminished.

Take for example an airport. The overarching purpose of an airport is to accommodate the efficient and safe arrival and departure of airline passengers, their luggage and any accompanying freight. The airport's buildings are there to accommodate some parts of this objective. The purpose itself does not mention aircraft and airlines, the myriad of technical procedures, the unusual and expensive specialist equipment, highly trained personnel, and closely monitored procedures needed to support that objective. These all come in order to fulfil the purpose.

There are lots of things that need to take place at an airport for passengers and their luggage to safely and efficiently come and go. These are the activities of the airport. From being dropped kerbside from a taxi, to check-in, security and immigration checks. The activity profile of a modern airport is pretty much consistent across the developed world. These are the functional steps toward the overarching purpose.

The form that the airport then takes is wholly derived from the need to support these functional requirements. From the baggage conveyors that take your checked bag through security checks, onto a baggage cart that is later pulled out onto the runway apron to the aircraft waiting on its stand, and then transferred into the hold of the aircraft via a vehicle-mounted mobile motorised conveyor belt.

Another one of these pieces of highly technical equipment is the tug. The airport tug is a squat and frankly ugly vehicle that looks like a farm tractor crossed with a flattened pick-up truck. It is used to push an aircraft back off its 'stand' because passenger aircrafts cannot reverse. It is an essential piece of an airport's operational kit. Its form (heavy, wide, practical, powerful) enables its function: nestling under the aircraft nose cone, attaching to the front wheel landing gear and once air-traffic control clearance is given, pushing a 200-ton aircraft backwards off the stand for a prompt departure. Its highly practical, no-frills form is wholly derived from its functional necessity. But its individual contribution to purpose is clear in supporting on-time passenger departures and thus, the airport's smooth operation.

As passengers on board the departing aircraft, we don't really consider the myriad of contributing componentry. Yet many, like the tug, are the workhorse of the airport and essential in its smooth operations. However new, however well engineered, without the tug, an aircraft full of fuel, crew, passengers and their luggage is left completely stranded.

Traditional tugs are hugely expensive. And as aircrafts get bigger, tugs get even more expensive. This tends to mean that airports have to finely balance peak period schedules with the availability of tugs. It is not economically possible to have a single tug allocated to every stand. And so, at the busiest times of the day, tugs are seen darting back and forth across airport aprons working to 'just in time' mandates. They are summoned to an aircraft when crews are ready, so the pilots can get clearance from air traffic controllers to 'push-back' and to depart. Yet at quiet times of the day, the same expensive tugs are sat idle.

The problem for airports that run this balancing act too tightly is that they are at risk of any one aircraft delay causing a ripple of delays to other aircrafts waiting on the support of the same tug. In a game of airfield jeopardy, a pilot can only inform air traffic control they are ready for push-back once the tug is attached. But once the tug is attached, it is committed to that aircraft. Regardless of whether air traffic controllers give immediate clearance for push-back or leave the aircraft with its crew and passengers, and the tug, waiting.

This feels a little like the real estate balancing act between the number of employees coming to an office and the number of desks or enclosed meeting rooms available to support them. Run it too tight and it doesn't work at busy periods, yet there are rooms and desks sitting empty in quiet periods. Offices, like airports, have busy days and quiet days, and busy hours and quiet hours.

The tugs are also traditionally equipped with powerful diesel engines. And so, they also come at an environmental cost. Something which airports, and the airlines who use them, know they need to improve. With the dramatic advancement of battery-powered vehicles over the last decade, this has led to some promising innovation in the tug market.

New remote control, battery-powered tugs are increasingly replacing the old diesel versions. They are a fraction of the size and a fraction of the price and are operated by one technician with a handheld wireless controller. Their significantly lower price means that more and more major airports are equipping their busiest stands with their own designated battery tug and charging point. The results are lower energy costs, lower environmental impact, and most importantly perhaps, significantly less aircraft departure delays due to lack of availability of a tug. The manufacturers of the new battery-powered tugs were focused on improving the functional performance of the tug and in doing so, supported the overarching objective.

Organisations must similarly define the primary role or purpose of their workplaces in supporting organisational objectives and outcomes, from which functional requirements and then the form can be derived. And they must understand the role key components play in delivering that objective. The Leesman Workplace Experience Assessment measures these organisational outcomes, known in our methodology as our 'impact statements'. A number were found to synthesise into four sub groupings as shown on the following pages. The research further showed which work activities (functions) were most closely associated with each cluster.

Identifying which of the four purpose groupings most closely fits with the organisation's prime purpose of its workplaces allows you to then easily identify the functions that it will need to effectively accommodate. After singling out these critical activities, deeper conversations around the cost and value of the infrastructures needed to support them become much simpler.

Some may argue that a great workplace should in fact be successful at achieving all of the impact statements across all four groupings. We would not disagree. But we also know that budgets are not limitless and that post-pandemic real estate footprints are harder to justify. So, perhaps this is best seen as a priority matrix. And as we will show later, there are aspects of the physical form, like meeting spaces and quiet spaces, that contribute directly to a number of these objectives. Therefore, we argue that because of their overall contribution to success, the importance attached to these areas can be significantly elevated.

See the following pages for the four purpose groupings in more detail.

01 — Productivity

It is assumed that there can be little confusion about what is meant by productivity. Yet real estate and the workplace world has confounded itself for decades, chasing a single measure of employee productivity. Often reverting to the productivity of its spaces as a pseudo proxy for the value of space. We strongly advise against this. When the Leesman methodology was conceived and designed, we took the view that workplace productivity was becoming less ‘holy grail’ and more ‘gold at the end of the rainbow’.

We pose a single transferable question relating to an employee’s sense of personal productivity, that works regardless of their particular output responsibility, industry, role, seniority etc. Does your workplace enable you to work productively? Yes, the response is wholly subjective. But we do believe that an employee’s opinion in this respect (around the ability of the environments and tools they are provided with to support what they go there to do) is an entirely relevant indicator of their ability to work productively. And when those environments and tools change, for better or worse, we can see that employees’ responses to the productivity-related questions also change. We can see how inputs impact the outputs.

The impact statements combined from the Leesman Workplace Experience Assessment that provides the data for this purpose outcome:

- My workplace enables me to work productively.
- My workplace enables us to work productively.

02 — Meeting & collaboration

The pandemic fuelled the exponential growth of platforms and technologies that enabled us to meet and collaborate while being entirely remote from each other. Our data shows how video conferences will pass telephone conversations in order of magnitude of importance somewhere in 2023.

We also know that employees had to get more ‘planful’ in how they met and collaborated. So we have also seen an increase in the importance of ‘Planned meetings’, seemingly at the expense of ‘Informal, unplanned meetings’, which have reduced in importance. Again, the relevance of this outcome group in the delivery of a workplace to which employees willingly return cannot be underestimated. And fresh consideration must be given to the likelihood of any of the functional activities that feed this group, involving both in-person and remote participants.

Meeting & collaboration are participatory. They are ‘contact sports’. Collaboration can only happen where both parties choose to actively participate in the process and so all infrastructures around this must support all parties. Collaboration with colleagues surely sits at the heart of organisational cadence, representing the ability of employees to share, develop and progress ideas. It is about solving problems together, not in isolation. It is about belief in a common goal. It is participatory ideation.

The impact statement from the Leesman Workplace Experience Assessment that provides the data for this purpose outcome:

- My workplace supports me sharing ideas/knowledge amongst colleagues.

03 — Community & culture

The ability of a workplace to actively support a positive sense of Community & culture must surely be critical in the value proposition for having workplaces? They talk to the ability of a place and its workings to instil a sense of the value attached to being together with colleagues and contributing to a collective outcome. Both are indicators of cohesive identity, aligned values, shared common purpose, and mutual respect.

They are also measures that the pandemic heavily disrupted. These are clearly things that are more difficult to participate in and therefore more difficult to maintain when we are remote from one another. The fashion for Zoom pub-quizzes wore off and these online events take on a diarised formality and structure, in a stage-managed way that struggles to offer authenticity and almost any spontaneity.

We have also seen that these are areas where both industry segment and workplace location can have a meaningful bearing on outcomes. Generally, workplaces in the public sector and those workplaces on remote campus environments find these areas harder to excel in.

The impact statements combined from the Leesman Workplace Experience Assessment that provides the data for this purpose outcome:

- My workplace contributes to a sense of community at work.
- My workplace has a positive impact on the organisation's workplace culture.

04 — Pride & enjoyment

Is it likely to see employees willingly comply with a return to office request if their workplace is not one they can say they enjoy? How can an employee be expected to value a workplace that they are not proud to show to customers, clients or candidates?

Pride can only come from qualities or attributes that are widely admired, by both internal and external commentators. And enjoying a workplace is less about gimmicks and much more about a wider sense of a space being supportive, considerate and uplifting. We particularly see this negatively reflected in the results of spaces riddled with points of friction, where key work activities that should be straightforward to support are failing the user. Obstructing the way in which the space could be used.

It is also important to recognise that the attributes that contribute to a positive outcome in this area are a wide range of key infrastructure items, including some 'soft services' that can be more difficult to justify for some organisations.

The impact statements combined from the Leesman Workplace Experience Assessment that provides the data for this purpose outcome:

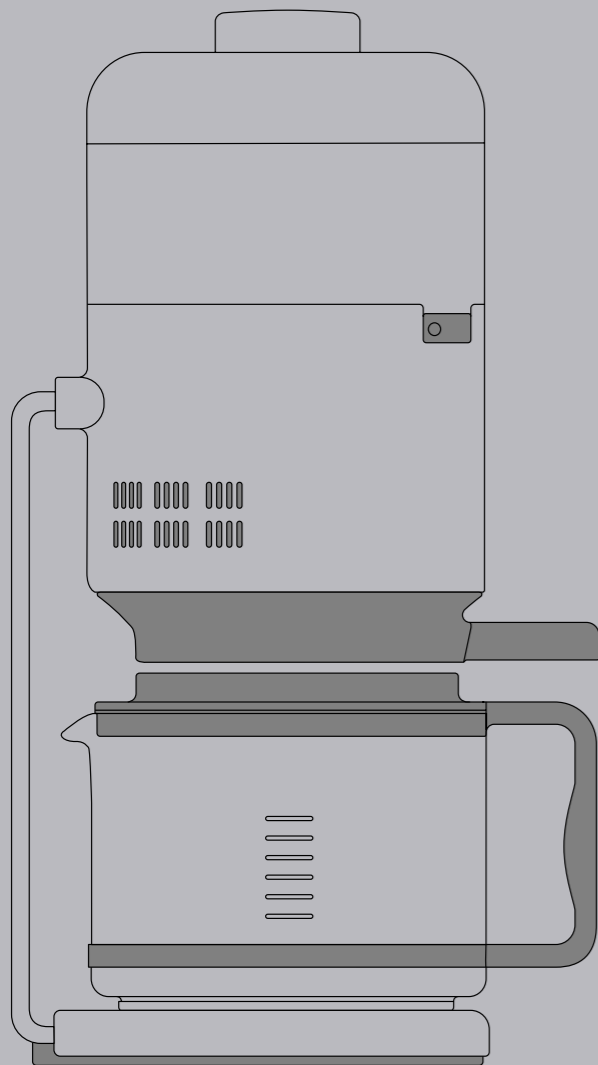
- My workplace creates an enjoyable environment to work in.
- My workplace is a place I'm proud to bring visitors to.

Purpose checklist

Your workplace purpose is your “we have workplaces because...”. It’s your ‘north star’ statement which defines your overarching objective. It’s your organisation’s version of ‘to allow the safe and efficient passage of passengers and their luggage’. If it hinges on ‘Community & culture’ then you have to decide where ‘Productivity’ happens. If it’s a mix, then you must understand the extent to which your employees collaborate versus the extent to which they focus. Define your ‘workplace why’.

- 01 —**
What is the overarching purpose of your workplace? What is it there to do?
- 02 —**
Is that purpose static for 3-5 years or is it likely to be more fluid?
- 03 —**
Have you considered variation in the purpose across different teams or lines of business?
- 04 —**
Do your employees understand how being in the office contributes to desired outcomes?

04 Function



Create the right blend
1972 – KF20 Coffee Machine

Work activities

We know from our prior research that employees are behaving in a far more playful way. Our 2022 report, ‘Purposeful Presence’, showed that employees are more thoughtful about how they divide their time across home and office, attending each with particular functional work activities in mind.

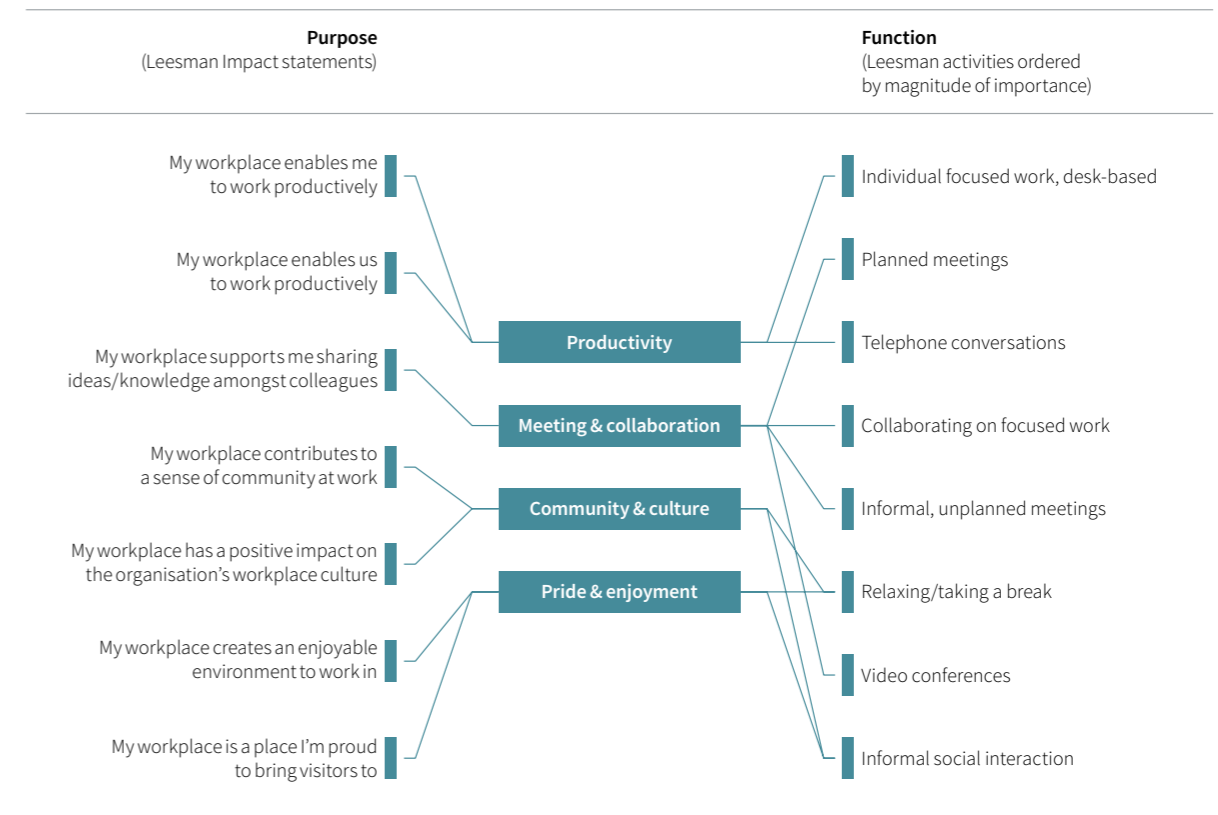
Organisations can use this to their advantage, by understanding and agreeing on which activities they expect or prefer employees to be doing in-person and ensuring that these are superbly supported.

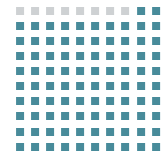
The research has allowed us to identify the most statistically common functional requirements of the post-pandemic workplace. Eight out of our 21 Workplace Experience Assessment standard activities typically register as important by the majority of respondents (> 49%) shown opposite in Figure 1. These work activities are likely to emerge as fundamentally important in most workplaces. These must be supported if employees are to report that the space meets their needs. It is equally important to acknowledge though that these will vary between business sector, organisations, and lines of business within those organisations. So, each organisation must establish its own workplace function hygiene factors.

Our data also shows that when an activity is brilliantly supported, it can directly influence the number of employees who attach importance to that activity. Employers should use this to their advantage in any strategy that seeks to magnetise rather than mandate employees back to the office.

Each of these functional requirements can be statistically mapped back to one of the purpose groupings, outlined on the next page.

Figure 1. The Workplace Reset framework: Purpose and Function





92%

Of respondents cited 'Individual focused work, desk-based' as the most important work activity

01 —

Individual focused work, desk-based

Statistically, this is the bedrock of the workplace, as shown by it being important to 92% of respondents. This is quiet, solo, concentrated work and it is crucial to a positive sense of personal productivity. It will include a myriad of typical knowledge worker duties and sits at the heart of almost all knowledge economy work. Workplaces that fail to support 'Individual focused work, desk-based' are failing the basic processing of information, problem solving, and the incubation of ideas.



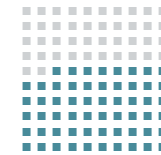
75%

Of respondents cited 'Planned meetings' as an important work activity

02 —

Planned meetings

The second most important function, cited by 75% of respondents as a key work activity, is 'Planned meetings'. These may or may not be creative in nature, but they are scheduled events that employees know about in advance and involve others. They have become increasingly more important throughout the pandemic as a result of distributed working. 'Planned meetings' enable collaboration through the sharing and dissemination of knowledge.



58%

Of employees cited 'Telephone conversations' as the third most important work activity

03 —

Telephone conversations

Third in importance to 58% of employees is 'Telephone conversations'. This activity is more important in some industries than others, such as engineering or banking, where quick 'yes or no' answers are required, but in almost all sectors, it is progressively reducing in importance as we move to video-first communication. 'Telephone conversations' enable and strengthen collaboration and creativity but first and foremost are perceived to support personal and collective productivity.



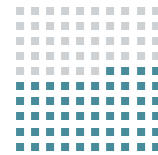
56%

Of respondents said that 'Collaborating on focused work' is a key activity for them

04 —

Collaborating on focused work

'Collaborating on focused work' ranks fourth by volume of importance, with 56% of respondents saying it is a key work activity for them. As a function, it is not bound to a specific environment, but it does require fewer distractions and benefits from privacy. Increasingly it may involve others who are remote so is as likely to be digital as face-to-face or hybrid. 'Collaborating on focused work' generates ideas, solves problems, and reinforces creativity.



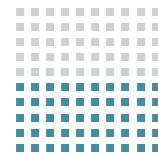
54%

Of respondents see 'Informal, unplanned meetings' as an important part of their work

05 —

Informal, unplanned meetings

These are spontaneous opportunities to share information and knowledge, thereby bolstering collaboration on a less formal basis. A total of 54% of respondents see it as an important part of their work. In offices, these meetings require space away from the desk, most likely in an acoustically-enclosed location but equally could be an impromptu video call at the request of a remote colleague.



50%

Important to half (50%), 'Relaxing/taking a break' has a statistically higher importance than in years preceding the pandemic

06 —

Relaxing/taking a break

Important to 50% of respondents, 'Relaxing/taking a break' now has a statistically higher importance than in years preceding the pandemic. The specific reasons for this are not self-evident, but perhaps it suggests that employees visiting the office are attaching an increased value to social time with their colleagues since working from home more. Like 'Informal social interactions', 'Relaxing/taking a break' aids social cohesion, cultural alignment and instils a sense of Pride & enjoyment.



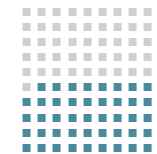
50%

At 50%, the importance of 'Video conferences' is climbing steadily

07 —

Video conferences

Unsurprisingly 'Video conferences' has increased in importance through the pandemic, but at 50% importance, organisations should be aware that this is climbing steadily. Its purpose is clear: Collaboration & connection. For a great experience, employees are likely to require privacy, especially given most have been used to the acoustic privacy of their homes. The impromptu nature of some calls offers a significant challenge to those working in open-plan offices, both for the person on the call and for potential disturbance to those nearby.



49%

Of respondents said that 'Informal social interaction' is important

08 —

Informal social interaction

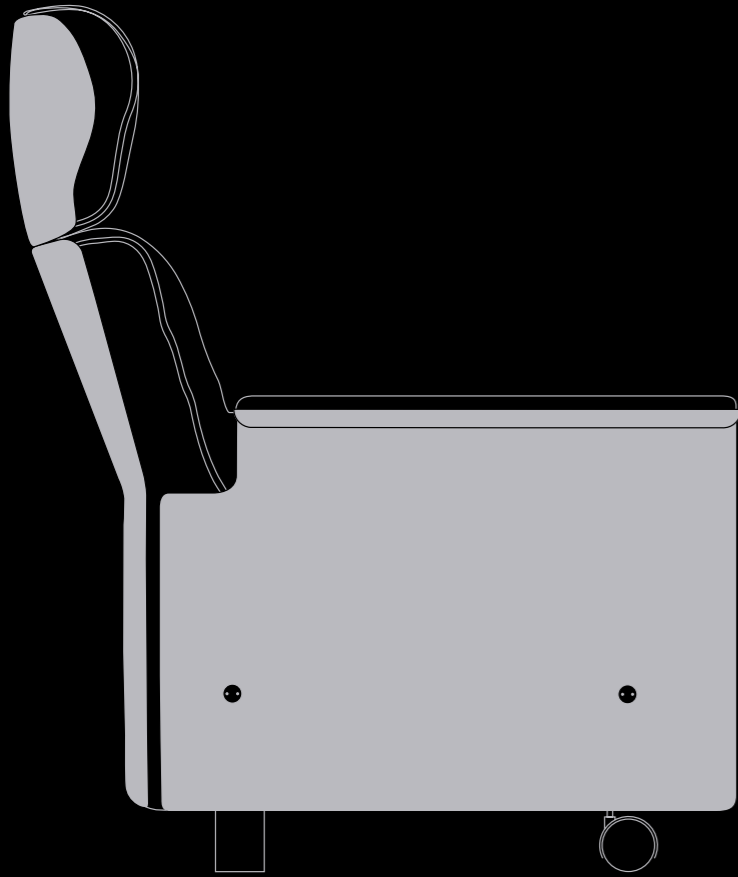
'Informal social interaction' is important to 49% of respondents. Its primary outcomes are building social ties, trust, camaraderie, friendship, and community. These interactions can be intentional, even if they are unplanned and help boost wellbeing, humanise the workplace and break down corporate barriers. As such, they play an important part in employees' mental and physical wellbeing. Employers are increasingly creating facilitated social events to encourage employees to come to offices.

Function checklist

This is where it gets more tangible and measurable. Can you describe what it is that employees will be doing in the workplace to support your purpose? Can you describe a typical working day for an individual contributor? Do you know how often they will be office-based and whether the mix of things in those days is defined to the things they will do remotely? And do you know how many employees have access to space that supports the work they might do away from the office?

- 01 —**
Which activities must your workplace support?
- 02 —**
Do you know how well these functions are supported at your employee's homes?
- 03 —**
Which activities make up a typical working day for employees and require the presence of others?
- 04 —**
What will you do to attract employees to use the workplace over their homes?

05 Form



Configure

1962 – 620 Chair Programme – High Back Modular Chair

Workplace features

The 19th century American Architect Louis Sullivan is widely accepted to have coined one of the most repeated tenets of design: *the design of any building or object must first and foremost allow for, and relate to, its intended function. Form should follow function.*

While homes were formed first for living, employees have successfully repurposed spare rooms, garages, sheds, lofts and odd corners of their homes around their individual and very personal functional work needs. And the form of the corporate office is often poor in comparison.

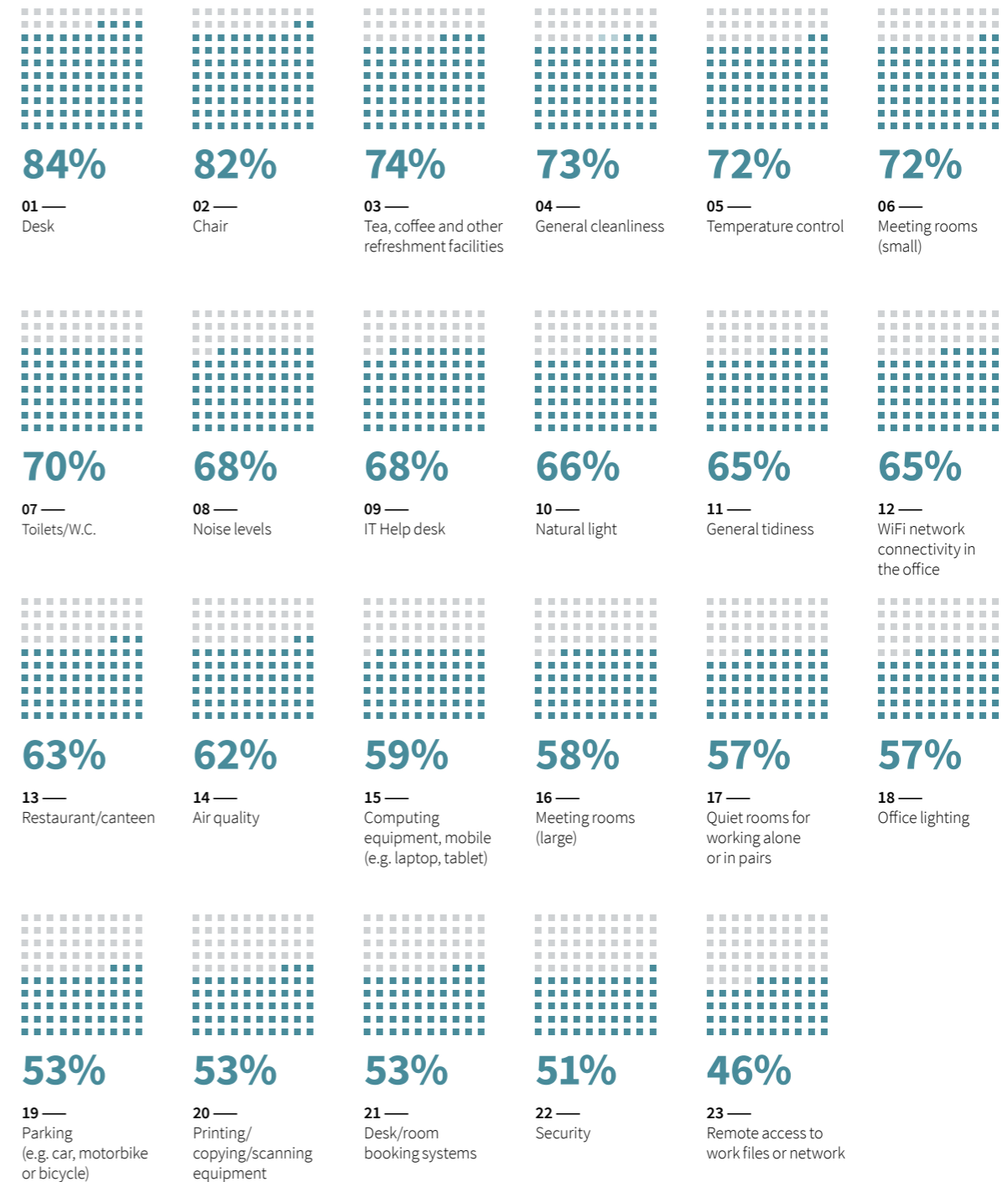
We know from our research over the last decade that employee satisfaction with the physical and service features that make up the total workplace experience is critical to success. To extract the critical factors that impact workplace experience in hybrid working, this study's research methodology focused on the features that had been selected as important by around half of the employees with an 'Office-leaning', 'Balanced hybrid', or 'Remote-leaning' hybrid profile.

The 23 physical and service features that emerged from this part of the study are shown in Figure 2 and are ranked by importance.

Since all of these features are important to a significant number of respondents using offices, organisations need to ensure that these features are delivered well. These should be seen as mission critical in a minimum viable office that offers the user a distinct benefit in being there.

It is also important to acknowledge that this list represents the views of a diverse sample of knowledge workers measured across a specific time frame. It is not intended to be used as a definitive template for designing any specific workplace. What is important may vary from organisation to organisation, role to role or team to team. There may be other activities and features that did not make the initial threshold used here but may, in fact, be important for specific employee groups or job families. So, while this data and the resulting frameworks must not be seen as a blueprint for every future office, they can certainly be used as a strong indicator of where investment in the interior physical space and service provision will deliver greater return on investment.

Figure 2. Importance of workplace features



n = 157,880, Q3 2021 – Q4 2022

The Leesman Research & Insights unit analysed the dynamics of the hybrid workplace by examining how 157,880 employees used different features to support the activities essential to their roles. Specifically, our study focused on understanding the statistical relationship between 8 important activities and 23 important features using random sampling, *Principal Component Analysis* (PCA), and logistic regression.

First, the PCA stage explored any natural clustering among the top 23 importance features shown in Figure 2. The analysis revealed six clear groups, which goes to show that employees who selected one feature from any cluster as important were also likely to use other features within that same cluster. The six clusters are: Furniture, Enclosed spaces, Technology, Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ), Facilities & Services and Food & Beverages.

Then, logistic regression modelling was used to test the relationship between a person's role (the activities they selected as important) and what they need from the workplace infrastructure (the features they indicate as important). This was done by five Leesman researchers using random samples of approximately 4,000 responses each, with results collated, compared and synthesised.

These findings map out the statistical relationships between workplace purpose, function, and form, shown in Figure 3. The critical part of this research was the inter-relationship that different features have with multiple different activities. Each tick shown at the intersection between these high-importance activities and features represents a statistically significant relationship. In total 77 statistically significant relationships were identified.

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Some of them, like the relationship between both 'Desk' and 'Chair' and 'Individual focused work, desk-based', are expected. Yet, many are surprising, like the multiple activities related to 'Quiet rooms for working alone or in pairs'.

On the other hand, 'Relaxing/taking a break' is the most demanding of the group. It is associated with 17 different features and failing to support this can relate to a cascade of negative consequences for the social fabric of an organisation around organisational outcomes such as Community & culture to Pride & enjoyment. So, focusing on any of these is a balancing act between different, and perhaps conflicting, organisational priorities.

The following sections explain the context behind each of the identified groupings in more detail.

Figure 3. The Workplace Reset framework and key findings

Purpose

– Impact

Function

– Activities

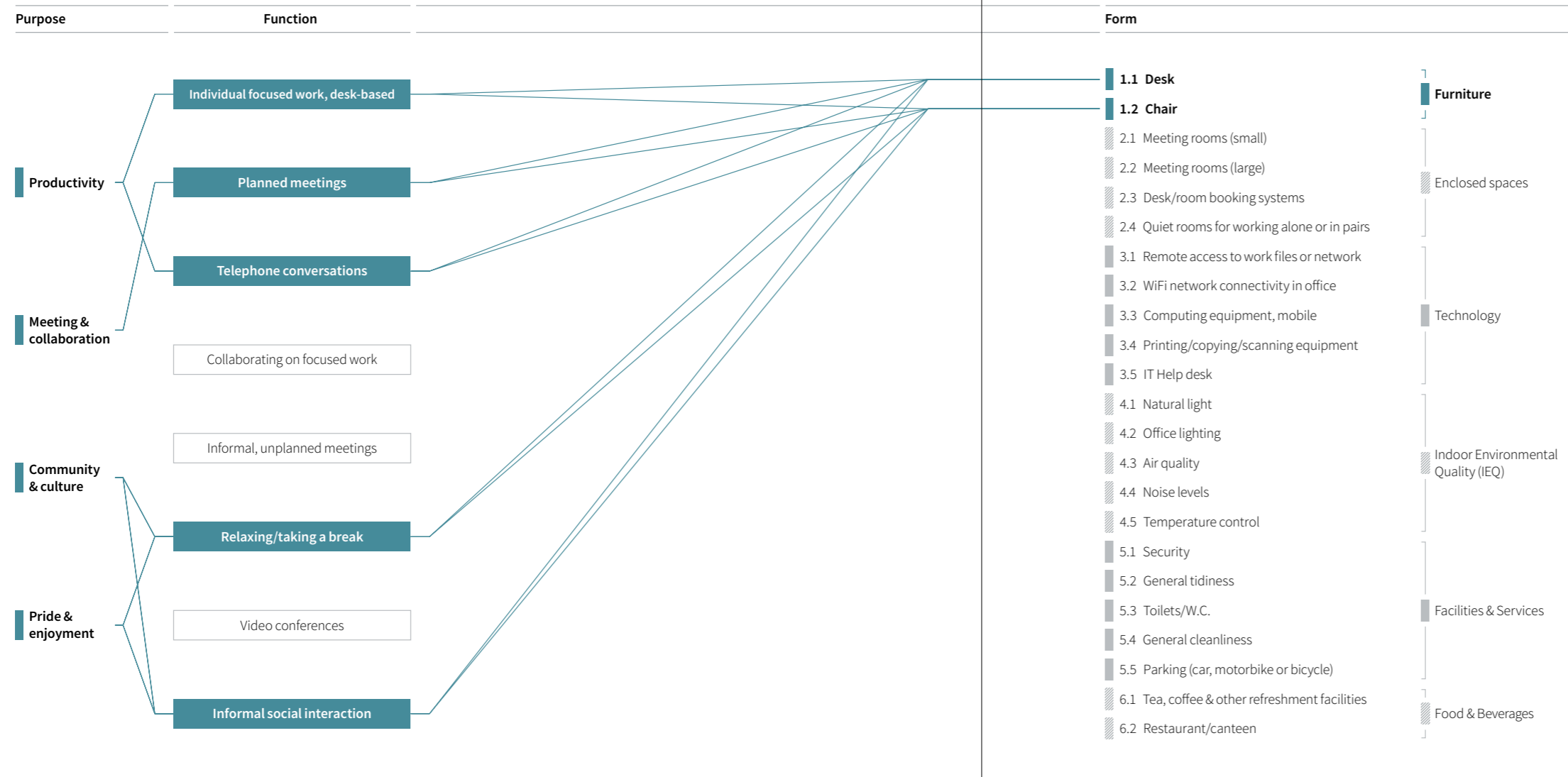
Form

– Features

				Productivity		Meeting & collaboration				Community & culture Pride & enjoyment	
				Individual focused work, desk-based	Telephone conversations	Collaborating on focused work	Informal, unplanned meetings	Planned meetings	Video conferences	Informal social interaction	Relaxing/ taking a break
				3 / 23	16 / 23	5 / 23	5 / 23	12 / 23	8 / 23	11 / 23	17 / 23
Furniture	1.1 Desk	5 / 8		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
	1.2 Chair	5 / 8		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
Enclosed spaces	2.1 Meeting rooms (small)	4 / 8			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	2.2 Meeting rooms (large)	4 / 8			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	2.3 Desk/room booking systems	6 / 8			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2.4 Quiet rooms for working alone or in pairs	6 / 8			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Technology	3.1 Remote access to work files or network	4 / 8			✓		✓	✓	✓		
	3.2 WiFi network connectivity in the office	3 / 8						✓	✓	✓	
	3.3 Computing equipment, mobile	3 / 8			✓			✓	✓		
	3.4 Printing/copying/scanning equipment	2 / 8			✓						✓
	3.5 IT Help desk	2 / 8			✓			✓			
Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ)	4.1 Natural light	4 / 8			✓	✓				✓	✓
	4.2 Office lighting	4 / 8			✓				✓	✓	✓
	4.3 Air quality	3 / 8			✓					✓	✓
	4.4 Noise levels	3 / 8		✓	✓						✓
	4.5 Temperature control	3 / 8			✓					✓	✓
Facilities & Services	5.1 Security	2 / 8			✓						✓
	5.2 General tidiness	3 / 8			✓					✓	✓
	5.3 Toilets/W.C.	2 / 8						✓			✓
	5.4 General cleanliness	4 / 8			✓			✓		✓	✓
	5.5 Parking (car, motorbike or bicycle)	2 / 8			✓						✓
Food & Beverages	6.1 Tea, coffee & other refreshment facilities	2 / 8								✓	✓
	6.2 Restaurant/canteen	1 / 8									✓

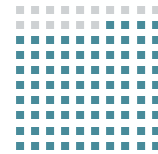
1.0 Furniture

Figure 4. Key activities related to 1.0 Furniture



- 1.1 Desk
- 1.2 Chair

Furniture includes just two workplace features, but they are the ones that most employees, across this study and Leesman’s database, indicate are important: ‘Desk’ and ‘Chair’ (84% and 82% importance). The bond between them is significant: 95% of the people who use the former also use the latter, and 97% of those who use a chair also use a desk. Unsurprisingly, the top activity that connects them is ‘Individual focused work, desk-based’: 79% of the people who use either a ‘Chair’ or ‘Desk’ also perform this activity as part of their role. Our research demonstrates that the contribution these two foundational blocks of workplace ergonomics provide are pivotal to success.



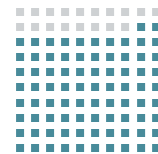
84%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Desk' is important

**1.1 —
Desk**

The five activities most likely to statistically predict if an employee will use a 'Desk' in the workplace are the same ones related to 'Chair', and even the order of their predictive strength is the same (Figure 4). This further shows that the generic term desk (like chair) may, in fact, refer to desks or tables located in various workplace settings that employees use for different activities. The proportion of people who select 'Desk' as important is higher among employees with more complex and collaborative profiles.

Since more than nine in 10 of the employees in the study (and our historical database) selected 'Individual focused work, desk-based' as important, it is critical that organisations understand it is not just the specification of the furniture that impacts employee satisfaction, but its configuration, planning density, proximity to noise disturbances, etc. Desks placed immediately adjacent to circulation pinch-points like elevator lobbies will struggle to give any user a favourable experience.



82%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Chair' is important

**1.2 —
Chair**

There are five activities that predict whether an employee will indicate they use a 'Chair' in the workplace with statistically significant accuracy. In descending order of their predictive power, they are: 'Individual focused work, desk-based', 'Relaxing/taking a break', 'Telephone conversations', 'Planned meetings', and 'Informal social interaction'.

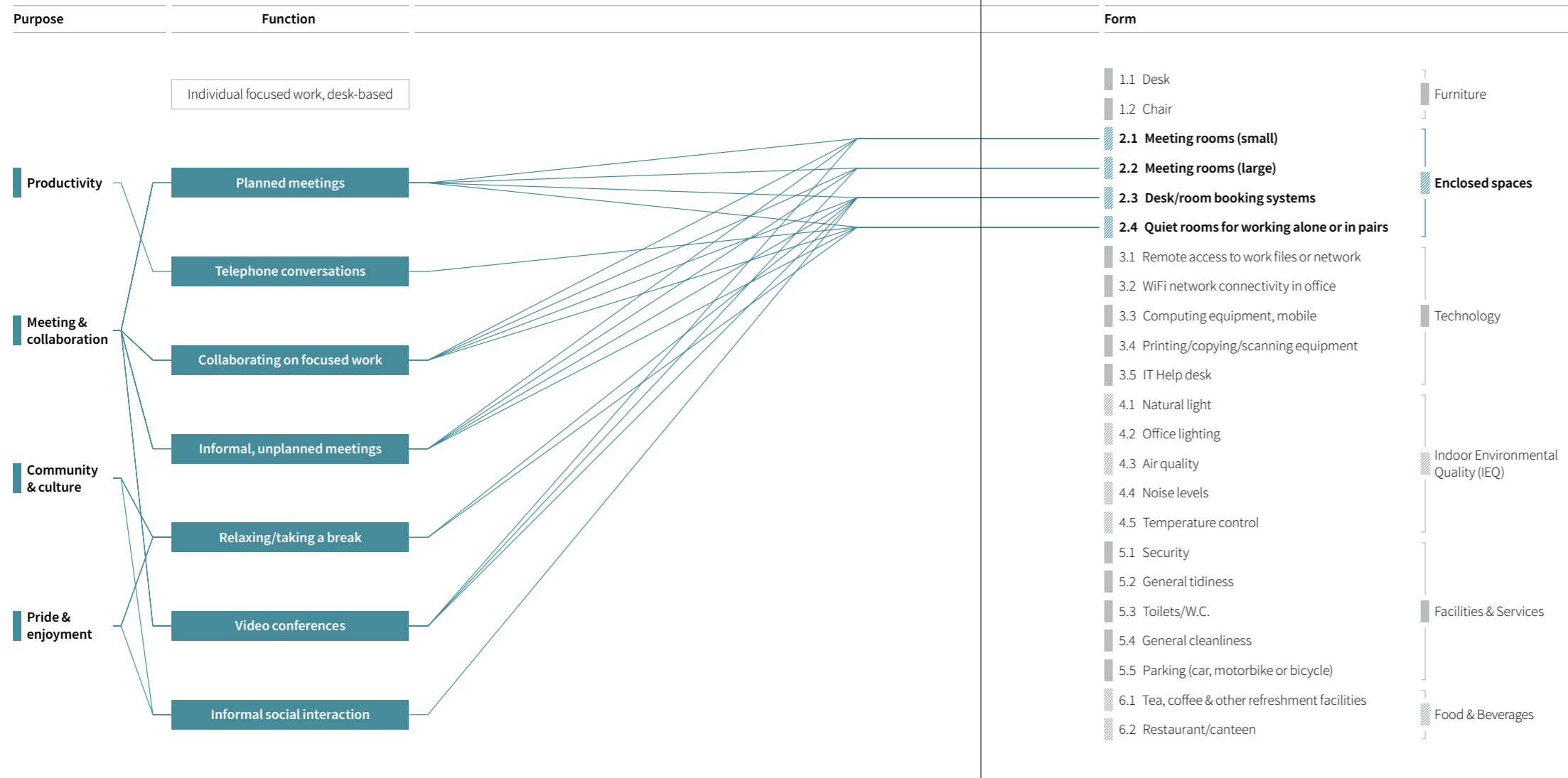
It is obvious why desk-based individual focused work is the strongest predictor of whether someone will use a chair. This activity is important to the highest proportion of employees (92% in the study sample, consistent with historical figures). But the statistical association with activities that take place in other settings shows that whether a desk chair, a café chair, a sofa or a stool, seating is an emotive topic.

Key takeaway —

Investing in high-quality furniture throughout the workplace environment may bring some of the widest benefits. Statistically they map to key organisational purposes like Productivity, Pride & enjoyment, Community & culture, and Meeting & collaboration. Detailed consideration should be given to the size, materials, orientation, acoustic treatment, proximity to circulation areas, etc. Furniture should also be 'business-like' and be fully considerate of all business attire, whether casual or formal.

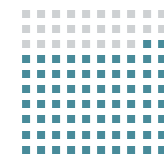
2.0 Enclosed spaces

Figure 5. Key activities related to 2.0 Enclosed spaces



- 2.1 Meeting rooms (small)
- 2.2 Meeting rooms (large)
- 2.3 Desk/room booking system
- 2.4 Quiet rooms for working alone or in pairs

Our statistical analysis demonstrates that enclosed meeting spaces are, in fact, some of the most in-demand and most complex types of space in the office landscape. Failing to get meeting rooms right will affect the large number of employees who rely on them for focus, connection, knowledge transfer, collaboration and creativity. Enclosed spaces contribute directly to all four of the purpose clusters (Productivity, Meeting & collaboration, Community & culture and Pride & enjoyment), so they warrant considerable thought, attention, and investment. And in a post-pandemic workplace, where video communication is the new normal, immediacy of access to these spaces will also be critical.



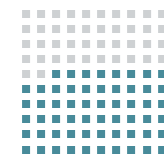
72%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Meeting rooms (small)' is important

2.1 — Meeting rooms (small)

The four activities in an employee's role that most accurately predict whether someone will use small meeting rooms are, in descending order: 'Planned meetings', 'Informal, unplanned meetings', 'Video conferences', and 'Collaborating on focused work'. Incidentally, all these four activities have become more important globally during the pandemic, albeit some more than others.

The importance of 'Planned meetings' at 75% remains the second highest activity in the Leesman Index and has increased by 3 percentage points (pp) since 2018-19. 'Video conferences' has increased by 12 pp to 50% in the same time period. Organisations should be acting on this change now. We would also point to previous research that found employees are more planful in the way that they attend and use workplaces. They come with particular purpose in mind and expect those activities to be better supported in the office than at home.



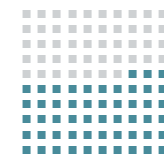
58%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Meeting rooms (large)' is important

2.2 — Meeting rooms (large)

For 'Meeting rooms (large)', the same four activities are statistically the strongest predictors as with 'Meeting rooms (small)', although with some minor adjustments to the order of importance. 'Video conferences' is slightly higher in the list (second strongest) and 'Informal, unplanned meetings' lower (third strongest).

Each of these activity-to-feature relationships are statistically significant, so the presence of any of these activities in a person's profile is a strong predictor that they will need access to meeting rooms of different sizes. Of course, for people whose profile includes three or four of them, like the collaborative 'Office-leaning' profile, dependence on high-quality meeting rooms multiplies exponentially.



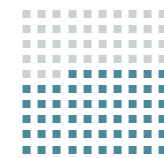
53%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Desk/room booking systems' is important

2.3 — Desk/room booking systems

'Desk/room booking systems' are important for 53% of the employees in the study (same as before the pandemic), but the array of activities related to this technology feature is much wider than anticipated. Six out of the eight most important activities across the study sample are significant predictors of whether an employee will use a desk or room booking system or not. They are, in descending order: 'Planned meetings', 'Informal, unplanned meetings', 'Informal social interaction', 'Video conferences', 'Relaxing/taking a break', and 'Collaborating on focused work'.

The hybrid workplace operates under new assumptions. And as per our previous 'Purposeful Presence' research, we know that employees are more planful about when they visit a workplace and the specific tasks they expect to undertake when there. We see this specifically in 'Planned meetings' but also in 'Unplanned meetings'. If the office is being promoted as a place for serendipitous interaction, it must also facilitate easy access to spaces to support such moments.



57%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Quiet rooms for working alone or in pairs' is important

2.4 — Quiet rooms for working alone or in pairs

This feature is situated across the realms of individual and teamwork. A pair of colleagues is a very small group, but a group nonetheless. By definition, they should provide acoustic privacy, but is there anything else? The activities that were significant predictors of whether employees used this type of space suggest a more complex picture: 'Relaxing/taking a break', 'Informal, unplanned meetings', 'Telephone conversations', 'Collaborating on focused work', and 'Planned meetings' all showing statistical linkages.

The fact that 'Relaxing/taking a break' tops the list of potential uses for quiet rooms suggests a bigger problem that the contemporary open-plan workplace may need to solve if it aims to attract employees back, such as the lack of spaces where employees can mentally refresh during the working day, alone. 'Telephone conversations' is perhaps the least surprising use of quiet rooms (which may also be phone booths). It is also one of the key activities related to productivity, so investing in adequate quiet rooms will likely reap multiple benefits. The use of quiet rooms for 'Planned meetings' and 'Collaborating on focused work' and not just impromptu meetings suggests they are also used for longer work sessions, like small meeting rooms. As such, ergonomics and acoustic privacy are paramount.

Key takeaway —

Meeting rooms are a critical component in the new minimum viable office. Designing meeting rooms and quiet rooms in the hybrid workplace needs to start from what the space is being used for — not just meetings, and not just considering those in-person. Meeting rooms must provide good acoustic privacy and ergonomics as basic requirements. Both small and large meeting rooms are high-importance features (72% and 58% importance across the sample), and the top use for both is ‘Planned meetings’.

A ‘one size fits all’ approach to the design of meeting spaces would fail to address the new ways of working developed in recent years. In the hybrid workplace, meeting rooms of all sizes are routinely used to connect and collaborate with people who are not physically present: that’s why ‘Video conferences’ is one of the four activities that predict whether someone will use meeting rooms in their workplace.

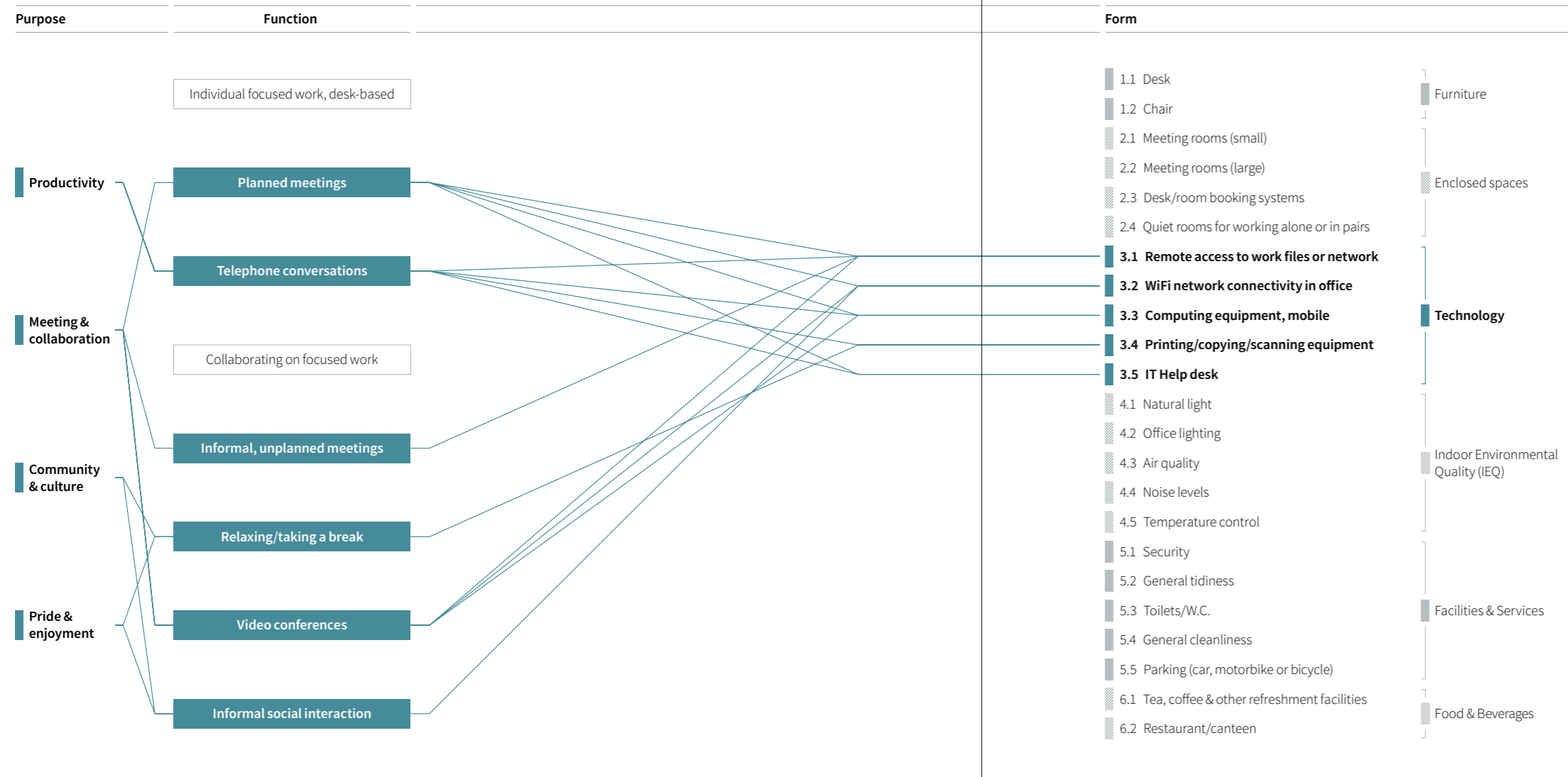
This raises a set of follow-up questions around the visual privacy and digital inclusivity needs of all meeting participants. Will every meeting room need a screen? Where will the screen be placed? Spaces for mixed-presence interactions need to enable all participants to feel fully included. But remote and in-person demands are different. Is the room arrangement and camera angle set to avoid visual distractions in the background for those remote participants dialling in?

The inclusive design of meeting rooms is rightly becoming a non-negotiable demand. Some of the questions that should be at the forefront of designers’ minds when it comes to meeting rooms include:

- Is there enough space to allow people to move around freely in a workshop scenario?
- Is there space for someone with a physical impairment, perhaps in a wheelchair, to move around (noting that those with physical or cognitive impairments increasingly prefer not to endure the commute and to stay remote)?
- What about the general layout and design of the space? Are the colours, fabric, and flooring over-stimulating?
- How is the lighting relative to the camera position for video conferencing hardware?
- How many seat positions in a room are rendered unusable as soon as a digital participant is asked to join?

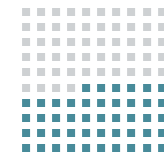
3.0 Technology

Figure 6. Key activities related to 3.0 Technology



- 3.1 Remote access to work files or network
- 3.2 WiFi network connectivity in the office
- 3.3 Computing equipment, mobile
- 3.4 Printing/copying/scanning equipment
- 3.5 IT Help desk

From cloud computing and big data analytics to mobile productivity software or remote collaboration tools, the relentless advancement of work technologies is rapidly transforming how people in the knowledge economy access, process, and co-create content. New ways in which people work together, communicate, and share information have been forged during the pandemic and have become the norm for many people. But is the workplace ready to accommodate these new ways? This section explores these new technology behaviours and extracts the implications for the workplace infrastructure.

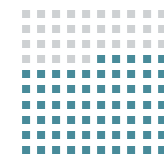


46%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Remote access to work files or network' is important

3.1 — Remote access to work files or network

Our study revealed four activities that predict, with statistically significant accuracy, whether an employee will indicate 'Remote access to work files or network' as an important feature in their workplace. They are, in descending order: 'Video conferences', 'Telephone conversations', 'Planned meetings', and 'Informal, unplanned meetings'. This makes for a fairly obvious list of activities, but it points to the rather evident relationship this has with the next most important technology feature: WiFi access.



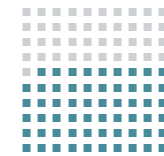
65%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'WiFi network connectivity in the office' is important

3.2 — WiFi network connectivity in office

The activities most likely to predict whether someone will state that 'WiFi network connectivity in office' is an important feature in the workplace are: 'Video conferences', 'Planned meetings', and 'Informal social interaction'. All three relationships are statistically significant.

This shows that in a hybrid workplace where significantly more employees are using laptops in their office and home-based work, great 'WiFi network connectivity in office' is non-negotiable. The colleague receiving an impromptu video call at their open plan desk, and wanting to avoid disturbing colleagues carrying out deep concentrative work, will increasingly expect to be able to pick up the laptop and walk to an adjacent acoustically private space without loss of connection.



59%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Computing equipment, mobile (e.g. laptop, tablet)' is important

3.3 — Computing equipment, mobile

Mobile computing equipment (laptops and tablets) are important to fewer employees than you might expect. But they do have a statistically significant relationship with 'Planned meetings', 'Video conferences' and 'Telephone conversations'.

This adds another dimension to workplace behaviour already hinted at by the high degree of association of these activities with WiFi and remote access to work files: in a hybrid world, communication and collaboration are increasingly mobile.



53%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Printing/copying/scanning equipment' is important

3.4 — Printing/copying/scanning equipment

In an increasingly digital and paperless age, it is surprising to see that more than half of employees see 'Printing/copying/scanning equipment' is important in the workplace and that they statistically map with activities such as 'Telephone conversations' and 'Relaxing/taking a break'.

Both relationships are statistically significant, but they shouldn't be interpreted as depicting causality. For example, perhaps one benefit of being in the office is ready access to printers rarely available at home. And that printing content to review away from the desk, in a different area, might well be seen by some as taking a break from screen-based work. It is also possible that in some roles, having printed material available to hand prior to a telephone call is part of an employee's work process.



68%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'IT Help desk' is important

**3.5 —
IT Help desk**

'Planned meetings' and 'Telephone conversations' are the two activities that predict whether someone will find the 'IT Help desk' important at a statistically significant level. We know from the Enclosed spaces section that both activities are linked to the use of 'Quiet rooms for working alone or in pairs' and that 'Desk/room booking systems' are used whenever possible. The 'IT Help desk' is very likely part of this dynamic.

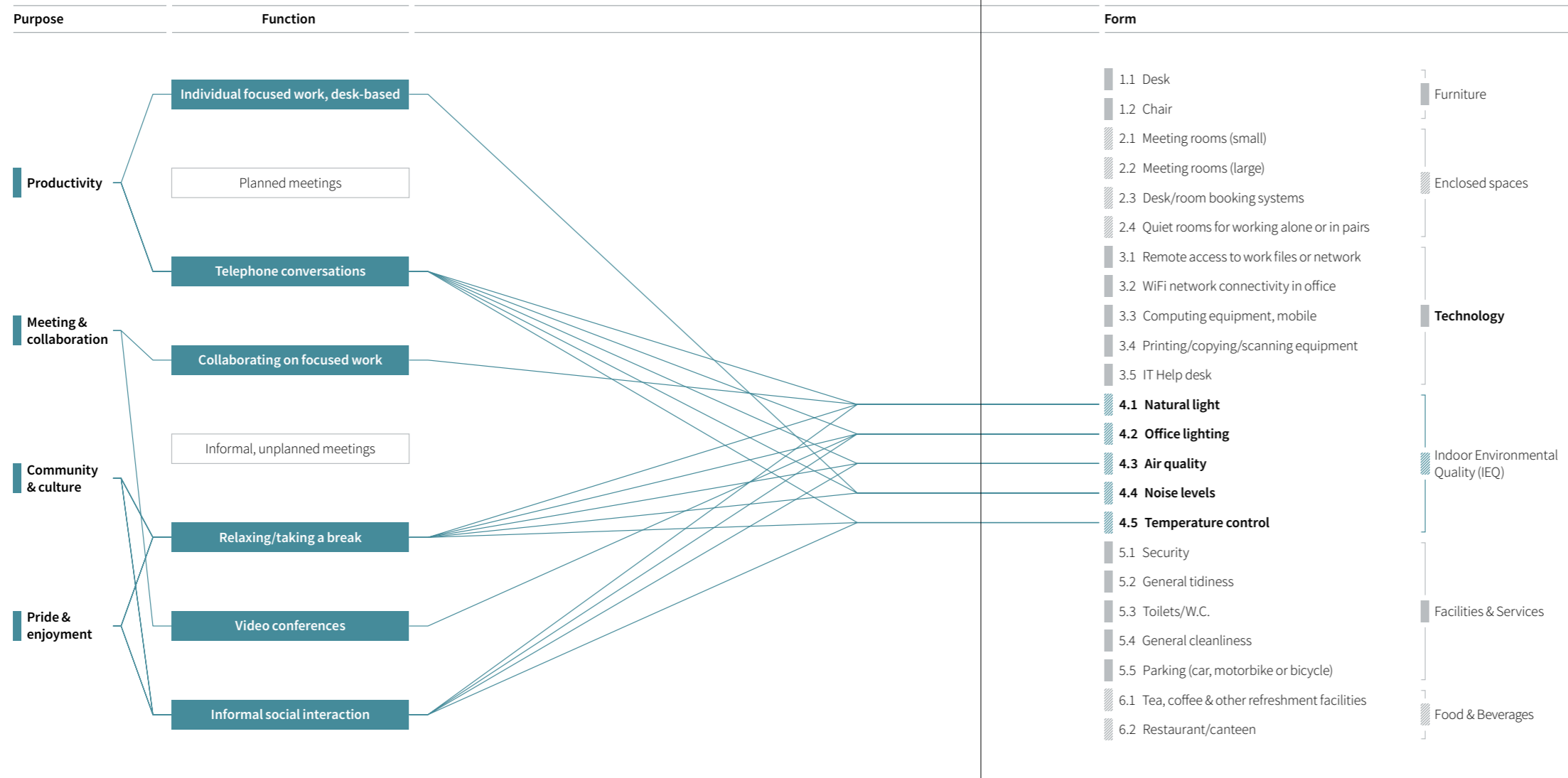
This relationship to 'Planned meetings' could also be explained by the frequency that 'IT Help desks' are needed to unblock problems with digital collaboration or connectivity in meeting rooms. It is not unfair to say that we are still some way off a 'one click' digital connectivity in most meeting spaces.

Key takeaway —

Our statistical analysis revealed the numerous and sometimes unexpected ways technology supports employees' work in the post-pandemic, hybrid workplace. Expect that most activities connecting two or more people, including meetings, 'Telephone conversations' or 'Video conferences', require great WiFi and remote access to work files and are likely to be conducted on a mobile computing device. Understanding the central role that technology is playing in most employees' working life and designing the workplace around these needs will help support outcomes such as Productivity, Meeting & collaboration, Community & culture, and also Pride & enjoyment.

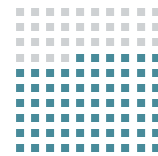
4.0 Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ)

Figure 7. Key activities related to 4.0 Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ)



- 4.1 Natural light
- 4.2 Office lighting
- 4.3 Air quality
- 4.4 Noise levels
- 4.5 Temperature control

Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) is the collective term for a long list of workplace features that can have a significant impact on workplace experience. A number are covered in the Leesman methodology and five emerged through this research project as having statistical relationships with key work activities. They are 'Natural light', 'Office lighting', 'Air quality', 'Noise levels' and 'Temperature control'. This study has shown their critical impact on key organisational outcomes and, even more so post-pandemic, the impact on the willingness of employees to use the office over their own homes.



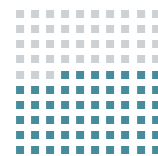
66%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Natural light' is important

4.1 — Natural light

Natural light has always ranked high in importance to employees in the Leesman Index. What is interesting in this study are the particular work activities that predict with significant precision whether an employee will select 'Natural light' as important to the work they do. They are: 'Relaxing/taking a break', 'Informal social interaction', 'Telephone conversations', and 'Collaborating on focused work'.

The exact reasons for these linkages are not self-evident, but for the first two perhaps it talks to the simple preference to relax and socially interact in lighter, more 'airy' spaces, or indeed, outdoors. It might also relate to views of the outside. While this is not an area considered in the Leesman methodology, it is something that numerous other studies have shown.



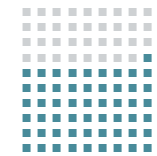
57%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Office lighting' is important

4.2 — Office lighting

Like natural light, poor office lighting is known to affect health. This study shows it can also erode important organisational outcomes. 'Relaxing/taking a break', 'Telephone conversations', 'Video conferences', and 'Informal social interaction' are four activities that predict with statistical significance whether an employee will state 'Office lighting' is an important feature.

We believe particular attention is needed here to the impact of poor lighting on video conference participants, especially in smaller rooms and 'phone booths' where ceiling lighting might be limited to one fitting. Well-considered lighting ensures participants' faces and expressions are clearly visible on camera; otherwise, communication and engagement are likely to suffer.



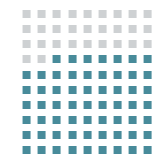
62%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Air quality' is important

4.3 — Air quality

Poor air quality and the presence of odours in the workplace are at the very least highly emotive. In the shadow of the pandemic, employees are also more aware of air quality. Three work activities show strong statistical connections with 'Air quality' and are the same for 'Temperature control': 'Relaxing/taking a break', 'Telephone conversations', and 'Informal social interaction'. All these relationships are statistically significant, and the order is the same for both features.

Employers looking to willingly attract their teams back to the corporate workplace are contending here with the much greater control employees have over their personal comfort at home. Where opening a window for a blast of fresh air is much more likely to be in their full control than in a new highly controlled and engineered modern workplace.



68%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Noise levels' is important

4.4 — Noise levels

More than two thirds of employees cite 'Noise levels' as an important workplace feature, and there is a strong statistical link with three key work activities, in descending order of their predictive strength: 'Telephone conversations', 'Relaxing/taking a break', and 'Individual focused work, desk-based'. This reinforces previous research that acoustic performance in the workplace is associated with concentration but also with wellbeing and supporting employees' ability to mentally refresh when taking a break.

Yet despite its recognised importance, employee satisfaction with 'Noise levels' remains embarrassingly problematic, with the ability to work productively the first to suffer. The biggest difference between employees who are satisfied with workplace noise levels and those who aren't is the extent to which they agree that 'Their workplace enables me to work productively'. Employers wanting to attract employees back need to support all their work-related needs. For most workplaces this will mean a dramatic reappraisal of the acoustic privacy needed for focused, concentrative work.



72%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Temperature control' is important

4.5 — Temperature control

Just like 'Air quality', there are three work activities that show strong statistical connections with 'Temperature control': 'Relaxing/taking a break', 'Telephone conversations', and 'Informal social interaction'. All these relationships are statistically significant.

Minor shifts in office temperatures can create severe discomfort, leading to productivity losses for both individual and group work. Again, employees can exercise far greater control over the temperature at home, where they can align it with their personal preference without fear of criticism from colleagues whose preferences are different.

Key takeaway —

Workplace IEQ parameters are usually seen as a set of hygiene factors often treated as a tick box exercise. But our statistical analysis revealed that their implications go far deeper into the work life of employees and social fabric of an organisation. Key relationships to take note of include:

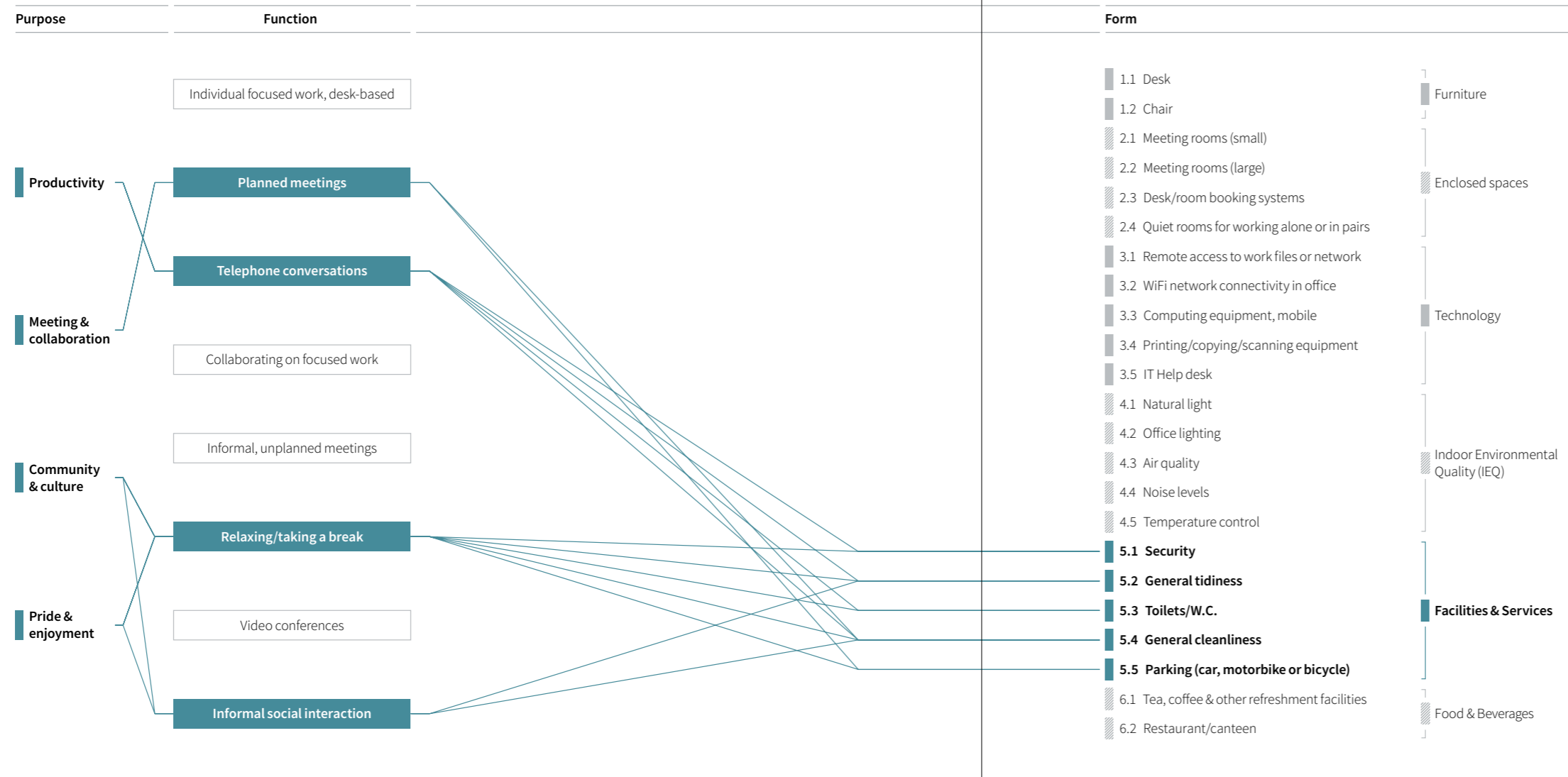
- 'Telephone conversations' and 'Relaxing/taking a break' are linked to all five IEQ parameters.
- Both 'Natural light' and 'Office lighting' are essential for supporting the interconnected world of hybrid work (for example video or telephone calls) but also in creating an environment where colleagues can take a break and socialise.
- Acoustic privacy is linked to 'Individual focused work, desk-based' and 'Telephone conversations' as expected, but it is also a necessary component in 'Relaxing/taking a break'.

Through their role in supporting six out of the eight high-importance activities examined in this study, they can impact all four purpose outcomes: Productivity, Meeting & collaboration, Community & culture, and Pride & enjoyment.

But that's not all. Employees can fully control the IEQ parameters of their home working environment, as opposed to the workplace where they are hard to adjust. As such, keeping IEQ to optimum levels throughout the entire workplace has now become truly non-negotiable.

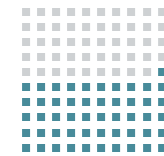
5.0 Facilities & Services

Figure 8. Key activities related to 5.0 Facilities & Services



- 5.1 Security
- 5.2 General tidiness
- 5.3 Toilets/W.C.
- 5.4 General cleanliness
- 5.5 Parking

Facilities and services have long played an understated but crucial role in workplace experience, too often the victim of targeted tactical cost cutting. But the study reveals a new side to the story, showing the statistical link to collaboration and connection, wellbeing and enjoyment, and furthering organisational and workplace culture. Once again, it is worth remembering the way in which these facilities and services are delivered has ripple effects through key organisational outcomes, and one of the aspects that suffers most is Pride & enjoyment. This will be key in motivating employees to choose to work from their corporate offices instead of their homes.



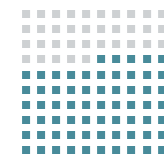
51%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Security' is important

5.1 — Security

There are two activities that predict whether someone will select 'Security' as an important feature in their workplace, and they are: 'Relaxing/taking a break', and 'Telephone conversations'. Both are statistically significant.

The relationship between these activities and this feature is more likely to be circumstantial than causal, although it might relate to the security measures that facilitate or impede access to and from a building where employees routinely come and go to take a break, grab some refreshments, etc.



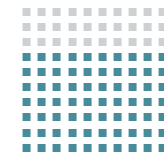
65%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'General tidiness' is important

5.2 — General tidiness

Employees for whom 'General tidiness' is important are highly likely to select the following activities as part of their role: 'Relaxing/taking a break', 'Telephone conversations', and 'Informal social interaction'. All three activity-to-feature relationships are significant. The presence of telephone conversations is not easily explained and may again be circumstantial, where perhaps 'Relaxing/taking a break' and 'Informal social interaction' relate to how employees expect to find those spaces.

And like many of the categories in this section, it is worth remembering that at home, employees are likely to have full control over how their space is cleaned and tidied compared to the office, especially in offices where desks are not assigned to individuals. Therefore, our post-pandemic awareness of tidiness and cleanliness may have increased.



70%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Toilets/W.C.' is important

5.3 — Toilets/W.C.

Toilet facilities are obviously essential workplace infrastructures. It is perhaps more surprising that only 70% selected them as important. But those employees who did indicate 'Toilets/W.C.' are important also have a high statistical likelihood of selecting 'Relaxing/taking a break' and 'Planned meetings' as important activities for their role. A further illustration that just because a feature is statistically related to an activity doesn't mean they are used for these activities. The same is likely for 'Parking'.



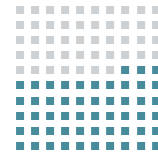
73%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'General cleanliness' is important

5.4 — General cleanliness

Employees for whom 'General cleanliness' is important are highly likely to select the same activities as those under 'General tidiness' but with the addition of 'Planned meetings'. This shows that maintaining tidiness and cleanliness throughout the workplace has a number of implications on employees' workplace experience, criss-crossing all four purpose outcomes: Productivity, Meeting & collaboration, Community & culture, and Pride & enjoyment. Again, the rise of unassigned seating strategies could very well be making employees more aware of the cleanliness of spaces used by someone else just hours or minutes before.

In a subgroup of almost 60 buildings with more than 500 employees in each building, we noted that general cleanliness and pride of the workplace were correlated. Buildings where satisfaction with general cleanliness was high tended to include higher proportions of employees stating they felt proud to bring visitors there and vice versa.



53%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Parking (car, motorbike or bicycle)' is important

5.5 —

Parking (car, motorbike or bicycle)

Parking remains an important workplace feature in some markets. Those who selected 'Parking' as important were statistically likely to have selected 'Relaxing/taking a break' and 'Telephone conversations' as important activities. Incidentally, the same two activities predicted whether 'Security' is important as well.

Key takeaway —

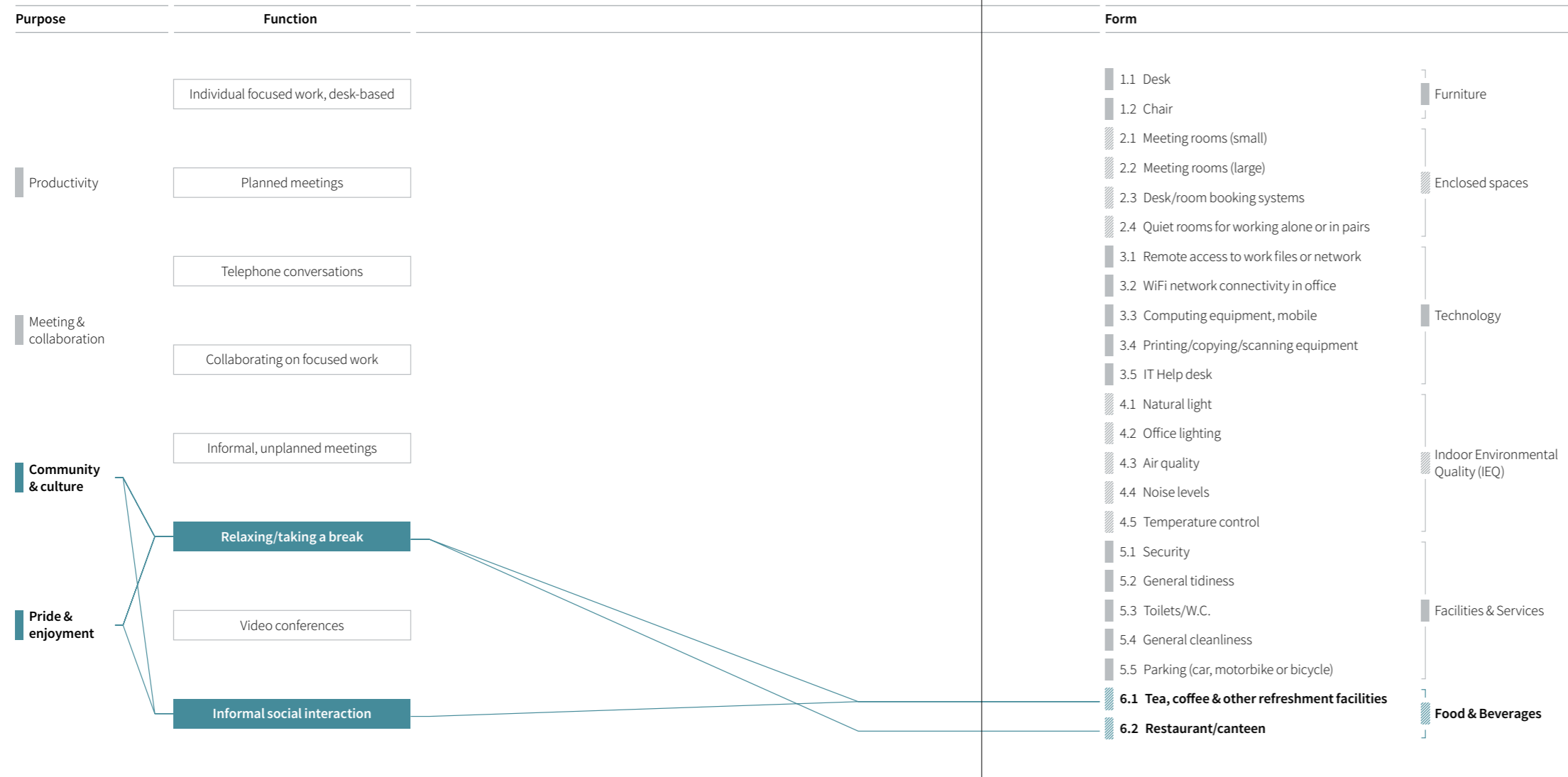
Facilities and services are an understated component of the workplace infrastructure, but our analysis revealed they are in many ways the backbone of employee experience. They are used by employees for a diverse array of functions:

- Participating in meetings
- Communicating and exchanging information via telephone conversations
- Connecting to colleagues
- Relaxing/taking a break

Through their role in supporting these high-importance activities, facilities and services impact all four purpose outcomes: Productivity, Meeting & collaboration, Community & culture, and Pride & enjoyment. As a result, failing to provide high-quality facilities and services is likely to attract a great number of negative consequences, with sense of pride in the workplace likely to be affected the most.

6.0 Food & Beverages

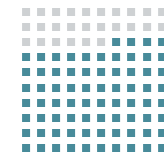
Figure 9. Key activities related to 6.0 Food & Beverages



- 6.1 Tea, coffee and other refreshment facilities
- 6.2 Restaurant/canteen

Underestimating or downplaying the importance of food and beverage facilities in the post-pandemic workplace could have dire consequences for employers. Typically ranked amongst the five most important workplace services, employees attach huge emotive weight in the presence and quality.

In addition, the study shows they also have the important task of creating a setting where workplace culture and a sense of community can flourish. Well-designed hospitality facilities provide an additional perk for organisations to attract and retain talent. However, they can also pose a huge risk: when poorly designed or maintained, they profoundly affect employee morale and pride.



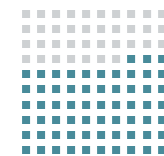
74%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Tea, coffee and other refreshment facilities' is important

**6.1 —
Tea, coffee & other refreshment facilities**

Important to 74% of employees, 'Tea, coffee and other refreshments facilities' are statistically related to 'Relaxing/taking a break' and 'Informal social interaction'. Whilst that seems perfectly predictable, it is important to note their link back to both organisational outcomes: Community & culture and Pride & enjoyment. In workplaces where the average satisfaction with 'Tea, coffee & other refreshment facilities' was lower than 50%, around half of the employees thought their workplace creates an enjoyable environment to work in (53%), contributes to a sense of community at work (54%), or has a positive impact on workplace culture (55%).

In workplaces where the average satisfaction with this feature was over 50%, the proportions were 68-69%, higher by 13 to 16 pps. Pride suffered the most across all impact statements: 44% across the workplaces in the low satisfaction group, 19 pps lower (63%). This suggests that hospitality and food and beverage facilities have a particularly potent role in the workplace ecosystem.



63%

Of employees indicated that the feature 'Restaurant/canteen' is important

**6.2 —
Restaurant/canteen**

While 'Restaurant/canteen' has a slightly lower importance than other refreshments facilities, it is still important to two in three employees in most organisations. Statistically it maps directly to 'Relaxing/taking a break'.

The data also suggest that it may also remain a hugely un-tapped resource. Both 'Tea, coffee & other refreshment facilities' and 'Restaurant/canteen' should provide employees access to essential amenities like food, beverages, and snacks. This nourishment helps support their productivity but should do more in encouraging employees to take a break and connect, or for 'Informal, unplanned meetings'. As a result, they should be seen as infrastructure that actively supports personal and collective productivity.

Key takeaway —

Food and beverage facilities help employees to maintain energy and productivity throughout the day, but their biggest impact may be on the social dimensions of work and workplace. Our study has revealed that 'Restaurant/canteen' settings and 'Tea, coffee & other refreshment facilities' are primarily associated with 'Relaxing/taking a break' and 'Informal social interaction' and more could be done to ensure that these activities are better supported.

It is clear that currently, the central role of these functions is in maintaining the social fabric of the organisation, and a drop in the quality of food and beverage facilities could damage workplace Community & culture, but also Pride & enjoyment.

Form checklist

Having established why you will have workplaces and what exactly your teams will be doing in those spaces, you can now determine the types of infrastructure needed to support them carrying out those activities. This stage is about understanding the contribution the individual componentry makes to overall success. This is about recognising the importance of key pieces of infrastructure and investing proportionately. It is about thinking deeply around how to deliver the best return on experience investment.

- 01 —**
Do your workplaces meet employee expectations?
- 02 —**
Do you know how often prioritised functional activities will occur?
- 03 —**
Are your acoustically private spaces designed for outstanding experience (in person & remote)?
- 04 —**
For video-first teams, do you have enough private spaces available?
- 05 —**
Do you have room & desk booking technologies to plan office days in advance?
- 06 —**
Do you offer food & beverages and an environment that encourages informal social interaction and/or unplanned meetings?

Good design

We have included a series of visual references in this research guide that are drawn from products designed by the renowned German designer Dieter Rams.

Born in 1932, Rams' work is most closely associated with the products he designed for consumer electronics giant Braun, and specialist furniture company Vitsø. His pared-back functionalist approach to modernism was the result of a guiding belief in "less, but better". He is quoted as stating that "Indifference towards people and the reality in which they live is actually the one and only cardinal sin in design."

Today his products sit in design and art museums as icons of pure simplicity and credited as inspiring modern-day giants like Sir Jony Ive of Apple. And his ten principles of good design hang in design studios all over the world.

Dieter Rams' ten principles for good design:

- 01 — Good design is innovative
- 02 — Good design makes a product useful
- 03 — Good design is aesthetic
- 04 — Good design makes a product understandable
- 05 — Good design is unobtrusive
- 06 — Good design is honest
- 07 — Good design is long-lasting
- 08 — Good design is thorough down to the last detail
- 09 — Good design is environmentally-friendly
- 10 — Good design is as little design as possible

B Corp

Leesman is proud to be a certified B Corp organisation. To us, this is more than just gaining the certification. It is an opportunity to use our business as a force for good – to ensure everything we do, both internally and externally, meets the highest standards of social and environmental performance.



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