



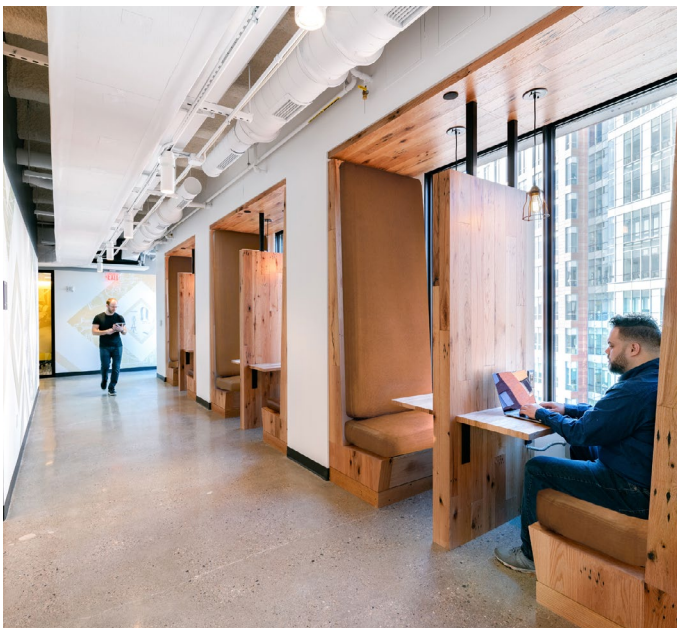
WORKPLACE

**REDEFINING THE HIGH
PERFORMING WORKPLACE**

SMITHGROUP



REDEFINING THE HIGH PERFORMING WORKPLACE



Workplace culture – which is embedded in a company’s policies, procedures, and practices – is paramount to fostering an environment where employees are engaged, feel valued, and are empowered to take ownership over when, where, and how they accomplish work-related tasks. As competition to attract and retain top talent continues to intensify, many companies are looking for opportunities to showcase their unique corporate culture while raising the recruiting bar. And the most forward-looking of these enterprises are exploring how their physical workplace can help to strengthen work-life integration, enhance productivity and innovation, and even improve employee health and wellbeing.

In the Fall of 2019, SmithGroup design experts and workplace strategists came together with leaders from across industries for a two-day workshop dedicated to Redefining the High Performing Workplace. Sessions were devoted to discussing operational and workforce challenges impacting businesses today; delving into trends impacting corporate real estate and development; exploring how physical environments can help or harm occupants’ health and wellbeing; and collaborating on how physical environments can be designed to advance a new era of work.

Enthusiasm around these topics was electric and sparked compelling dialogue and exploration of many transformative “what if” scenarios. Each scenario addressed six key factors that workshop participants felt must be considered when setting out to create a high performing workplace:

- The Employee Experience
- Design of the Workplace
- Technology
- Flexibility
- Work-Life Integration & Choices
- Health & Wellbeing

The following summary offers a glimpse into the group's exploration of these topics. For a more in-depth discussion on these and other factors impacting the future of work, please contact Lise Newman, Director of SmithGroup's Workplace Practice.

THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Employees are the cornerstone of every business. From the moment that an employee first comes in contact with an organization, each interaction, tool, touch point, and process has an impact on that individual's journey with the company. It should come as no surprise that entities like Google, Intuit, Under Armour, Mercer, Marsh, and General Motors - which were among participants in the SmithGroup-sponsored Fall

2019 workshop, and all of which invest heavily in their employee experience - are considered great companies for which to work. In addition, these organizations are more in-demand among applicants and are seen as having a strong culture of innovation. So, how can other organizations model the practices of these companies and improve their own employee experience? Consider the following:



DESIGN OF THE WORKPLACE

The design of a company's workplace can have a substantial impact on employee experience. Observation studies and research conducted by SmithGroup's design experts and workplace strategists suggest that having a workplace that enables creative ideas to flourish, empowers employees to realize these ideas, and promotes collaboration to implement these ideas increases the likelihood that employees will have a positive experience working for this enterprise.

To help promote a positive employee experience, companies can:

INTEGRATE A RANGE OF SPACES THAT ARE CONDUCTIVE TO SPARKING CREATIVITY AND COLLABORATION.

Offering employees the choice to work from a range of environments – from small and mid-sized meeting spaces with reconfigurable furniture to accommodate a variety of uses, to in-house cafes, lounge areas with a range of seating options, and even quite “cell phone free” zones – contributes to the creation of a richer workplace where creativity and interaction thrive and employees feel more satisfied and connected to their company.



PROVIDE QUIET AREAS FOR CONCENTRATION.

Through research, direct feedback, and observational studies, SmithGroup design experts understand that space for focused, heads-down work is a top “want” among employees and necessary for activities that require concentration.

CREATE AND CAPITALIZE ON SPACES FOR CHANCE ENCOUNTERS.

Great ideas and solutions don't always come from planned meetings. Designing a building to include space where people naturally intersect enhances innovation and serendipitous conversation that can lead to groundbreaking concepts.

UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF “UN-FOCUS” SPACES

Top-rated companies with exceptional employee experiences embrace the idea that teammates occasionally need to relax and unwind. Those that include spaces that allow staff to break out of work mode for a bit and recharge often report higher levels of employee productivity and increased staff satisfaction.



"There will be naysayers. Learn from them. Listen to what they're complaining about. In my personal experience, they're inevitably complaining about the culture, the way leadership treats them, the way they feel in their organization, their psychological safety. The space is a lightning rod but it's not really causing their angst."

- *Dane Parker, General Motors*

"It used to be about first cost analysis and value engineering and getting the finance and business leaders in the room and crunching numbers. The focus was on figuring out how cost effective we could make a building. Now, it's about human resources."

- *Bill Guthrey, KDC Development*

"Successful work environments allow people to stay focused and offer employees the resources they need to do their work. At Google, we want to make sure that we're creating spaces where people are excited to go, and where they are proud to bring their family and friends over to visit."

- *Joshua Bridie, Google*



TECHNOLOGY

As work continues to evolve and transcend traditional workplace boundaries of space and time, technology is becoming increasingly important to the employee experience. From software platforms, to equipment and devices provided to employees, and even network speed, technological innovations have made it easier for people to work together regardless of their location. The most successful high performing enterprises have uncovered the benefits that come from skillfully balancing high tech and high touch. Takeaways from the Fall 2019 workshop indicate:

TECHNOLOGY SAYS A LOT ABOUT CULTURE AND EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Companies that integrate robust wireless networks along with a variety of workplace settings enable employees to work from just about anywhere, reinforcing the value that organization places on its employees.

MINUTIA MATTERS! UTILIZE APPS!

Building management systems have evolved beyond monitoring energy consumption and air quality. Today, systems can be integrated with apps that can help employees locate parking spaces, identify available workstations, find colleagues, reserve meeting spaces, and so much more. Utilizing such technologies to help employees streamline activities that could otherwise eat up valuable work time is not only efficient, but it also goes a long way toward creating a positive workplace experience.

VIRTUAL, ON-DEMAND LEARNING WILL INCREASE IN POPULARITY

Studies show that future generations of workers place great emphasis and expectation on access to on-demand learning and training opportunities. Organizations that do not already embrace this technology must be prepared to incorporate these offerings in years to come.

WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION & CHOICES

As companies increasingly ask employees to wear more hats, do more, and always be “on,” people are working longer and harder to satisfy their work obligations. As a result, spaces that blur the boundaries between lifestyle and work are becoming the norm. Workshop participants shared:

WORK AND LIFE CONTINUE TO BLUR, BUT IN NEW WAYS

Future-focused organizations recognize that current and future generations of workers are thinking about the lives they want and then looking for careers and employers that support that experience. As a result, organizations are beginning to explore work and life as one integrated experience and are embracing policies and places that will support this evolution.

IMPACTS ON DESIGN AND FURNITURE

As time goes on, environments that look like a living room, café, or neighborhood coffee shop will likely become features in all buildings as developers, real estate partners and organizations look to create opportunities to facilitate work across a variety of spaces and places.



"When employees can identify with their company, they feel closer to that company. They feel more loyal and the experience is better."

- Lise Newman, SmithGroup



HEALTH & WELLBEING

Employers have a vested interest in creating a culture that emphasizes the importance of mental and physical wellness. Thirty years ago, if asked what the definition of a high performing workplace was, teams would have cited energy consumption, carbon footprint, costs per square foot, and factors related to these topics in order to measure success. As we enter a new era of work, we realize that the definition of and focus on employee wellbeing must also evolve. Creating a high performing workforce and workplace requires business leaders understand and embrace the following:

THE HEALTHY WORKPLACE IS EVOLVING

In the past, it was thought that providing a fitness center, walking trails, and a handful of healthy food options was adequate to address health concerns. While these remain important, designing to promote health and wellbeing has evolved to encompass sustainability, the integration of nature, and movement through a building. Today, designers are focusing more intently on the physiology of buildings, including greater attention to indoor air quality, access to natural light, and other factors that impact health.

DATA DRIVES DESIGN

Recent scientific studies have revealed meaningful data which enables designers to connect the impact of the environments they create to human health and wellbeing. It is increasingly important that all parties involved in the creation of built environments understand these metrics and use the data to create spaces that can enhance employees' physical and mental wellbeing.

BE IN TUNE WITH BIOPHILIA

It is important to understand the connection between humans and nature. Next, we must explore the best ways to design buildings to connect people to nature. Providing access to daylight, views, and the ability to walk away from desks can have profound impacts on stress level, health, and wellbeing.

CULTURE IS ASSOCIATED WITH BEHAVIORS

To truly make a commitment to employee health and wellbeing, employers need to lead by example and create a culture of wellness in their organization. Designers will then study that organization's culture, behavioral patterns of leaders and employees, and then create a physical space that supports or induces the behaviors and culture they espouse to achieve.



The average American worker sits twice as much as the average American retiree.



10% of employee absences are attributed to the lack of nature in buildings.



No matter the industry, meeting the needs and expectations of one's workforce is a challenge for any company. To truly enjoy their jobs, employees must feel respected and trust that their employers will provide them with the tools and resources they need to be successful in both their professional and personal lives.

Those who participated in the SmithGroup-sponsored Fall 2019 advisory board and workshop are still working to unlock the exact formula - part culture, part process, part physical space - that will help companies create the exceptional employee experience that they desire while also achieving their operational and financial goals. This event brought us closer to advancing our mission: to design a better future.

We thank our participants for the insight that was shared and look forward to continuing to explore next steps on this topic with members of this prestigious group.



THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR PARTICIPANTS

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