

WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE

Could we make the workplace more resilient, better, healthier, safer, more productive, sustainable and funnier?



WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE – on the back of COVID19

On the back of COVID-19 a short term and a long-term perspective;

The short term operational “here and now” focus; new distances between people in the workplace layout, analyse the capacity of co-workers simultaneously present in the building, adjustment of services – especially cleaning.

The strategic long-term focus - better, above and beyond; reconsider your Real Estate strategy and future need of space. Reconsider ways of working on the learnings from Covid-19. Remember where we were challenged before Covid-19 and consider how we can deal with those challenges in a new way – raise the bar from good to much better!

The KPI’s are still the same

Attracting and retaining employees and ensuring they are productive. Cost-efficiency, transparency, brand protection and consistency. We need to deal with them in new ways and with a much more people-centric focus, where the workplace on the back of COVID-19 needs to offer much safer and healthier environments – with strong expectations to deliver on sustainability, flexible work conditions with great curated service experiences regardless where you choose to work.

How strategic and long term focused the single organisation will look at the future of work on the back of COVID-19, will be very individual and often in a close connection to their existing perception of work. Do they see work as a place, work as an activity, work as experiences or work as community first - then work gets done? This will differ across industries and even in the same industry you will find huge differences in the maturity on how you look at the workplace as a strategic tool to support you reach the organisations criteria of success.

The real estate considerations; Where will we locate globally in connection to how countries and healthcare systems have handled the pandemic? How fragile did it make us? What will our real estate-location strategy look like in the future – which countries will we withdraw from and which should we expand into? Will we bring previously out-sourced production back to domestic production? How will our building portfolio strategy look in the future – do we change strategy from few and larger locations in bigger cities, to a more decentralised strategy on building sizes, types and locations to give us more flexibility to scale, the ability to become more agile on demands to fast decisions on close or open up? Will we need to divide large high rise & other office buildings into smaller zones with separate logistic, to ensure fast isolation of future pandemic? How will our future need of space look like – probably less, depending on what we activate in the “workplace of the future toolbox” – travel less, more virtual meetings, increased work from home and maybe even show up at the office in different tams on different time slots over the day?. For sure these considerations need to be taken, before we zoom in on the individual building and the design & service of the workplace.

Themes that will reflect the workplace of the future:

Safer and healthier: Shift focus from not only complying with new social distance requirements, but creating an overall healthier workplace by focusing on how workplace design, nudging of new behaviour, sport programs, healthy food, nutrition etc. all together can reduce, already before the pandemic, high sick leave, making us more resilient towards future pandemics and at the same time increase productivity. “Can we vaccinate the workplace” against future pandemics? Will we see the rise of a “Pandemic Safe Workplace Certification” in the same way we have different rankings for sustainability? (LEED, DGNB, BREAM - platin, gold, silver etc.)

The toolbox of “where to work” in the future: We will certainly see a much larger range of offers and more flexible solutions in the toolbox when choosing where to work in the future – a combination of three types of workplaces; The office, the working at home station and maybe also the rise of the local “virtual meeting hub” close to where you live - an option for employees who cannot host all kinds of tools for virtual collaboration in the home office. Or the professionalisation of the many Co-working concepts to be more digitalized and advanced when it comes to technology, a range of virtual meetings formats and sizes – and not only bringing many people, changing people, close quarters, social events, casual collaboration, high-fives and good fun together in very space efficient crowded hot-desking areas. Maybe the banking industry will convert some of their branches to host local and decentralised virtual meeting formats with all the latest technology to host the brainstorm sessions, hackathons, development sessions we cannot do from home – and cannot do physical when not traveling as much as we used to. Maybe something also to be offered to the whole local community?

Remote work / Working from home; Needless to say, that maybe the world’s largest eco-experiment on home working have taught us to see what remote work can and cannot do. Many studies have shown what remote work delivers on; high flexibility, free choice of when and where to work, and avoiding long commutes. The flip side is however that the employees who works the most from home also experiences a lack of collaboration, lack of communication and the feeling of loneliness. So, as the work at home definitely will increase, we will need to take care of the downsides both in terms of how the remote work should not be seen as an either-or solution, but a combination, where we will work both at the office and remote. Employers will need to deal with a huge professionalisation of the work at home concept. Both in connection to IT and technology platforms, in connection to how mind, body, furniture and virtual break outs is added. And by creating a mutual behaviour on how we are visible and present online ensuring colleagues at the receiving end to notice – and ensuring clock-outs and disconnecting when workday’s over. All this must be handled as professionally as we run the workplace at the office – this will become the employer’s responsibility. Including delivering the home working package; inventory, IT and a range of services, furniture packages, modules of small, medium, large - set up and service, and topped with great on-demand-service experience – lunch packages, and other great experiences to ensure employees are productive and not “out of sight out of mind” but with a strong sense of belonging to the organisation. So it’s not only when being at the office you get the full service package.

The point of an office; we will need to rethink the office to deliver much more as a mutual arena for collaboration, communication, innovation and informal meetings in many formats. The increasing of atomisation, digitalisation & artificial intelligence will put an increased focus on research, innovation, education and continuing education in world class. It’s not about coming back to the days before COVID-19 but place the organisation in a changed view of the world. So, we must ask ourselves what makes us innovative and give us the ability to move fast towards future challenged and deliver world class – where also speed can be an important factor? In this context the office must be worth commuting and showing up for! A melting pot of colleagues being part of communities and different working cultures, collaborating in many formats – also celebrating workplace relationships as a very important thing to drive employee engagement, productivity and innovation.

For the big workplace frontrunners, we will see much stronger design-coded workplaces to showcase the organisation’s DNA and purpose. Desk and chair will still be part of the lay out – but in much more fun and collaborating settings – now you have your focused work desk at home – this is for collaborating! We will see new meeting formats where technology needs to offer more seamless and spontaneous virtual meetings across locations – the rise of the virtual cafés where we “safely” bump into each other - for those in the same time zone... other informal virtual formats also to be requested if we cannot

travel as much as before ... away with the meeting table between us – also in the virtual meeting – and in with new ways of having group meetings at both ends of the line. We will see a demand of having as many virtual meetings formats as we see physical formats at the office today. The office will have to deliver very highly on employee satisfaction impact and the quality of the experience you bring home!

Great curated service experience; if agreed on the future 'point of an office' – we can probably also agree on the increasing demand for an even greater service experience and how they are being curated.

Campus experience strategies are already being implemented by global first movers. In the future these experiences will be much more advanced than the mainstream traditional service touchpoints and user journey of today. It's a change of logic, going from a traditional service logic as a one size fits all, to a user perspective logic – acknowledge that the user is many different archetypes and therefore a need to know the 'whole-self personas' on a range of archetypes and user profiles, to be able to deliver on demand individual service experience above and beyond what we do right now.

It will consist of very advanced programmes for mental and physical wellbeing, healthy F&B choices and work-life balance. There will be an increasing demand for "flexucation offers" - ongoing education while still being at work – and maybe the home office will be the platform for E-learning and successive education and learning, as the office will be the platform where we meet and train and harvest all the new skills and knowledge we have got from education – sharing learning itself becomes a great experience. There will be a critical audience demanding a continuously evolving focus on newness and expectations to get authentic and memorable live experiences, when being at the office!

There will be experiences reaching out and engaging with the local community to interact and to showcase the organisations purpose and that sharing is caring – we need to show public spirit! Open doors and engagement with local community goes both ways, on a wide range of interaction on both local & global matters driving the sense of belonging – acknowledging that collaboration and socializing also is productive.

This will put new demands to the service personnel delivering the experience – we will see new profiles coming from the venue world and profiles with strong network community building skills. Very extrovert profiles who will be frontrunners and "be the change" showing colleagues the way we want future behaviour to be – and by that, nudging and having the license to ACT according to values, CSR and company DNA – in all the new manners of safety and much more than ticking boxes on specific touchpoints, in specific areas of the workplace. This force of experience magicians is supporting employee flexibility only focusing on their needs and their productivity – it is high level practical and emotional support – both at the office as well as at home – ensuring a clean and safe environment on top of it all.

There may be two categories of services to be delivered and thereof two types of profiles; The FM services such as cleaning, engineering, security etc. and the more front experience derivable as mentioned above where even food becomes theatrical kitchens. This will call for new recruitment channels, news ways of onboarding and training – even from the start focusing on creating a strong community feeling and a very ambitious career path to retain the front experience leads. There will be a whole world of live venues and experiences out there to compete and to tempt! However, it is important to mention that all service employees will be valued and recognised with the same value. The crisis has highlighted that service personnel are of critical importance whether they be support in the healthcare industry, cleaners or handymen. The critical role these members of the community have played, both during the crisis and in the coming return to a new normal has been recognised a lot!

Sustainability;

Since we will probably be travelling less, built into this restructuring after COVID19 will be more climate considerations, as people have used their time in lockdown to reassess the pace of life and appreciate the positive effects on their natural environment. So, crises or not – the climate agenda is still here – driven by the demand from consumer. We already know that next generation will choose the employer that have a strong and clear agenda on sustainability. Many companies around the world is already acknowledging this, having the business cases ready showing that the green conversion is something that brings ROI. For the workplace, things like energy efficiency and development of new sustainable products like furniture that releases less CO2 and to be recycled later, will increase. Focus will be on both building physics sustainability, economic and social sustainability.

For the look and feel at the workplace, we already see a return to the use of natural materials, using much more biophilia in the workplace, less waste on both food, paper and other resources. The future employees need to be part of a more activist approach to avoid climate change, to do something good for the climate everyday – so the organisation needs to offer / support a lot of nudging on a daily basis to reduce waste, improve recycling, upcycling, transformation to greener products – repairing things instead of buying and wasting.

Technology;

After COVID-19 we will see a continuous and increased reliance on technology to connect people and business with a stronger integration between technology, workplace and experience.

Technology will be used as nudging giving us information about; the two meters distance, peak capacity in buildings or at work floors, gyms and restaurants so we can plan our activities.

Already now we see examples on COVID dashboard that gives us real time data on the overall social distances all over in the building.

Sanitizer trackers will be connected individually to each employee and any type of sanitizer at the office will give you information about your sanitizer status (clean or not clean) and also give dashboard information about when to fill specific sanitiser. You will have thermometers on your phone, and get push information when entering the workplace with suggestion on the nearest clean and free work desk, meeting room etc. Technology will give us on time data on how pandemic-resilient our building and workplace have been today?

Technology will also be used to deliver on time, individual great curated services – both at the office as well as at home – we expect high quality on both locations! Linking work at home and at the office will also see the rise of new types of software to better support virtual meetings where you can share documents, interact more informal and socialize, share brainstorm etc. much better than in many of the formats we have using under COVID-19. In connection to the professionalising of the work from home station, a new demand for remote IT help desk will arise – not only virtual but also to support home visit IT setup and successive support when hardware's not working.

Augmented reality will be used for service personnel to train all the new cleaning procedures, food handling, among other new services.

We will see lots of new technology delivering no-touch tech, automated motion controlled, facial recognition and voice activated workflows. Contactless is the new thing as much as we can get!!

Technology may also give us possibilities moving seamlessly between physical and virtual, at home, on the go or in the office, mimicking visiting and experiencing interaction in real life through VR/AR solutions. The question is how much of this we want? And how much of this we will get without wanting it?

We may see a continuous health monitoring and surveillance, since we already now see a new willingness to use monitoring of citizens to track whereabouts and interactions. With due respect

to GDPR and the ethical aspects, we can capture data on people's actions and interactions at the workplace – and maybe some governments will allow even to capture your where-about outside the office – leaving us with the ethical decision to make about this.

For some of these technologies speed is important to ensure we can open up our workplaces ASAP – ensuring we have the nudging and technology to help us out – for some lines to be drawn for sure.

Cost

The focus on cost will continue for a long time. Many businesses may seek to cut costs where possible, for example renegotiating contracts with suppliers or those providing outsourced support, lease contracts when exiting out of office space etc. and if done right, there will be a potential to optimise the use of space depending on what and how you activate the work from home concepts or in general remote working. This could – with the right combination – represent a huge value to be spent elsewhere – maybe to be reinvested in the employees?

There are signs that perception on how to gain potential for cutting cost is changing to a more “intelligent” – or indirect way to cutting cost, than the traditional ones mentioned above.

A new understanding of the need to invest up front in the people to ensure you get ROI later – exx. in reducing sick leave, increasing engagement, retention and attraction – and in the end increasing productivity! To be able to make the right decisions and strategies on this cost agenda, we will need data and evidence to document the right match between investment and the expected maybe doubled, tribble, or even more ROI.

New role of leadership

A more people centric approach to leadership has arrived - a new and more diverse understanding of what makes us productive. It's not only to run faster and bring in more technology – but getting knowledge on “the whole-self personas and archetypes” to ensure we deliver great experience on well mind and well body programs, having a best friend at work and the sense of belonging. It's about great onboarding programs and continuously learning and development programs, about community engagement and all that's making us proud to work exactly where we are.

In the slipstream of this C-level people centric focus we will also see the rise of a new type of leadership, with a new task being added on top of many others; the remote work leadership and proactive distance feedback culture, have arrived. Businesses will need to show they are supporting employees and being understanding and flexible to their needs.

It's a leadership role developing from the old fashion leadership perception as something where you can order and demand, to something where you need to provide and support – and now to what you could call ‘responsible human leadership’ - not only towards leading employees but also a role where you must practice huge public spirit and society responsibility.

There will be an increasing focus on which businesses have gone ‘above and beyond’ to support employees and make a positive contribution to society!

And rumours will spread fast!

So; let's make our workplaces more resilient, better, healthier, safer, more productive, sustainable and much more fun to work in.

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