



# Returning to the post COVID Office.

Leveraging the workspace ecosystem.



## Contents

- 03 Embracing the future of work
- 05 The Home
- 09 The Office
- 13 The Hub Office
- 17 Designing your future workspace ecosystem



# Returning to the post COVID Office - leveraging the workspace ecosystem

The global pandemic has disrupted the way we work and will have a lasting and sustainable effect on the way people want to work going forward. COVID has forced businesses around the world to rethink the way work is being done, challenging them to find new, agile ways to communicate and interact. Work activities will increasingly be done where people feel they can perform best, whilst people's work-life balance will only increase in importance.

## Embracing the future workspace ecosystem

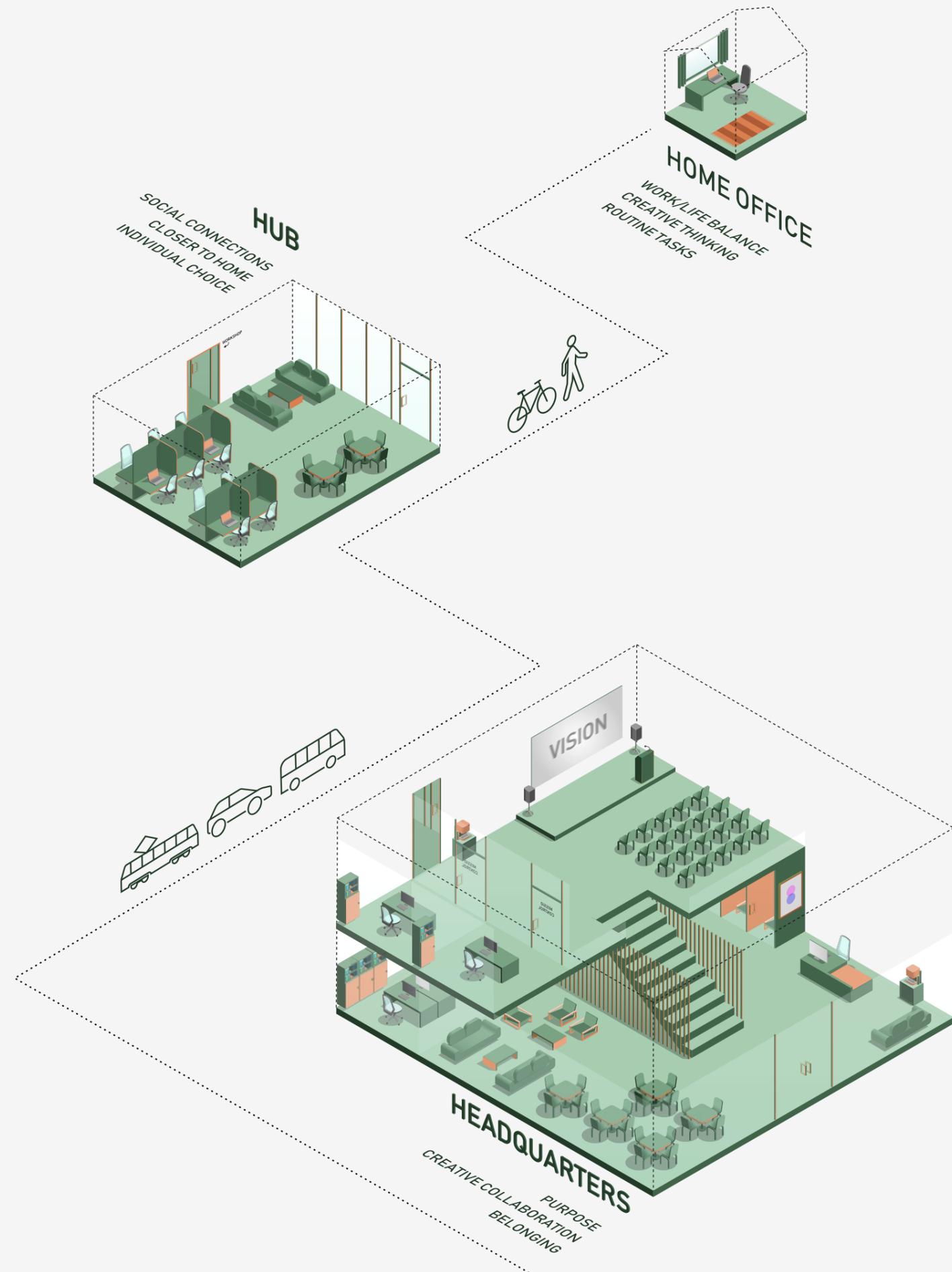
This shift from having all work done in one place presents organisations with a unique opportunity to reimagine their physical workspaces, creating an environment more suited to the new working patterns of employees, whilst taking advantage of the many benefits to be had from a more distributed workforce, including increased productivity, reduced expenses and access to a global pool of talent.



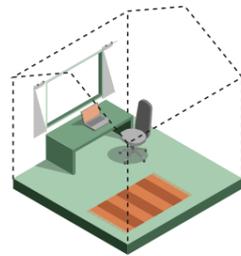
9 out of 10 people want flexibility in where and when they work\*

Businesses will, however, have to overcome several challenges in order to fully embrace and efficiently utilise this new hybrid way of working, especially when it comes to redesigning the workspace environments. It's not simply a case of offering employees the freedom to work from wherever they want to, but rather to assess which environments are best suited to which particular work tasks and to reshape those spaces to provide the best working conditions to enhance productivity, wellbeing and happiness.

In this document we highlight three types of workspace - the office, the home and the 'hub' - that we see as playing a significant role in the future, offer some practical advice on how to successfully transition to these new ways of working, and explore the benefits and challenges faced by companies when adapting their current workspace ecosystem.



# Home office - remote working 2.0



Remote work will be one of the more significant legacies of the pandemic. Not only has it been proven to be as productive as working from the office for many tasks, it has provided workers with greater autonomy over how they plan their day, removed the stress and expenses of the daily commute and offered a chance to redress the work/life balance. It has also allowed businesses to access a wider pool of talent less reliant on geographic location, offered a chance to reduce office space size, and even lowered staff turnover rates. With the positives, it has also brought a range of challenges, including a disparity in suitable home workspaces for employees, and a feeling of isolation for the more socially inclined individuals.



83% of respondents said their home environment enables them to work productively\*

Prior to 2020, relatively few companies had fully fleshed out working from home policies, and even now, few have formally caught up. For remote work to be sustainable this needs to change, and companies will have to develop a more structured approach, not only to maintain high levels of productivity but also to ensure the health and wellbeing of workers.

## What works at home?

Creating a sustainable home workspace relies upon understanding what types of activities are best performed when working remotely, and constructing an environment to best support those tasks. Surveying over 180,000 people in 90 countries, The Leesman Group found that the most important work activity people were doing at home was individual, desk based, focused work, with planned meetings and collaboration on focused work coming in second and third. Most workers and businesses who have adopted remote work patterns can relate to these findings, and it lays out a fairly straight forward set of demands when it comes to designing an appropriate workspace.

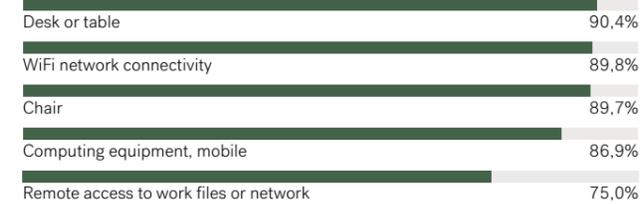
## Building procedures

Companies who expect employees to work from home at least one day a week should start with a standard ergonomic risk assessment of their employee's home workspaces. Preferably this is to be done in person, but it can also be done via video call. In many countries this is a legal requirement anywhere that a business asks an employee to work (as opposed to those who volunteer), but is a law that has been relaxed in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic. As home working becomes more long term, organisations should begin adding these risk assessments to their standard procedures.

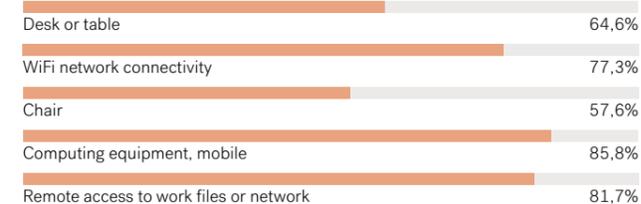
If you are unsure on the current laws, you can find a wealth of information [>>>here<<](#).



## TOP 5 Importance (%)



## TOP 5 Satisfaction (%)



## The right tools

The immediate workstation of the individual should be the most pressing concern of the employer, ensuring staff have access to comfortable ergonomic seating suitable for the tasks and length of time spent seated. This needs to be paired with a desk or work surface of a suitable height to match the chair and employee.

Tasks are predominantly completed on a computer, so providing appropriate equipment is also necessary, with a separate screen and a peripheral mouse and keyboard to reduce injury caused by craning over a laptop. And in order for staff to

for staff to communicate effectively, access to collaboration software and digital communication tools such as headphones and a camera should be provided.

A significant challenge for businesses can be a lack of space in an employee's home, with a sizable proportion of those working from home without a dedicated work area. In this instance, an employer can provide furniture which blends into the home aesthetic, such as chairs with colourful fabrics or slim tables made from wood or veneer. This will enhance the working environment without creating an "office feel" in the home.

## Positive benefits

- more autonomy for workers
- greater flexibility
- improved work / life balance
- reduced staff turnover
- reduced need for office space
- less commute stress
- wider talent pool less reliant on geographical location

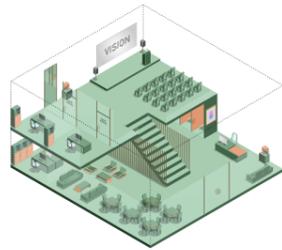
## Challenges

- disparity in suitable home workspaces
- employees can feel isolated
- inadequate furniture can be damaging to health and wellbeing, as well as productivity
- requires technology to maintain communication with colleagues
- requires employee trust



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# The office - reimagedined



COLLABORATION



INDIVIDUAL



TOOLS



CONVENIENCE

With remote work firmly the domain of private focused work, the office will have to adapt to accommodate new working patterns and optimise the use of space available. Cash strapped companies may see this as a great opportunity to downsize and reduce expenses, but it is also the perfect chance for businesses to reimagine their office workspace. Organisations that fully embrace this new way of working have to opportunity to build an experience rich office that enhances company culture and creates a sense of community and belonging. However, businesses will also have to learn to manage occupancy levels effectively, providing the right amount of workspace for the right amount of people at any one time, and train employees to understand and embrace their new working regimes.

## A place to meet

If the home is to provide a healthy and productive environment for focused individual work, then the office should be designed to enhance other important workplace experiences, such as face to face meetings and collaboration. A 2020 study by software producer **Okta Inc** at the height of the pandemic found that over half of participants were missing in-person conversations with workers despite daily video calls, and nearly half simply missed having people around them in their day to day life. Redesigning office environments to cater for collaboration and scheduling employees time in the office to focus on these types of activities will enable you to make the most of your space, whilst ensuring that time spent in the office complements that spent at home.

With individual work largely done remotely, businesses have the opportunity to significantly reduce the amount of individual workstations, and instead create a range of meeting & video conference rooms, presentation suites and informal social areas. Getting the formula right requires businesses to fully understand their employees working day. One way to do this is by completing a companywide survey. Employers can ask their staff to break down what tasks they do, how much time is spent on them, and what workspace is best for them to complete these tasks. With this set of data, organisations have a workspace formula, and with a bit of planning can calculate how to allocate their space effectively.



More than half (57%) say they miss having in-person conversations with their co-workers\*



49% miss the relationships they have forged with those in the office\*



10% are missing the benefits provided by their company, such as free food and snacks and fitness classes\*



## Stay flexible

Flexibility will be a key driver in the way these new workspaces will be designed. Daily occupancy levels will fluctuate and different teams will be utilising the same spaces on different days. And by creating a space that can be regularly adjusted, you can host larger meetings, events and parties to create a truly experience-led company HQ.

It's not just about shaping the space though. Proper training and planning on how to use these spaces effectively will be needed to make the most out of the environment and dissuade people from seeking out their old desks and old ways. And without a personal space, companies will have to think up new and creative ways to design their workspace to make employees feel like they belong, creating a "we" space instead of a "me" space.

## A place to belong

In most workspaces there will still be a need for individual desks, but with lower daily occupancy levels, there is no need for permanently assigned desks. By assigning teams to specific zones or "neighbourhoods", organisations can create personalised workspaces that use less space. These zones can be customised to offer the equipment and environments needed for the whole team, whilst colour schemes, team-related pinboards, whiteboards and decorations can be added to make employees feel like they belong, without the need for a permanent workstation. By using modular furniture and office fittings, you can allow your teams or neighbourhoods to shrink, grow and evolve when needed. It also allows switching from solo-focused desks to open-plan or collaborative spaces without any fuss.

One of the most important tools an employee will use at the office is their chair, and it can be off-putting and discouraging if you have to continually adjust the settings to get it to fit after someone else has used it. Intuitive designs with easy to use features will help employees feel comfortable. Customisable furniture will also allow businesses to colour code particular items to the correct neighbourhoods, and allow individual neighbourhoods to choose their preferred designs.

When designing these zones, it is important that vital equipment and facilities, such as the bathrooms, kitchens and copy machines, are within reach. Teams far away from these necessities may feel isolated or neglected. Having communal socialisation spaces on every floor creates "collision zones" which encourages collaboration and networking between neighbourhoods.

## Positive benefits

- reduction in focused workstations provides more space for collaboration environments
- a workspace built around engagement makes people happier & increases employee retention
- opportunity to promote company culture
- activity-based working implemented effectively increases productivity and creativity

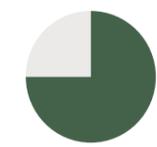
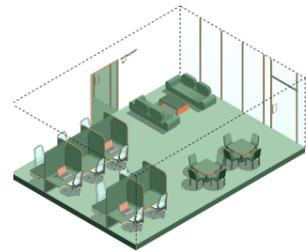
## Challenges

- managing occupancy levels effectively
- advanced digital collaboration tools required
- creating a sense of belonging without individual workstations
- training employees to use workspace efficiently



*If the home is to provide a healthy and productive environment for focused individual work, then the office should be designed to enhance other important workplace experiences, such as face to face meetings and collaboration.*

# The HUB



COLLABORATION



INDIVIDUAL



TOOLS



CONVENIENCE

The last two decades have seen rapid growth in the use of co-work spaces, and despite taking a heavy hit at the start of the pandemic, occupancy and availability continues to grow. Global commercial real estate advisors The Instant Group have forecast an astonishing 21% growth in flexible workspace supply for 2021. As more and more businesses begin to evaluate the way they work, the particular advantages of these types of workspaces will become increasingly attractive.

Instead of being the central base of operations for organisations, these satellite offices will become 'hubs' of activity, filling the gap between home and office, designed to meet various needs of companies and employees. Companies can take advantage of short term or daily leases to reduce expenses, and provide places for employees to work in many locations. Employees are able benefit from access to specialist equipment, unique creative environments and network with like-minded people outside of their company sphere.



67% of CRE decision makers are increasing workplace mobility programs and incorporating flexible space as a central element of their agile work strategies\*



55% of remote workers will consider using a co-working space as a remote work solution in the future\*

## Home away from home

Working from home is not a sustainable solution for everyone, either due to lack of space, access to equipment or the need to be around creative likeminded people. Despite this, many workers will be reluctant to give up the freedoms gained through remote working, or may even have been hired when returning to the central office was out of sight. Companies can offer employees access to local hubs, shared workspaces that provide suitable space for individual focused work and access to remote collaboration tools all within a local vicinity.

By using this type of workspace, businesses are able to sidestep the costs and complications of setting up effective home workspaces for their employees, and simply lease space for them in a more professional setting. If several employees work within the same area, there is also the added bonus of working together in the same building. Likewise, leasing individual desks on a daily basis offers businesses the opportunity to have employees all over the world.



## The powerhouse hub

One of the benefits of using satellite office space is access to specialist equipment and specialist people. Flexible spaces are increasingly diversified, meaning that businesses or employees that rely on particularly expensive or cumbersome equipment can find the perfect place to work from. Often found in city centres, these powerhouse hubs also provide their tenants with a range of professional networking opportunities and on-site collaboration, benefitting all.

## Something for everyone

There are an estimated 35,000 flexible workspaces in the world today, meaning that businesses have a wide range of choice to provide the perfect environment for their employees. Unique locations, niche specialities, access to knowledge or regular events are all part of the make up when it comes to operating a hub, and can be a big advantage when it comes to attracting and retaining employees.

## Positive benefits

- company & employee access to specialist equipment & workspaces
- creative environment
- cross pollination and collaboration with other businesses and individuals
- ease of access removes need for commute
- flexible leases reduce cost risk
- ability to scale
- knowledge access & events

## Challenges

- difficult to reflect company culture in shared location
- potentially difficult relations with co-sharers
- can be expensive
- liable to changes



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# Designing your future workspace ecosystem

The new workplace ecosystem currently taking shape is a big challenge for organisations when it comes to reimagining their workspace designs, but it should also be treated as a golden opportunity to reap the benefits presented by a more distributed way of working. Flexibility in how people want to work has never been more important, and how businesses will be able to provide this flexibility will be crucial not only for retaining talent, but also keeping employees healthy, happy and productive.

## Further Reading

[Leesman Home Survey](#) – with over 180,000 respondents in 90 countries, the data compiled by Leesman offers considerable insight into the way people around the world have adapted to remote working, and is great reading for anyone contemplating changing the way their business operates.

[Flokk Focus](#) – Packed full of the latest insights from the world of architecture and design, there are plenty of articles expanding on some of the themes covered in this document, including [employer responsibility when working from home](#), [a guide to building an ergonomics program](#) and [creating a hybrid workspace that makes your employees feel like they belong](#).

## Contact

If you are looking for more help when it comes to finding the right furniture we are confident in our abilities to help you identify the needs of your organisation, and find the best solution for your spaces. As a house of brands, our product range also includes acoustic panels, tables, sofa systems, room dividers and many more furniture accessories to help you shape your interior design project.

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## The Flokk Future Lab

This document is based on the tireless work of the Flokk Future Lab – a place where we gather, interpret and share insights about the world around us to understand how we can increase our impact on the future. The lab contains everything from first-hand research from collaborations with scientific institutions and material labs, to customer and market testing results as well as meta-research. It is the cradle of our early stage ideas and opportunity briefs.

## About Flokk

Flokk is a 'House of Brands' offering a wide range of seating solutions, tables, and accessories for working spaces. Being a market leader, we feel responsible to work towards a future with a healthy climate and conscious resource consumption. We therefore continuously strive to push the standards for sustainable design and production.”

As a house of brands, Flokk combines the heritage and expertise of nine distinct brands, each with their own story to tell, but united by a common goal of creating innovative designs with a strong focus on the health and wellbeing of the users and the communities around them.