



Beyond Hybrid

Is your workplace strategy keeping pace with the evolution of hybrid work?



Read the commonly asked questions our global experts receive about hybrid work and explore insights that will help optimize your work experience.

Spark Brilliance.

Bridging the gap between in-person and virtual work

What started as a “quick fix” during the 2020 crisis has evolved into something much bigger.

Hybrid and virtual work have changed how we connect, collaborate, and innovate. While hybrid work often means deciding between working from home or the office; virtual work—thanks to technology—breaks down location barriers and gives people more flexibility.

Together, these new work styles are impacting everything from office layouts to the digital tools we use, the way we connect, and even third spaces like cafes and coworking hubs. But despite the progress we’ve seen in workplaces globally, there are still some challenges when it comes to accommodating these new ways of working.

The insights covered in this paper address nine key questions our global workspace experts are commonly asked about hybrid work and how to adopt it. We’ll cover the behaviors redefining hybrid work, the evolution of workspaces, the challenges of designing inclusive, collaborative environments, the essential technologies all workplaces need, and strategies for managing teams effectively—all while balancing productivity and teamwork.

As a global firm, with local strategists, designers, and delivery teams, we draw insights from diverse perspectives to design solutions that embrace both universal workplace trends and local nuances. We create workplaces that are globally connected yet locally relevant—ensuring seamless experiences that enhance regional workstyles.

Meet Unispace's experts

The global experts invited to contribute are at the forefront of modern workplace design, delivering innovative strategies to bridge various work environments. Their forward-thinking insights focus on creating adaptable, efficient, and inclusive workspaces that meet the needs of today's hybrid and dispersed teams.

By reimagining how we work, they're creating future-proof solutions that seamlessly bridge in-person and virtual collaboration, setting the stage for a more dynamic and connected workplace.



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What do our experts think?

QUESTION

01

What key trends in hybrid working and virtual technology are most impacting the way organizations use their physical spaces today?

In today's rapidly evolving work environment, hybrid working and virtual technologies are transforming how organizations utilize their physical spaces. Key trends are emerging that influence office design and functionality, addressing the immediate needs of hybrid teams and setting the stage for future workplace innovations.

DESK-BASED VIRTUAL MEETINGS

The new reality

As offices fill up again, mindful speaking habits are returning, but higher density increases the need for acoustic solutions like sound-absorbing materials, zoning strategies, and noise management.

Customs vary across regions; for example, in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (DACH region), using one-ear headphones can unintentionally raise noise levels as individuals speak louder to compensate for background sound. In contrast, clients in Australia report the opposite effect — wearing one-ear headphones helps employees hear their own volume and adjust accordingly.

While clients are noticing the positive energy returning to offices, maintaining a well-managed soundscape remains key to making hybrid work truly effective.

VIRTUAL TECHNOLOGY

Enabling connections and enhancing experiences

Advancements in virtual technology are transforming workplace operations. Technologies like IoT, cloud platforms, and AI-powered infrastructure have revolutionized remote monitoring, minimizing the need for on-site presence—even in traditionally hands-on industries such as R&D and manufacturing. Integrated systems for smart room booking and ambient technology are also elevating employee satisfaction, making for improved collaboration across hybrid teams a reality.

A recent focus on our projects is improving lighting for video meetings, with front-facing ambient lighting now installed in meeting rooms, not just small quiet spaces.

Creating immersive virtual experiences

The growth of hybrid events and virtual product demos is revolutionizing business outreach and cost-efficiency. These formats are expanding global engagement while reducing the need for frequent travel. Innovative setups, including 'hologram-like' displays, allow businesses to display products in a retail environment or activate a showcase of medical instruments.

By incorporating virtual demos and visualizations into the workplace, teams gain a deeper understanding of a product's development and usability, creating a lasting impact on clients and stakeholders alike. This can be extended to immersive digital experiences designed as part of the visitor journey in reception areas of lobbies.

FOCUS VS. COLLABORATION

Finding the right balance

Office designs are evolving further to strike a balance between individual-focused areas and shared spaces for collaboration. For example, the ubiquitous semi-enclosed collaboration spaces popular as part of the Activity Based Working (ABW) era are no longer appropriate due to video conference speaker acoustic issues and proximity to the workspace.

Virtual collaboration is the key driver, with more businesses optimizing spaces for hybrid meetings and video calls. Even industries rooted in face-to-face interactions are diversifying layouts, adopting flexible designs with up to 15 tailored workspace types to get the right balance.

Our work at Google's New York City HQ



FLEXIBLE WORKSPACES

Adapting to diverse styles

Demand for adaptable office spaces is surging, with organizations reimagining layouts to suit different work styles and activities due to the unpredictability of office attendance.

Projects like **Orrick Seattle** underscore the importance of blending professional development with social interaction with the understanding that each space has multiple uses.

These flexible, multipurpose spaces reflect a growing industry-wide preference for environments that enhance connectivity and accommodate evolving workplace dynamics.

As hybrid working and virtual technologies continue to evolve, organizations must remain agile in adapting their physical spaces to meet these new demands, ensuring they remain competitive and innovative in a dynamic landscape without sacrificing functionality.

02

What are the biggest challenges in designing spaces that support both hybrid and virtual working? How do we address them?

Designing spaces that balance hybrid and virtual working needs presents unique challenges. To create effective environments, businesses must address technological requirements, employee expectations, and seamless integration between physical and digital workspaces.

CHALLENGE

Managing fluctuating attendance levels

Hybrid work environments often face uneven office usage, with up to 60% of employees coming in on midweek days (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday).

At the same time, Mondays and Fridays see attendance dropping to 10% or less.

This imbalance can lead to overcrowding on peak days and underutilized spaces on quieter days, making resource allocation inefficient.

SOLUTION

To balance attendance, organizations can incentivize employees to work on-site during low-occupancy days, such as offering perks for coming in on Mondays or Fridays. Some companies implement structured attendance policies to distribute office usage more evenly throughout the week.

Using reliable attendance and occupancy data is critical to anticipate the impact of flexible work policies and prevent overcrowding. Apps like Calvern, Desk Bird, and Condeco provide desk booking and event alerts to assist with balancing office utilization.

CHALLENGE

Optimizing space usage

Hybrid work can create challenges in efficiently using available office space. While some companies assume hybrid models mean reducing space, the reality is that more diverse, multifunctional areas are required to meet varying employee needs.

Many traditional spaces, like reception lounges and meeting spots in corridors, remain underutilized, while the demand for flexible work zones grows. Additionally, meeting room utilisation has shifted—mid-large meeting rooms are often underfilled, while smaller, tech-enabled spaces are in higher demand to accommodate hybrid meetings.

SOLUTION

Repurposing overlooked spaces into functional work zones, such as small focus pods or collaborative areas, ensures every space is utilized effectively. Optimizing meeting room sizes to better match hybrid work patterns prevents wasted capacity and improves accessibility.

Offering a variety of spaces tailored to different tasks enhances productivity and employee satisfaction. Flexible setups that support both individual and teamwork, paired with adaptable technology, will help companies align office layouts with evolving work styles.

CHALLENGE

Integrating virtual platforms into physical spaces

Seamlessly merging virtual platforms with physical spaces is a technical challenge, particularly in industries like biotech or pharma, where specialized tools and compliance are critical. Gaps in digital infrastructure can hinder collaboration and efficiency in hybrid work environments.

Our recent project experience tells us that technology remains under-budgeted and under-provisioned across the office which impacts the user experience and accessibility to suitable AV software and hardware.

SOLUTION

Businesses can enhance digital infrastructure with smart technology and strong cybersecurity to bridge the gap between virtual and physical workspaces.

In regulated industries, virtualizing specific tasks can support compliance while optimizing space planning.

While securing digital information is paramount, careful consideration regarding the placement of information-sensitive spaces and the orientation of collaboration boards and digital screens is critical to avoid IP leaks.

CHALLENGE

Maintaining a consistent employee experience

Hybrid work has expanded the traditional office ecosystem to include home offices and remote locations, creating disparities in employee experiences.

Our Global Workplace Insights research shows that 35% of employees are still lacking suitable infrastructure at home to complete their daily tasks. Unfortunately, employers don't have direct control over remote environments, but ensuring all employees have the tools, resources, and spaces they need is critical for the hybrid world we live in.

SOLUTION

A truly inclusive and flexible approach balances employee freedom with company culture while making sure both in-office and remote employees have what they need to work effectively.

Beyond software and training, some organizations are now helping employees set up better home offices by offering corporate furniture at a discount or even covering the cost —ensuring comfort, consistency, and a better work experience.

Providing equal access to the right tools, spaces, and support—whether at home, in the office, or elsewhere—helps create a more connected and productive team. Companies that take a thoughtful approach to these factors make collaboration easier and remove the daily friction of hybrid work.



Many companies maintain a 1:1 ratio of workstations to employees to ensure a harmonious work environment and smooth operations, even with employees working remotely two days per week. We're seeing the need for more space than before to perform the different activities that are part of today's way of working."

Thomas Breton

Principal, Strategy (France)



03

How can organizations create environments that cater to diverse teams and encourage inclusivity and collaboration?

Why inclusivity matters

Inclusivity is more than just a moral imperative—it drives innovation and organizational success. Organizations unlock the power of diverse perspectives by fostering equity and providing employees with a sense of belonging. Collaboration thrives when all team members feel safe expressing their authentic selves.

This improves business performance and provides a competitive edge, making inclusivity a critical component for any forward-thinking organization. To build environments that support diverse teams and promote inclusivity and collaboration, organizations should focus on the following elements:

Create physical spaces that support a variety workstyles

Physical space plays a pivotal role in supporting an inclusive workforce. Beyond policies and recognized good universal design practices, offering diverse spaces and settings empowers employees to customize their experience at work. By giving them autonomy to engage with the workplace on their terms, organizations can foster a sense of trust and value for all. We are from varied cultural and behavioral backgrounds and biases, so a well-considered mix of quiet work zones, recharge spaces recharge spaces, and virtual meeting areas ensures that different personal work preferences can be accommodated.

Taking this a step further, workplaces could adopt responsive technologies. Imagine a system that curates an employee's workday—like how platforms Netflix or Spotify personalize user experiences. Providing adaptable, flexible environments both in-person and virtually allows individuals from diverse backgrounds to feel comfortable and confident as they collaborate.

Incorporate training to foster cross-cultural understanding

Effective collaboration starts with understanding. Promoting inclusivity relies on cross-cultural and continuous training. It's essential to help teams appreciate different communication styles and work preferences. This not only ensures smoother collaboration but also bridges gaps that may arise due to generational or cultural differences. Beyond formal training, mentoring and learning by observation help employees develop a deeper understanding of workplace interactions, fostering stronger connections and communication across diverse teams. Our research found that employees are more comfortable in spaces that they can “recognize themselves in”.

Arup is an example of this, developed in partnership with Māori Mana Whenua, Dane Tumahai, and Paora Puru of Te Manu Taupua Ltd, to create a workplace that connects New Zealand's cultural heritage with the community and the land, fostering a sense of belonging and respect. Organizations should provide learning opportunities focusing on professional development and cultural awareness. By updating employees on emerging trends and fostering adaptability, companies encourage effective communication and stronger interpersonal connections across their workforce.

Use technology to bridge gaps

Inclusive technology serves as a vital tool for collaboration across cultures. With recent wide-spread recognition of different learning and contribution profiles of employees, synchronous and a-synchronous communication platforms are more important than ever, and organizations should prioritize platforms that offer real-time translation, closed captions, and other accessibility features to foster equitable opportunities for all employees. Technology not only ensures everyone has access to the same resources but also fosters greater participation regardless of language or location.

For global teams, inclusive virtual tools can level the playing field, allowing everyone to contribute meaningfully. Whether in a remote setting or across time zones, ensuring technological accessibility enhances teamwork and strengthens the sense of belonging. Many popular enterprise communication platforms lack the search and recall features to capture ongoing conversations denying employees who prefer a-synchronous dialogue the opportunity to share ideas and shine.

“Organizations can create inclusive environments by embracing diverse communication styles, providing cross-cultural training, and using multilingual tools to foster collaboration across culturally diverse teams.”

Daniel Maldonado

Managing Director, Life Sciences
(North America)



Global Software Company, Sydney, Australia

04

How do you see hybrid working and virtual technologies evolving over the next 5 years, and what should organizations prepare for?

Redefining hybrid

Over the next five years, we anticipate a continued shift from the temporary state of a 'hybrid' framework of remote versus in-office work towards a more unified model. This evolution prioritizes unity and connectivity, transforming all interactions — whether in-person or virtual — into a cohesive experience.

By eliminating the divide between 'remote' and 'in-person,' this unified approach fosters a fluid, flexible structure that supports collaboration and productivity in any environment.

This approach already applies to sectors like biotech, life sciences, healthcare, and technology, where the integration of, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) enables training, real-time data, and facilitation of remote consultations. While using wearables, such as AR glasses, employees will utilize on-demand spaces and virtual workstations tailored to their specific tasks.

Laboratories will increasingly depend on cloud-based collaboration platforms, virtual labs, and immersive technologies like AR/VR for real-time remote collaboration and testing. AI-powered modeling will accelerate hypothesis testing, while digital twins will simulate experimental conditions to predict outcomes.

How organizations can prepare for the future

Over the next few years, the demand for spaces that foster distributed team collaboration will grow. This shift will require advanced digital infrastructures, strengthened cybersecurity, and scalable cloud solutions to support remote work and virtual teamwork effectively. To stay ahead, organizations must invest in secure cloud systems, provide training on remote management best practices, and develop seamless integrations between virtual and physical environments.

Based on our experience with large organizations, we've seen that it typically takes 2-3 years for IT strategies, capital expenditure, and operational teams to align and take the first steps in implementation. The sooner an organization commits to a property digitization strategy, the faster it can bridge the gap between the physical and digital work environments.

As IoT and 5G networks continue to improve connectivity, organizations must prepare for advancements in remote monitoring. Employees will have even more access to real-time data from anywhere, fostering more decentralized and agile decision-making. To thrive in this evolving hybrid work environment, it will be essential to train employees on effectively utilizing emerging technologies such as AI, AR, and VR.

This approach will not only maintain productivity but also foster innovation in the workplace. By streamlining collaboration, improving data sharing, and enabling seamless teamwork across any location, these steps ensure teams can work efficiently and effectively together.



We have seen the adoption of wearables in other industries, but there is huge opportunity to provide enhanced experiences across the workplace to support non-physical collaboration and training.”

Simon Pole
Group Chief Product Officer



Smith+Nephew, Munich, Germany

What are the most important technologies or tools that enable seamless integration between hybrid and virtual work environments?

Creating integrated hybrid work environments requires tools and technologies that support both individual and group needs, bridging the gap between physical and virtual spaces. Key considerations include:

Supporting individual virtual participation

For individuals joining virtual meetings from the office, thoughtful desk-based setups are key. In recent years, the quality of backgrounds and avatars has improved to reduce outline interference. However, most organizations still rely on the cameras, speakers, and microphones provided by laptop suppliers, rather than investing in higher-quality hardware that could address many of the issues employees report, such as distractions in open-office environments.

- **Acoustic solutions** like intelligent sound masking to reduce distractions, allowing employees to join meetings from their desks without relying on focus rooms.
- **Tech-optimized workstations** featuring high-quality audio equipment, headsets, microphones, and cameras ensure smooth engagement from desks, minimizing reliance on isolated spaces.
- **Focus rooms**, such as those at [FB Rice](#), should support concentration and virtual meetings with features like adjustable lighting, noise control, and soundproofing, while flexible workspaces with acoustic barriers boost productivity in hybrid settings.
- **User behavior and etiquette training** helps improve virtual meeting engagement, ensuring best practices such as keeping cameras on, using quality audio, and maintaining professional virtual presence—enhancing communication and collaboration.

Enhancing group collaboration

Leveraging advanced tools to create equitable hybrid experiences for group collaboration.

- Dual-screen and advanced AV systems allow visibility of both participants and shared content. 360° cameras and microphones ensure remote attendees are part of the experience. Communication presentation tools such as Crestron's Intelligent Presenter Tracking or Logitech's RightSight products are pushing us closer to equitable solutions in our meeting rooms.
- Interactive collaboration tools like Miro, Whiteboard, and MURAL bridge in-office and remote brainstorming and are great for A-synchronous input.
- Cloud-based platforms (e.g., Google Workspace, Microsoft 365) allow document sharing and real-time collaboration, critical for cross-location work.

Communication platforms and security

- Video conferencing software (e.g., Zoom, Teams) ensures seamless global connections with features like real-time collaboration and breakout rooms. Unfortunately, they rely on a strong and stable internet connection to be effective which isn't always available in remote locations.
- Secure cloud file-sharing platforms like OneDrive protect sensitive data, while cybersecurity tools like VPNs and end-to-end encryption safeguard intellectual property.

Intelligent systems optimizing workflows

- Sensors and network activity monitors collect data while AI-driven management analyzes occupancy and employee feedback to optimize layouts and workflows in real time. This can also be used for underutilized floors, allowing the building to conserve energy and water by shutting down zones when not in use.
- Digital twins for office spaces replicate physical workplaces in the digital realm, allowing facility managers to simulate configurations and monitor real-time conditions to avoid overcrowding and potential fire regulation issues.
- Environmental sensors tracking CO₂ levels, temperature, and humidity can enhance workplace well-being and productivity by maintaining optimal air quality and comfort levels—helping prevent fatigue, boost concentration, and improve overall employee health.

Innovations transforming life sciences

Workspaces in the life sciences sector benefit significantly from AI integration, reimagining design and productivity.

- Intelligent AI-driven platforms process vast datasets for faster discoveries. AI generative labs simulate experiments and predict outcomes, transforming workflows and accelerating breakthroughs in the pharmaceutical and biotech industries.
- Quantum computing brings unprecedented computational power to solve complex challenges, advancing drug discovery and enabling innovative solutions.
- Robotics and data mining streamline operations by automating repetitive tasks and extracting actionable insights. These tools optimize workflows, improve research safety, and help researchers focus on core innovations. Robotic systems, for instance, can rapidly interpret and execute tasks, saving time and resources.
- In clinical trials and research settings, remote patient monitoring and telemedicine platforms are being integrated to enable decentralized trials and data collection from various locations, enhancing accessibility and efficiency.
- Virtual labs, where experiments are simulated and tested digitally, are on the rise, allowing scientists to conduct experiments remotely and reducing reliance on physical lab presence.
- Smart systems improve personalized medicine accessibility by streamlining resource allocation. For instance, intelligent systems enable three operators to manage 80–100 patient therapy machines, enhancing efficiency in hybrid teams.

By blending cutting-edge AI, modular designs, and advanced collaboration tools, organizations can create resilient hybrid environments tailored for cross-industry innovation and specialized sectors like life sciences. These technologies turn hybrid setups into dynamic ecosystems where connection, flexibility, and discovery thrive.



As the workplace continues to evolve, organizations must reimagine how they enable collaboration and productivity in hybrid and virtual work environments. This transformation demands a strategic approach to technology that ensures seamless integration between physical and digital spaces.”

Marco Huber

Principal, Client Relations (DACH)



Boston Scientific, Madrid, Spain

06

How can organizations effectively support and manage hybrid teams and address the challenges of navigating remote and in-office work dynamics?

Managing hybrid teams requires a thoughtful approach to balance flexibility, structure, and team cohesion. Here's how organizations can address the challenges of navigating remote and in-office work dynamics:

Create intentional moments of connection

Hybrid work environments can unintentionally fragment team dynamics. To strengthen inter-team bonds, companies should create intentional opportunities for connection.

Examples include cross-functional collaboration days, where teams come together to brainstorm and exchange ideas, or hosting virtual networking sessions that encourage relationship-building across geographies. These interactions allow employees to engage with colleagues they might not typically work with, building camaraderie and enhancing cross-team collaboration.

Design spaces that balance flexibility with structure

Providing flexibility doesn't mean sacrificing structure. Hybrid-friendly workplaces should offer a variety of spaces tailored to different work styles, like focus areas, collaborative spaces, and virtual meeting zones.

One example is **DoubleVerify**, this project showcases vertically stacked neighborhoods, strategically layered to transition from dynamic, collaborative areas to more focused, heads-down spaces. Flexible designs maximize space utilization, turning overlooked areas like corners or lounges into productive zones. This balance helps teams toggle seamlessly between independent productivity and in-person collaboration.

Teach teams how to effectively use the workspace

While workplaces are increasingly designed to support hybrid work, many employees struggle to use these spaces effectively. Misunderstandings —like using phone booths for extended periods or hosting hybrid meetings in open project areas —often disrupt both productivity and collaboration.

To avoid such pitfalls, organizations must educate employees on the purpose and best uses of each space. This goes beyond simply providing instructions. Managers should receive training to support their teams in optimizing the available tools and spaces. Without this, even the most innovative spaces fail to achieve their intended purpose.



An effective hybrid workplace requires clear communication, flexible policies that balance expectations with work-life balance, and accessible well-being programs like virtual fitness, stress management, and mental health resources.

By ensuring these elements support both remote and in-office workers, organizations can foster a collaborative and supportive environment.”

Cheryl Martirez

Associate, Design (Hong Kong)



What physical features are required within offices and labs to deliver unified work for improved individual working and collaboration?

Creating a unified work environment requires thoughtful design and intentional space planning. Offices and labs must be equipped to support both focused individual work and seamless collaboration between in-office and remote employees. Here are some key physical features that can enhance the effectiveness:

Quiet zones for individual focus

To enhance individual productivity, offices and labs should provide quiet zones or private workstations equipped with thoughtfully designed acoustics to control the sound profile of the environment. Sound masking systems offered by companies such as LogiSon, BiAmp or Cambridge are particularly effective in minimizing distractions, especially for employees participating in virtual meetings at their desks.

These solutions strike a balance between the collaborative nature of open spaces and the need for focused, individual work. Fortunately, speaker direction-ability has improved, and you may have experienced this effect at museums or galleries when you walk under an active speaker talking about the artwork without disturbing the adjacent area. These same principles can be used in the office to control noise.

Additionally, workspaces should prioritize ergonomic furniture, abundant natural lighting, and reliable high-speed technology to create an optimal environment for concentration-intensive tasks like coding or research. One example of this is our project for **Takeda Pharmaceuticals**, various work settings cater to diverse workstyles by providing a range of settings that promote movement. Labs, on the other hand, must go a step further by incorporating specialized tools—such as microscopes or data analysis equipment—not only to facilitate precision work but also to ensure safety and regulatory compliance.

Flexibility to support dynamic collaboration

Adaptable, modular spaces are vital for effective hybrid collaboration. Outfitted with advanced tools like 14:9 ratio dual-screen video conferencing for larger participant picture windows, multiple camera locations capturing all participants individually, and interactive whiteboards or surfaces, these spaces enable seamless interaction between in-person and remote participants. Movable partitions and adjustable furniture provide the flexibility to quickly reshape work environments, keeping them dynamic and efficient.

Wellness and relaxation spaces

Supporting employee well-being is a vital part of design. While more advanced organizations believe that the entire office is a wellness space and have invested in zones with high-performance environmental and psychological benefits, typically offices with thoughtfully designed wellness rooms or recharge lounges offer employees spaces to rest and reset. Combining biophilic elements, like indoor greenery and natural light, further enhances these spaces, reducing stress and fostering a balanced work atmosphere.



Modular collaboration spaces and adaptable meeting areas that quickly transform from small huddle rooms to large team spaces, paired with flexible furniture systems, support diverse work styles and seamless collaboration.”

Swatasiddha (Sid) Majumdar

Principal, Strategy (India)



HP, Gurgaon, India

08

Are there specific design elements or technologies that you believe are essential for bridging the gap between physical and virtual collaboration? What's missing?

Creating a seamless hybrid work environment requires careful planning and innovation. It's not just about combining physical and virtual spaces—it's about ensuring collaboration, connectivity, and inclusivity for all team members. With the right design elements and technologies, organizations can bridge this gap and unlock the full potential of hybrid work.

Essential design elements and technologies for hybrid collaboration:

Advanced video conferencing and interactive tools

High-quality video conferencing systems are indispensable for bridging the gap in hybrid work environments. Features like noise-canceling microphones, high-quality cameras, and clear audio ensure seamless communication between in-person and remote teams. Interactive displays, like digital whiteboards, further enhance collaboration by allowing all participants to contribute to brainstorming and idea-sharing sessions in real-time. These tools create a shared experience, but deeper integration with immersive and interactive features could push collaboration further.

Telepresence robots for real-time presence

Telepresence robots are a game-changer for environments like biotech labs, where real-time decision-making and physical interaction with equipment are required. These robots allow remote users to move through spaces as if they were physically present, interacting with tools and personnel. Despite their potential, these systems could benefit from more affordable, user-friendly designs to encourage broader use.

Immersive technologies - AR, VR, and beyond

Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are shaping the future of hybrid collaboration. AR can overlay critical data in labs or meetings, giving real-time context to physical and digital environments. For example, AR tools can guide researchers during experiments or allow remote technicians to interact with lab equipment. VR creates fully immersive spaces for training, simulation, and even virtual walkthroughs of labs or offices.

For instance, our project for **Smith+Nephew** includes a virtual simulation room alongside a virtual operation room (OR) for interactive learning, enabling teams to practice procedures and refine skills in a safe, controlled environment. However, these technologies are still underutilized in workplace settings and lack the intuitive, accessible interfaces needed for widespread adoption.

IoT-driven smart workspaces

The Internet of Things (IoT) is transforming workspaces into intelligent, responsive environments. Sensors can adjust lighting, temperature, and space use dynamically, while automation systems enable remote monitoring and control of lab equipment. IoT integration ensures workflows are efficient and data driven. What's missing? These smart-systems need greater compatibility and security, especially in data-sensitive industries like life sciences.



In an era of rapid technological advancements and evolving workplace paradigms, immersive technologies have emerged as critical tools for bridging the divide between physical and virtual collaboration.

For example, gamification introduces game-like elements into collaboration tools, promoting participation, creativity and engagement.”

Darren Sutton

Principal, Client Development (Australia)



Zoom, London, United Kingdom

09

What are some innovative solutions you've seen or implemented that address the challenges of hybrid work environments

Hybrid work environments have transformed the way we approach collaboration and productivity. Balancing in-person and remote work brings unique challenges, from maintaining seamless communication to ensuring equal access to resources and tools. Innovative solutions are key to creating efficient, inclusive, and adaptable workplaces. The new environments are multi-modal and take into consideration all aspects of communication to provide a holistic experience.

Interactive AV technology

Creating hybrid workspaces that allow equitable participation for in-person and remote employees is crucial. High-end video conferencing setups, featuring multiple screens or split-screen capabilities, ensure participants can view shared content and meeting attendees equally. Screen ratios are adjusting 14:9 for video conferencing to assist with equality of digital real estate for all participants in a call rather than having a second page. Interactive screens and software further enhance collaboration by letting teams brainstorm and share ideas in real-time, regardless of location.

Reimagining hybrid meeting rooms

Modern meeting pods equipped with 360-degree cameras, noise-canceling microphones, and tools for document annotation create a seamless experience for hybrid teams. By displaying remote participants at eye level, these spaces foster inclusivity and make remote employees feel like active contributors to the discussion.

Our recent work with **Zoom Communications Inc.** exemplifies this through their 'boardroom of the future,' featuring next generation Zoom technologies.

Collaborative digital platforms

Cloud-based tools like LabArchives and Benchling help bridge the gap between remote and in-office teams, especially in biotech and life sciences. These platforms enable researchers to access data, conduct simulations, and collaborate seamlessly across geographies, increasing productivity and maintaining project quality.

Immersive AR/VR technologies

AR and VR technologies are transforming hybrid collaboration. AR tools overlay real-time data in physical settings, assisting researchers and technicians during experiments, while VR enables virtual lab tours and immersive training. These innovations make remote collaboration interactive and accelerate decision-making by offering lifelike environments for complex discussions.

Smart office systems

Smart office technologies optimize hybrid workspaces by introducing automated booking systems, sensor-adapted desks, and dynamic environmental controls. These systems ensure employees have access to the right resources when working on-site, eliminating manual scheduling frustrations and enhancing workplace efficiency. Examples Unispace projects include **Sonos** in Seattle, **Woodside** in Perth, and **Zoom** in London.



I've seen success in spaces designed with diverse seating and standing options with interactive technology that ensures everyone, in-person or online, can engage equally.

Features like dual screens, split views, and collaborative tools make hybrid teamwork seamless and effective.”

Karen Garrett

Sustainability Manager, Design (Australia)



Meridian Energy, Wellington, New Zealand

Moving towards a more unified approach

Hybrid work and virtual technologies were accelerated at the commencement of COVID as a fit-for-purpose solution to solve a specific problem.

Five years later, our research and data show that innovation and collaboration are suffering. It is now essential for organizations to adopt innovative strategies and flexible workspaces to enhance productivity and keep teams connected.

Embracing these changes positions businesses as leaders in a competitive landscape. By evolving workplace strategies to support collaboration, creativity, and adaptability, companies can create dynamic environments that foster continuous interaction and innovation, both remotely and in person.

This shift marks the evolution toward a new standard that unifies communication and collaboration across contexts and settings (in-office and remote).

At the core of this approach is designing for connectivity. Thoughtful design strategies like flexible layouts, optimized lighting and acoustics, cutting-edge technology, and adaptable modular solutions are essential. These features create future-proof spaces that encourage meaningful connections and foster innovation while maximizing cost-effectiveness and efficiency.

Take your next step in redesigning your workspace—connect with our experts for a tailored consultation.



Spark Brilliance.

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