The
New Office
Blueprint

dLL financial solutions partner

Perspective

Since the onset of the global pandemic, society has faced a slew of changes worldwide. We experienced shifts in consumer buying patterns, disruptions to the global supply chain, significant pressure on healthcare systems, and complex transitions to remote work in a matter of days.

Organizations were reacting in real-time, managing day by day, finding quick solutions to issues to hold them over in the short-term. Now, two years later as we find ourselves emerging from the pandemic, many businesses finally have the ability to make strategic long-term plans.

At DLL, my group specializes in all things office-related and over my three decades in the imaging and office technology industry, I do not think I have seen a more transformative time. I don't say this because I think the physical office is the thing of the past – rather quite the opposite. Well before 2020, there were forward-thinking businesses who took a human-centric approach to their offices, creating spaces optimized for creativity, rest, focus, teamwork, innovation, and collaboration. Today, many of those companies have more easily settled into a hybrid work structure because their offices provide employees with more than just a desk, a computer, and a printer. For employees to find value in an office environment over remote work they need access to exceptional technology, attractive and collaborative spaces, amenities, and tools & resources not easily accessed from a home office. In other words, the office is no longer just a place to work – it must be a destination.

In this whitepaper we will examine the historical significance of the office, the impact of pandemic-induced remote work, and evaluate how businesses can best leverage a physical office and not discount its power for business growth.

I hope you find value in the following information and invite you to share any questions or feedback with our team, whose contact information you will find at the end of this publication.

Sincerely,

Bob Hunter
President, Office Equipment
Global Business Unit

What was the role of the office pre-pandemic

In B.C. times (before COVID), offices were a central tenant of organizational development, recruitment, training, management, strategy, and so many more business functions. All at once, in what felt like an alternate universe, the second week of March 2020 became a landmark moment in office and work culture.

In evaluating the role of the office in the future, it is important to examine its origins and history. If we look all the way back, ancient Rome created the first office called the Tabularium[1] which was used to store state archives like deeds, laws, and treaties. Beginning in the late 1700s, professionals like lawyers, politicians, and other civil servants began working from central hubs rather than their home studies, particularly in large cities like London, where The Old Admiralty Office[2] was built. The impact of the office grew steadily over time, and in the 20th century it began evolving into the traditional office design we know today. Starting in the 1940s, we began to see the 'open office' concept, which some credit to Frank Lloyd Wright's design of the SC Johnson headquarters[3] in Wisconsin, United States.

Offices then took on an even greater importance in attracting and retaining top talent, creating an environment for optimal efficiency, and creating a true corporate brand. Few organizations took that to the level that Google did. Google created offices that made space for all elements of the human experience at work including collaboration areas, quiet spaces, the best technology, on-site meals, fitness centers, and non-work-related activities like intramural sports, art programs and, of course, the ability to bring your dog to work. Their office philosophy paid off – in 2019 alone, Google was named the number one workplace according to The Reputation Institute[4], awarded for best company culture according to Comparably[5], and ranked in the top ten places to work according to Glassdoor[6].

Over time, the role of the workplace has changed and its looks have evolved. From file storage to single offices, to cubicles and open workspaces, all the way to dog friendly collaboration spaces. Up until 2020, the physical office was a main character in the story of work. But then the story took a turn when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and the home office took center stage.

The effects of pandemic induced remote work

The pandemic sparked a fundamental shift in the role that work plays in the lives of employees, and a change in expectations from employers. The extended period of fully remote and hybrid work arrangements forced companies to redefine their processes and procedures to press forward during a historical health crisis. In this section we will explore how the pandemic has changed the relationships between employee, employer and the workplace.

> All at once, in what felt like an alternate universe, the second week of March 2020 became a landmark moment in office and work culture.

1. http://www.museicapitolini.org/en/collezioni/percorsi_per_sale/tabularium
2. https://digitaltrade.blog.gov.uk/2022/02/15/old-admiralty-building-past-present-and-future-workplace/
3. https://www.commercialcafe.com/blog/brief-history-open-office-concept/
4. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20190725005084/en/Google-Retains-Rank-as-World%E2%80%99s-Most-Reputable-Employer-in-Reputation-Institute%E2%80%99s-2019-Global-Workplace-100-Study
5. https://www.fastcompany.com/40502370/can-you-guess-which-tech-company-has-the-best-corporate-culture
6. https://www.glassdoor.com/Award/Best-Places-to-Work-2019-LST_KQ0,24.htm

Researchers
have calculated
that during the
pandemic, **workers
have been saving
approximately
$500 per month**
in reduced work-
related expenses.

Source: Gartner, Inc.

There will likely be decades worth of research done analyzing the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of work, we must examine the impact of remote work and isolation from the traditional workplace, along with technology's role. Employees and employers saw many benefits of the remote work environment. Employees enjoyed a short commute to their kitchen or home office, reduced daily costs for things like gas and food, greater flexibility, and in some cases, better work-life balance. "Researchers have calculated that during the pandemic, workers have been saving approximately $500 per month in reduced work-related expenses.[7]"

However, while many experienced a certain level of comfort and productivity working from home, others felt the opposite. There was a drastic impact on mental health, burnout, and separation of work-life balance. All these factors impacted the way in which employees and employers managed through the pandemic.

1. Higher than normal employee turnover rates

The experience of the remote working environment served as a catalyst for employees to question the true purpose of work. It created noticeable gaps between employee and employer expectations which has resulted in historically high turnover rates across the globe. In previous years, companies tackled attrition by 'fixing what's broken' and reactively reshaping the work experience for employees by providing more professional growth opportunities, increasing compensation, and creating more recognition opportunities. Those traditional means of retention, however, have not had the same impact in a post-pandemic economy. Disconnected values, new lifestyle aspirations, blurred lines between work and personal life, and burn-out have been a few of the leading drivers of attrition today. The remote work environment drove employees to reevaluate their priorities, bringing more personal values to the surface. According to Gartner[8]:
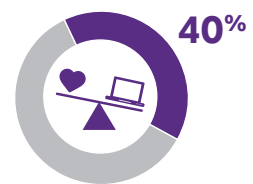
Employee remote working effects
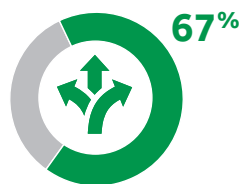
67% Increased expectations for working flexibility
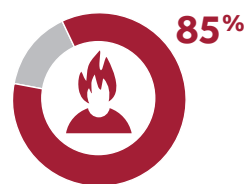
85% Experienced more burnout

40% Experienced worsening work/life balance

Source: Gartner, Inc.

Employees are now seeking career opportunities where companies can meet more personal needs and extend premium offerings to their workforce. Employees feel less connected to their organizations than they have historically, and working from home, it is much easier to find time to look for new roles if the company does not fit their values. In fact, the same Gartner study as referenced above shows that 41% of employees considering new positions looked outside their organization first.

7. Source: Gartner, Inc. | Future of Work Reinvented: Human-Centric Work Design, March 2022
8. Source: Gartner, Inc. | Why Employees Are Leaving: A Framework to Understand Attrition, October 2021
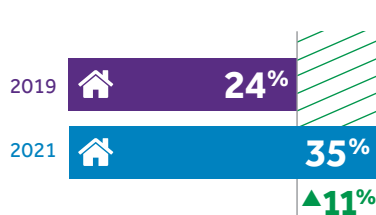
2. Employee attitudes around return to work

After being stuck at home for two years, many would have thought the rush to return to work in physical corporate offices would be exciting. While that may be the case for some, it is not for everyone. In fact, hesitancy to go back to the office full-time has increased as employee attitudes continue to evolve. Hybrid work scenarios are becoming increasingly popular, offering a balance between meeting employees varying preferences to work in-office and/or work remotely. New technologies have been adopted to ensure all employees can equally contribute and influence business decisions from anywhere. Gartner's study shows that[9]:
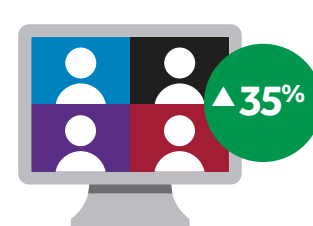
Working preference*

27%
Fully remote

34%
Hybrid
Only 1-2 days/week
at the office

26%
Office
3-4 days/week
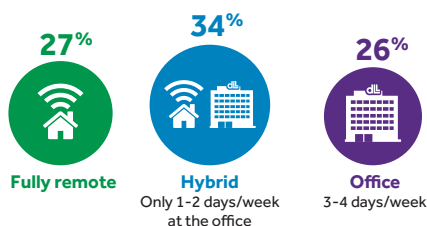
Source: Gartner, Inc.

Work from home preference
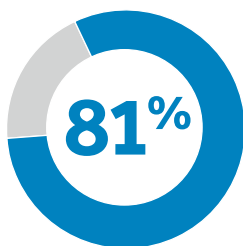
2019 — **24%**

2021 — **35%**

▲**11%**

Virtual meeting preference

▲**35%**

*The remaining 13% only wanting to work from home a few times a month, or never"

Needless to say, employees are demanding the right infrastructure, technology, and flexibility to work in all environments, whether that be in-office or working from home. According to Gartner's research[10], this will require companies to adopt a "Distributed Enterprise" infrastructure to support and ensure consistent experiences across hybrid, in-office, work-at-home, and mobile workers while maintaining productivity, engagement, and creating a holistic office experience. Without the necessary tools, employees are more inclined to look for roles outside of their organization. In fact, Gartner's research[11] found that 55% of employees agree that having work location flexibility will be a deciding factor in the future of their employment.

3. Organizations leading the way in hybrid structures

Global companies such as Microsoft, Google, and Amazon are a few of the many leading companies who have been taking a human-centric approach for years and are continuing to find success in the hybrid world. Even amidst the great resignation, Google is in the top 5% of similar sized companies for employee retention, and 81% of their employees are excited to go to work each day according to Comparably[12]. Those statistics were reported after Google's leadership requested that employees return to a physical office three days per week.

Google employees that are excited to return to a physical office three days per week (per their leadership's request):

81%

Source: Comparably

How were they so successful? Google strategically designed an unconventional office workspace "to stimulate creativity and ultimately encourage social interactions with members from structurally separate teams.[13]" They formulated their culture to focus on their employees rather than the business in order to embody their philosophy of "life at Google is not all work." They do this by providing the right amenities, with collaborative and comfortable spaces, and above all, the right office technology to make the physical office a more effective place to get their work done. Their office design was created to promote organic meetings, inspire innovation and offer advanced technological infrastructure. Google has made their offices

9.   Source: Gartner, Inc | Make Hybrid Meetings Successful, 2021
10. Source: Gartner, Inc | Research Connections: Enabling Technology for Human-Centric Hybrid Workplaces, 2021
11. Source: Gartner, Inc | 3 Hybrid Work Challenges Driving Employee Fatigue, March 2021
12. https://www.comparably.com/companies/google/retention
13. https://www.workspacedesign.co.uk/what-can-we-learn-from-googles-offices-about-workplace-design/

an accessible and fun environment to work in, making it a hub where employees come to efficiently innovate together. Google is not alone in their hybrid work approach, but they have provided a roadmap for other organizations who have begun the process of redefining their offices to offer similar experiences and resources.

The Future of the Physical Office

As restrictions subside, and the return-to-work plans are developed, we cannot underestimate the value of a physical office space, and what that means for employees today. It goes without saying that the future of the physical workplace will require more than renovated spaces – it will demand the right technology infrastructure to meet the individual needs of all employees, at all levels of the organization, and provide both flexibility and autonomy. So, what exactly should leaders be considering when creating an office space where employees can thrive? The answer to that question is going to vary, of course, but the one point everyone can agree on is that the office must be a destination where employees have tools and resources not found in their home offices. It must be an atmosphere that encourages creativity, efficiency, community, and innovation while putting the personal well-being of employees at the forefront. Let's explore what those considerations should be.

Safety

Key health and safety procedures, equipment, and technology are critical as businesses prioritize employee's well-being. This will require contact tracing technology, various sanitization tools at every part of the office, and contactless technologies for building entries or check-in kiosks. In response to the airborne nature of COVID-19, there has been an emphasis on air circulation and filtration system that allow for proper air flow to fight harmful airborne contaminants[14] throughout offices. These will not only enhance the employee experience but also put their personal well-being and safety at the heart of the human-centric office design.

14. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/ventilation.html

CRE leaders expected to adopt space reservation apps:

75%
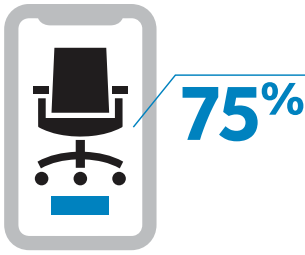
Source: Gartner, Inc.

Space Reservation Technology

Hotel desking, shared seating, and shared collaboration spaces have been trending components as successful hybrid working strategies are implemented. It is predicted that "the percentage of employees in shared seating will double to over 40% by 2023.[15]" This requires the right technology like space reservation applications and devices like monitors and smart boards to help manage how many employees work from the office at a given time. These types of technology help reduce administrative burden and increase employees' confidence related to scheduling their office time appropriately. Seventy-five percent of CRE leaders are expected to adopt space reservation apps soon. This type of technology is critical to prioritize space planning, forecasting, real-time utilization, and more.

Office Furniture

With the new blueprint of the office, there is an increased need for different types of office furniture. Sitting at a desk for eight hours a day has been proven to be detrimental to one's health[16]. Having the right ergonomic furniture to promote standing and moving throughout the office will allow for a more comfortable work experience and increased productivity[17]. This means populating the office with furniture like standing desks, lounge furniture, ergonomic office chairs, meeting pods and single work pods. Another hybrid-born challenge is the need for personal storage at work, especially amidst shared spaces. While shared seating becomes more prevalent, gone are the days of keeping personal items like chargers, travel bags, and changes of clothes at your desk. There is a need for employees to safely store work-related and personal items at the office. Lockers are proving to be a great furniture solution to provide this space for employees.

Equipment & Accessories

In a hybrid work environment, it is imperative that employees have the latest office equipment and technology available at home and in the office. This includes laptops, multi-function printers, pro audio-visual equipment, secondary monitors, lighting for optimal productivity, docking stations and more. Arming employees with these types of office supplies is essential to their productivity and success no matter where they are working from, coupled with the means for employees to purchase additional technology as needed for their remote working space.

Even within the office, providing the right meeting solutions such as videoconferencing room systems and digital displays in meeting spaces is crucial for the creation of an inclusive experience for all employees, regardless of work location. This may be accomplished through a "meeting-room-as-a-service"[18] offering, by providing the right solutions from end-to-end such as design and equipment procurement, to additional infrastructure. This can also be supported by the right flexible financing solutions to create a high-tech collaborative experience for all, without major capital investment. According to the same Gartner source, this includes pro audio and video hardware like microphones that are designed to capture human voice sounds from all participants in the room, complemented by noise reduction hardware. The AV technology extends to open collaboration spaces as well, where hardware like the Poly Studio X series can create audio fencing to block noise from a certain range. It also includes digital

15. Source: Gartner, Inc | 5 Ways Shared Seating Will Change the Workplace, April 2021
16. https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/expert-answers/sitting/faq-20058005#:~:text=Any%20extended%20sitting%20%E2%80%94such%20as%20at%20a,risks%20of%20dying%20posed%20by%20obesity%20and%20smoking.
17. https://www.allaroundmoving.com/what-sets-ergonomic-furniture-apart-from-regular-office-furniture/
18. Source: Gartner, Inc | Video-Enable Meeting Rooms for Collaboration Equity in Hybrid Workplaces, December 2021

whiteboards that allow for collaborative interaction from multiple participants, and even video camera hardware that puts in-room participants into their own windows for remote participants, as shared by Gartner.

Cloud-Based Technologies and IT Infrastructure

Deploying the right cloud-based technologies for remote monitoring, management, security, and support are key assets businesses must prioritize as hybrid work becomes a standard reality. This includes elements like cloud-based print services for improved device and print management with greater transparency into device usage, while being proactive and providing predictive support where necessary. Businesses are investing deeply into cloud, Internet of Things (IoT), and data analytics to enhance service delivery, service operations, fleet management, and field support[19] to improve services and enhance experiences.

Sustainability and Green Efforts in the Physical Office

The importance of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policies have grown for both businesses and consumers, impacting consumer buying decisions more than ever before[20]. According to the Sixth Carbon Report[21] by the Committee for Climate Change, the number of emails sent by employees in the United Kingdom increased by more than 800,000 from 2019 to 2020 as a result of remote work. This equates to approximately five transatlantic flights worth of carbon emissions[22].

Environmental effects of remote working

Emails sent by employees in the United Kingdom

2019

▲ 800k

2020

=

Five transatlantic flights worth of carbon emissions*

CO_2 CO_2 CO_2

CO_2 CO_2

*Approximate

Source: SNC-Lavalin
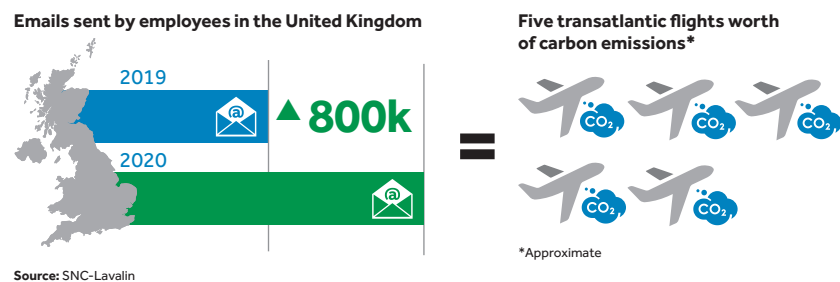
As organizations create their hybrid work plans, it is key that they take into consideration the environmental impact of their people, processes, and technology. Some considerations include implementing various sustainability programs, updating less-than-energy efficient assets like old multi-function printers, using energy-saving lighting and recycled paper, and encouraging employees to think with a carbon neutral lens.

Based on a March 2022 survey of DLL's largest US based office technology dealer partners, dealers have identified that sustainability is a significant opportunity for their businesses and that it requires solutions that work for all stakeholders. They noted that corporate responsibility is a priority, along with keeping up with customer demands and expectations. For some, that means implementing customer toner core recycling programs, boxing programs, and Styrofoam and cardboard recycling from manufacturer packaging. If there's one thing to be learned, that is, in order to build momentum in today's business environment, implementing economically friendly processes and procedures at every step of the lifecycle is critical for future success.

19. Source: IDC | #US48920922 | Enabling a New Print Services Model for the Hybrid Workforce, March 2022
20. Source: ELFA | THE ESG IMPERATIVE, Understanding the Opportunities for the Equipment Leasing and Finance Industry, 2022
21. https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/sixth-carbon-budget/
22. How can the hybrid working environment be sustainable for employees and the planet? – SNC-Lavalin (snclavalin.com)

Conclusion

The pandemic drove a fundamental shift in employees' expectations and requirements for their working environment. As organizations evaluate their go-forward office strategy, it is evident that the "human-centric" approach to the new office blueprint will remain the expectation of employees for the foreseeable future. The design of tomorrow's workplace plays a central role in the workforce of tomorrow. For office equipment and technology dealers across the globe, this means staying one step ahead of the curve by:

1. Expanding the portfolio of offerings to new types of office equipment and technology that are critical for the new office blueprint.

2. Adopting a consultative approach to selling to ensure that you as a business partner are meeting the human-centric demands of the workplace while staying close to customers through every single step of the process.

3. Remaining agile in your approach. If the last two years have taught our industry anything, it is to stay close to current trends, to your customers, their needs, and the latest technology to best serve them.

Want to learn more? Contact our team today:

Global Office Equipment contact form

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