



DEFINING THE WORKPLACE
OF THE 20'S



CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| REMOTE WORKING & FLEXIBILITY | 6 |
| TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATION | 8 |
| PEOPLE & CULTURE | 10 |
| PLACES & SPACES | 12 |
| HEALTH & WELLNESS | 14 |
| RESULTS & OUTCOMES | 16 |

The importance of the office has only been enhanced through the most disruptive year since World War II. Even in the now cliched post-covid world, the shockwaves of the sudden and violent shift in working methods will drive the way we do business into the twenties.

Many of the features we now see everywhere had been identified as the future of work for decades – flexibility, technology, collaboration, wellness and results-driven. 2020 arrived as if our 20th century working methods would continue to subsist in the workplace and the slow shift towards a vague and non-specific ‘Future of Work’ continued. Enter Covid-19.

In a matter of weeks, billions of people around the globe were working from home. Sales of Zoom and other video communications platforms skyrocketed as businesses large and small scrambled to set up systems to stay in touch with staff. Keyboards, mice, video cameras, laptops, toilet paper and a myriad of other items were cleaned out of stock as the remote working hubris began. IT managers and organisations went into overdrive working upwards of 100 hours per week helping the unprepared or ill-prepared set up all manner of remote technology systems. From Melbourne to Manila to Manhattan, dining room tables and kitchen benches were transformed to C-suites, workstations and schoolrooms. And just like that, the future of work was here.

OR WAS IT?

See, while without a doubt Covid-19 has brought about much of the infrastructure and the ways of working that will enable the future of work, the future of work will in all likelihood not be defined by a global pandemic permanently incumbent on the race. Be it vaccines or suppression of the virus to a point where we can live with it, a post-covid world is ahead.

Therefore, we must explore how the dramatic impacts of the work-from-home experiment and the successful office environment merge to define the workplace of the 20’s.



REMOTE WORKING & FLEXIBILITY

The early part of 2020 was defined by many people saying “The office is dead, everyone will work from home from now on”. However, very quickly people realized they were missing some of the vital ingredients of their organisation. Remote working and flexibility must work together with a thriving workplace to achieve optimum business outcomes.

Key Considerations:

- > Remote working and flexibility are not the same
 - › Flexibility means choice to the employee as to where and when they want to work, not dictating remote work. Even dictated Team A/Team B setups or rostered days in the office are not flexible arrangements
 - › A person that works flexibly may not work remotely, i.e. a staff member could work in the office four days from 6am to 4pm. A person working remotely may not work flexibly, for example, a person may work from home, but may work every day from 9 am to 5pm.
 - › Remote working is not necessarily working from home – it could be working from another office or a serviced office
- > Some of the advantages of remote working should be considered when planning for future flexible working
 - › Reduced commute times means staff can have more time in their day. If staff worked from the office 3-4 days per week, they could gain up to 4 hours per week that would have been otherwise used travelling
 - › Ability to look after children or drop them at school
- > Demographics of each team member impacts on how they approached things throughout 2020.
 - › Impact of children working from home at the same time – not ideal in any instance
 - › People that are not as disciplined may have trouble focusing on the task at hand while away from the office for an extended period
 - › Need to be aware that remote working works well for some, but doesn't work at all for others
- > Roles of staff will have an impact on the post-2020 workplace:
 - › Management staff will have an expectation to be in the office a reasonable portion of time.
 - › Staff that work largely solo, for example code writers may prefer to work remotely more often. This needs to be balanced with the need to feel part of a team, not just a part of the 'gig' economy.
 - › People who could work at client sites may see less need to come to the office at all
- > Activities undertaken will impact degree of remote working
 - › Activities that can be done at home or remotely such as paperwork, emails, writing reports may no longer need be done at the office
 - › Collaboration tasks, such as exploring new ideas and discussing projects will play a major part in the physical workplace
 - › Range of spaces will need to be catered for going forward
- > Tailor your expectations to your values as a business. Don't assume everyone will want to work from home, or assume everyone will want to come to work.
 - › Analyse what set up works best for your business
 - › Survey your people to see where their expectations lie
 - › Strike a balance of flexibility and rigidity that doesn't compromise your business direction. This may include hiring staff that are better aligned to your values



TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATION

2020 has accelerated trends on the use of technology and this will ensure that technology has a dramatic impact on the physical office going forward.

Key Considerations:

- > Cloud Software and Software as a Service offers flexibility and scalability to organisations during volatile times. Impacts on the physical office include:
 - › Reduced space for comms areas, therefore more space for staff breakout and collaboration zones
 - › Reduced expenses in onsite comms, for example, supplementary air conditioning, fire suppression systems and physical security expenses
 - › Flexibility means work can happen from anywhere, which will enable hiring of staff in remote locations or enable more working from home, which in turn may reduce floorspace
- > Video Communication enables meaningful meetings to occur anywhere at any time. Dramatic increase in video meetings will impact the physical spaces:
 - › Need for small VC rooms or spaces where video meetings can take place at any time
 - › Need for integrated technology in boardrooms and meeting rooms to ensure quality of sound and vision for meetings held in these rooms
- › May impact interstate hot-desking, where a team member would use hot desk after having one client meeting. Instead, interstate or intercity trips may be longer due to combining multiple meetings into one trip (i.e. a few days) as for one meeting a VC meeting could be held instead.
- › Not just more formal meeting settings such as Zoom or Teams, but also quick video calls using FaceTime or WhatsApp video. This can be very useful showing a client or a colleague how to fix something, or what a space looks like.
- > Telecommunications will remain as important as ever, but from experience over the last few months, many organisations do not have an effective and flexible system. Impacts on the workplace are as follows:
 - › Increase in use of softphones and mobile apps for an integrated system will reduce cabling in offices
 - › Virtual phone system will be an enabler for remote working. Zoom and Teams both have softphone options, but there are a myriad of other providers.
 - › Chats and instant messaging were vital throughout lockdown periods, and they may serve to short circuit email chains in future. They also provide a written record of informal chatter that could help resolve issues where some people can't remember what happened
- > Internet Speed will remain a key factor in the home/work divide. Most businesses have significantly better broadband speeds than the average residential home, which will impact decisions around WFH:
 - › Possible need to include contribution to staff's home broadband bill
 - › For employees who work with many programs and use a lot of internet in conjunction with others in the house, adequate bandwidth is necessary to ensure smooth business operations
 - › Office internet speeds and bandwidth will need to be maximized for increased use of cloud technologies
- > Internet of Things (IoT) will impact the way we work as we look to reduce touchpoints and enable more actions to be done remotely:
 - › Security, including being able to set alarms and enable access to staff and visitors through desktop or mobile apps without having to be physically present, for example taking deliveries at reception
 - › Services, including lighting and A/C being able to be controlled from an app without touching anything
 - › Automation in general, including app controlled lifts, automatic doors, coffee machines – minimizing touchpoints to reduce any disease transmission



PEOPLE & CULTURE

People are the key to any organisation's success, that's why it's so important to consider the needs of each individual carefully and balance with the good of the collective whole, while not compromising the value of the organisation itself. The Workplace of the 20's will have varying impacts on people, the way they interact and the way they work.

Key Considerations:

- > All the great cultures of the world have a connection to place
 - › Even though a culture may have a vast diaspora, they all connect to their place of origin.
 - › Workplace is no different – staff may work from anywhere in the world, but without a place to connect with, the culture will be weak
 - › This shows the importance of making your workplace a destination that truly embodies your organisation.
- > Culture of an organisation is developed and nurtured by retaining strong connections between people and company values. While not impossible to manage remotely, key considerations are as follows:
 - › More difficult to regularly observe business leaders setting a good example
 - › Vibe of a workplace builds momentum and atmosphere that people can feed off
- › Being in an environment with a particular culture, where behavioural expectations are maintained ensures the team is held accountable
- > Person-to-person business interaction is a vital contributor to business performance:
 - › Innovation and development of new ideas often come out of ad-hoc discussions around the office
 - › Instant feedback from senior colleagues or 'bouncing' ideas off each other as to what to write in a report, or how to respond to a customer inquiry
 - › In-person meetings provide better ability to gauge body language and pick up vibes, ensuring conflict is averted and resolutions found
- > Social interaction will likely take on new significance in a future office environment as it gives an opportunity to build stronger bonds with fellow team members beyond just work:
 - › Not just extroverts, introverts need social interaction as well
 - › Ad-hoc interaction, and water-cooler chatter provides easy connection points that remote working don't offer
 - › Need to celebrate wins together and build team camaraderie

- > New opportunities and challenges for talent management with remote environment
 - › May be an opportunity to employ remote staff in specific roles that are suited to it, which could expand your talent pool nationally or even globally
 - › Depending on the role, it may be difficult to undertake on-the-job training. While some roles will flourish, others may struggle
 - › Remote mentoring is more difficult, meaning younger employees and new starters may find it difficult to advance their careers and learn vital life-skills in person-to-person interaction
 - › Challenge will be how to attract talent that suits the role best, while at the same time offering a level of flexibility as to the work location. It will be important not to make assumptions as to the amount of remote working candidates will want to do.



PLACES & SPACES

Adapting to the changes brought about by Covid-19 have allowed people and organisations to re-define the 'where': Where we live, where we work, where our colleagues work, and indeed the interaction between all these places.

Key Considerations:

- > As mentioned, a connection to place is important for any culture, which is why it is imperative that your physical office becomes a destination of choice – a 'culture hub' for staff to collaborate and develop:
 - › Place that staff want to come to which will make you
 - › Represents your values
 - › Place where ideas can be shared spontaneously – this is much more difficult in a virtual environment
- > How much space will be required?
 - › If you reduce space because of staff working remotely, but you need to consider what happens if everyone wants to work in the office
 - › Consider increased collaboration and meeting zones
 - › Does everyone need their own desk? Some debate has arisen about hot desking, however with regular cleaning programs, good hygiene and vaccines, hot desking is a factor
- > Will your existing layout cater for new expectations around meeting room capacities, and will your meeting zones accommodate meeting technology?
 - › Existing layouts largely will not cater for a flexible model. There will need to be more collaboration areas
 - › Dedicated spaces for one person video meetings should be considered
 - › Consider creating zones rather than fixed rooms to enable more flexible meeting options
- > How much space will be required?
 - › If you reduce space because of staff working remotely, but you need to consider what happens if everyone wants to work in the office
 - › Consider increased collaboration and meeting zones
 - › Does everyone need their own desk?

- > Consider the best location for your office to cater for opportunities and challenges presented by remote and flexible working:
 - › Can you overcome commute issues or recruitment opportunities through a workplace location change?
 - › Business personnel are offered greater choice of residence through enhanced flexibility in work travel arrangements
 - › Would your organization benefit from avoiding CBD congestion through taking space in a suburban business park or stand-alone suburban tenancy?
 - › The Hub and spoke model is being increasingly embraced as a means of decentralizing office locations on the principle of a smaller central hub with additional spaces in proximity to specified regions.
- > By introducing remote work, your staff's homes effectively become an extension of your workplace:
 - › You need to consider your legal responsibility in providing an ergonomic and safe working environment
 - › Space should be an environment to enable productive work and distraction free



HEALTH & WELLNESS

The Workplace of the 20's will need to strengthen the connection between the physical environment and wellness more than ever before. We are going through a time where staying home has been promoted as being the safest space. The transition back to work and leaving that safe space is going to be challenging. Keeping employee's mental health as a priority is imperative to creating a safe workplace. The changes we can make in the workplace to help promote health and well-being are both physical and psychological. The workplace must act as a 'sanctuary' for employees, where staff can come together to find support and support each other.

Key Considerations:

- > General awareness and expectations around hygiene have dramatically increased over recent months, and adequate hygiene and sanitation programs must be adopted to suit:
 - › Hygienic practices will drive down general absentees from colds and flu, which will save businesses thousands of dollars in staff leave per year
 - › Demonstrating commitment to hygiene shows social responsibility as an organisation

- > Physical changes to the space to promote wellness
 - › Implementing biophilic design has been proven to reduce stress and support mental health
 - › Ensuring your space makes the most of natural light in order to minimise the health risks of fluorescent lighting. If staff lack access to natural light, they may chose to stay home, where they may have access to sunlight in their backyard
 - › Does your space incorporate zones that promote productivity, while maintaining elements of flexibility that provide for relaxation, support and collaboration.
- > Organisations can support the physical wellbeing through access to wellness facilities, or implementation of an organisational staff wellness and fitness program.
 - › Providing healthy food options for breakfast and/or lunch to promote general wellbeing of staff
 - › Implement company-wide programs such as flu vaccines (and covid vaccines in future!)
 - › Provide gym memberships and other exercise regimes to promote physical fitness

- > Support of mental wellbeing of staff can take many forms as well. In addition to physical wellbeing contributing to mental wellbeing, the following could be considered:
 - › Ensuring that conversations about mental health are held regularly
 - › Allowing staff to take mental health days off
 - › Provide staff with out of work training that will help with life skills, such as financial management and stress management
- > Workplace wellness extends beyond the physical office to also the home office. It is important that necessary programs and precautions are taken to maintain the safety and wellbeing of staff if an arrangement is in place for extended working from home:
 - › Ergonomic work set-ups should be prioritised
 - › Ensure the setup enables a defined line between home and work, i.e. kitchen table is not an ideal workplace location



RESULTS & OUTCOMES

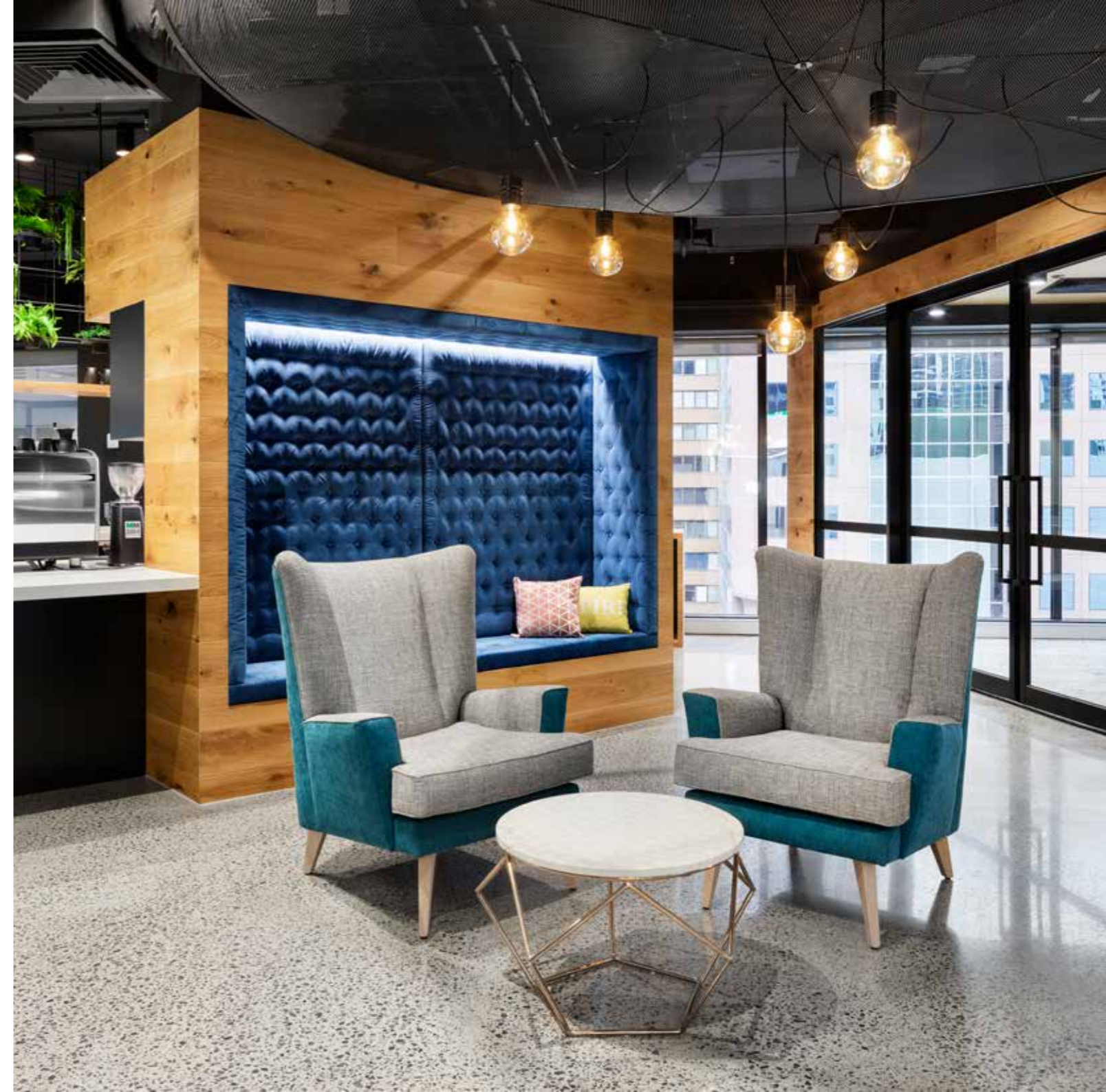
Ultimately, with all the disruption and change, businesses still need to be very much focussed on outcomes to ensure the sustainability of their respective business model.

- > Planning for the return to work, along with expected milestones should be completed very carefully.
 - › Lack of a plan may see staff unwittingly lower their productivity levels – as they are unsure what to do next.
 - › Set your expectations clearly to staff to prevent ambiguity
 - › Check your progress against milestones regularly to ensure you are on track
- > Management technology will enable businesses to better track commercial outcomes. Impacts include:
 - › Task management software to ensure things are getting done and tasks shared appropriately across the team, regardless of if they are working in the office
 - › Increased reliance on Key Performance Indicators and numbers given the potential increase in remote working, hence the need for programs that automatically track staff activities. Day-to-day on the job management will be more difficult with staff working in different locations, hence the need for focus on measuring outputs to ensure business outcomes.
 - › Room and desk booking platforms to keep track of who is in the office and when

- > Your real estate strategy should form part of your overall business strategy
 - › Work with real estate professionals to ensure you make the most of the combination of market conditions, identifying future trends and mitigating risk of obligations
 - › Your workplace design plans in terms of head count, collaborative opportunities

Workplace in the 20's will be dynamic and different to anything we've experienced before. Many organisations will likely experiment with different working models as they come to grips with the fallout of a once-in-a-century pandemic. Many businesses will choose one path initially, then will change course as the outcomes fail to meet expectations. And their decisions will largely revolve around the points we have covered.

Ultimately, the right solution will come down to the secret to any successful business outcome: finding what works for them and then executing it violently.





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