

The Future of Work

Navigating and Supporting the
New Hybrid Workplace Realities

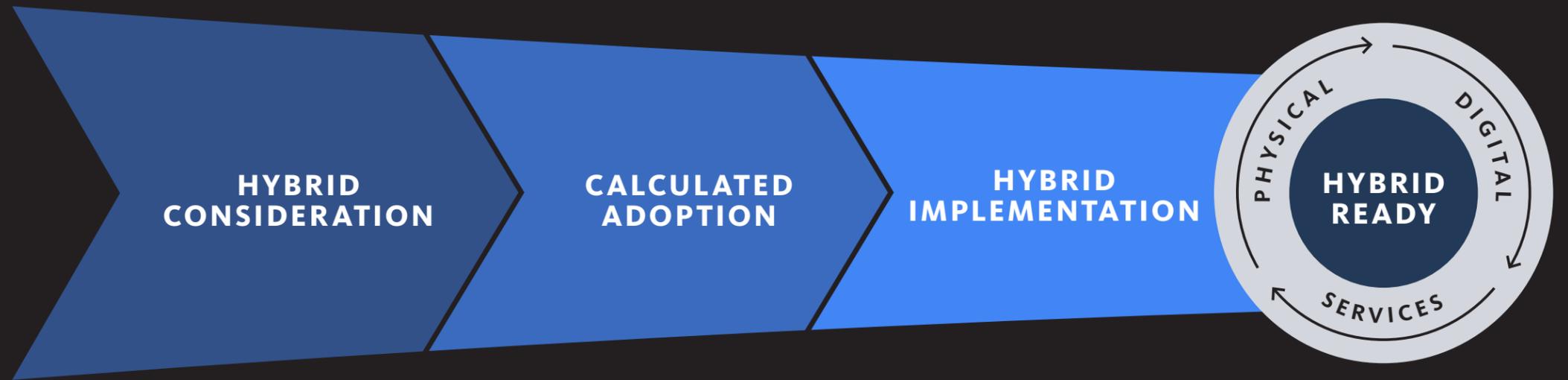
Wisp | by **Gensler**



THE HYBRID WORKPLACE.



The workplace is an ever-evolving space, but one thing is a constant: hybrid is here to stay. While this journey may be just beginning for some organizations, others have fully implemented hybrid work models. We spoke to a group of workplace strategy, real estate, and facilities leaders to learn about their different hybrid work models and how they were navigating the various stages of adoption, ensuring their key stakeholders' success in the hybrid world.



PLANNING

UNDER CONSIDERATION
Understand implications around hybrid work

- Activities**
- Perform external research
 - Develop policies
 - Perform space management assessments
 - Inventory technology & capabilities

TEST FOR FUTURE CHANGE
Create new pilot spaces

- Activities**
- Identify test metrics
 - Assess & observe space use
 - Involve & integrate real estate teams
 - Communicate to key stakeholders with plans & next steps

ROLL OUT A NEW NORMAL
Move into newly “designed” hybrid space

- Activities**
- Communicate expectations
 - Embrace the change
 - Lean into challenges

STAY THE COURSE
Leverage pre-existing sensor enabled space

- Activities**
- Make existing space work harder
 - Focus more on the metrics
 - Leverage learnings to define the future

THE FUTURE OF WORK

While the journey back to the office is just the beginning for some organizations and far underway for others, the evolution of the hybrid workplace is presenting new questions, behaviors, and opportunities. Across industries, workplace leaders are grappling with common challenges, from how to entice people to return to the office, to adoption and execution of hybrid work modes, technology migration, potential solutions, and how this workplace reentry journey is redefining roles and organizations.

We spoke to a group of workplace strategy, real estate, and facilities leaders about how they are focusing on the changing data, metrics, measurements, and office space calculations and analyzing what that will mean for their new workplace realities. We also heard from leaders working to change organizational behaviors at large by learning how to mitigate the preference of distance bias — the preference of people and/or things close in proximity, rather than farther away. These leaders are trying to leverage different space types to entice and better support teams in the future workplace.

After speaking with organizational and change management leaders, we have created three pillars for the new workplace reality:



Enticing Workers to Return to the Office



Considering Technology



Leveraging Industry Knowledge



Confidential Client, San Ramon, CA

ENTICEMENT TO THE OFFICE

As the more immediate concerns around returning to the office in 2022 surfaced, how to entice people to return to the office continues to be top of mind for business leaders navigating the new work experience. New behaviors and workplace expectations have emerged for remote and hybrid workers over the last two years, and as organizations have started to return to the office, our clients have created new ways to meaningfully engage workers around the return.

We have seen many strategies for easing the return to office, including various ways to create more excitement, comradery, and safety. The ongoing safety and well-being of workers should be a top priority in the return to office and as companies embrace the new workplace reality of the hybrid work model. We've conducted 11 workplace surveys in six countries over the course of the pandemic and one universal truth has emerged: people rank collaboration as the #1 purpose of the office, across survey respondents' varying geographies, industries, roles, and generations.

Business leaders should consider these seven factors when looking to welcome and entice employees back to the office and reinvigorate the culture of the physical workplace:

- **Opening Day and Beyond**

Create a celebratory atmosphere to welcome workers back; some organizations have included catered meals, balloons and décor, and a DJ.

- **Catering & Food Provisions**

Consider providing catered meals or on-site food & beverage, both catered and personal (such as potlucks).

- **Hosting Intentional In-Person Events + Meetings**

Provide workers with a reason to reconnect face-to-face. Creating intentional meetings or in-person events can help build comradery and inclusiveness while also enticing workers to the office.

THE FUTURE OF WORK

• Enhanced Sanitation and Cleaning Protocols

Make visible changes to sanitation that are permanent (e.g., installed sanitation stations vs. plastic bottles on every desk). This helps employees feel prepared, assists with behavioral changes, and provides a level of reassurance to employee safety.

• Old Design, New Feel

Incorporate enough “newness” to make the office feel fresh (and not a pre-COVID time capsule). This can help team members bring new outlooks and behaviors.

• New Design

Create the “wow” factor — a new space with a new feel. Use changes in space such as mobile seating, reserved seating, and focus spaces to change behaviors.

• Design for Joy

The future of work must be a destination, rather than an obligation, and create opportunities for engagement, interaction, and fun.

ARRIVAL EXPERIENCE: CONSIDERING TECHNOLOGY

We know from our workplace research that focusing on the employee experience and creating equity among remote and in-person employees is a pivotal component to the success of the new workplace reality. One way to bridge this gap is to understand workplace technology and its limitations and strengths.

• Hardware and Infrastructure

Take a moment to explore the meeting room experience. Does the equipment in these rooms, such as the microphones and cameras, provide an inclusive experience for those in person and remote? How about the workstations — are they set up with seamless laptop connections to ensure compatibility of various devices?

Finally, don't forget sensors to indicate space availability — having a good understanding of what spaces are being used, what they are used for, and why will help differentiate the workplace.

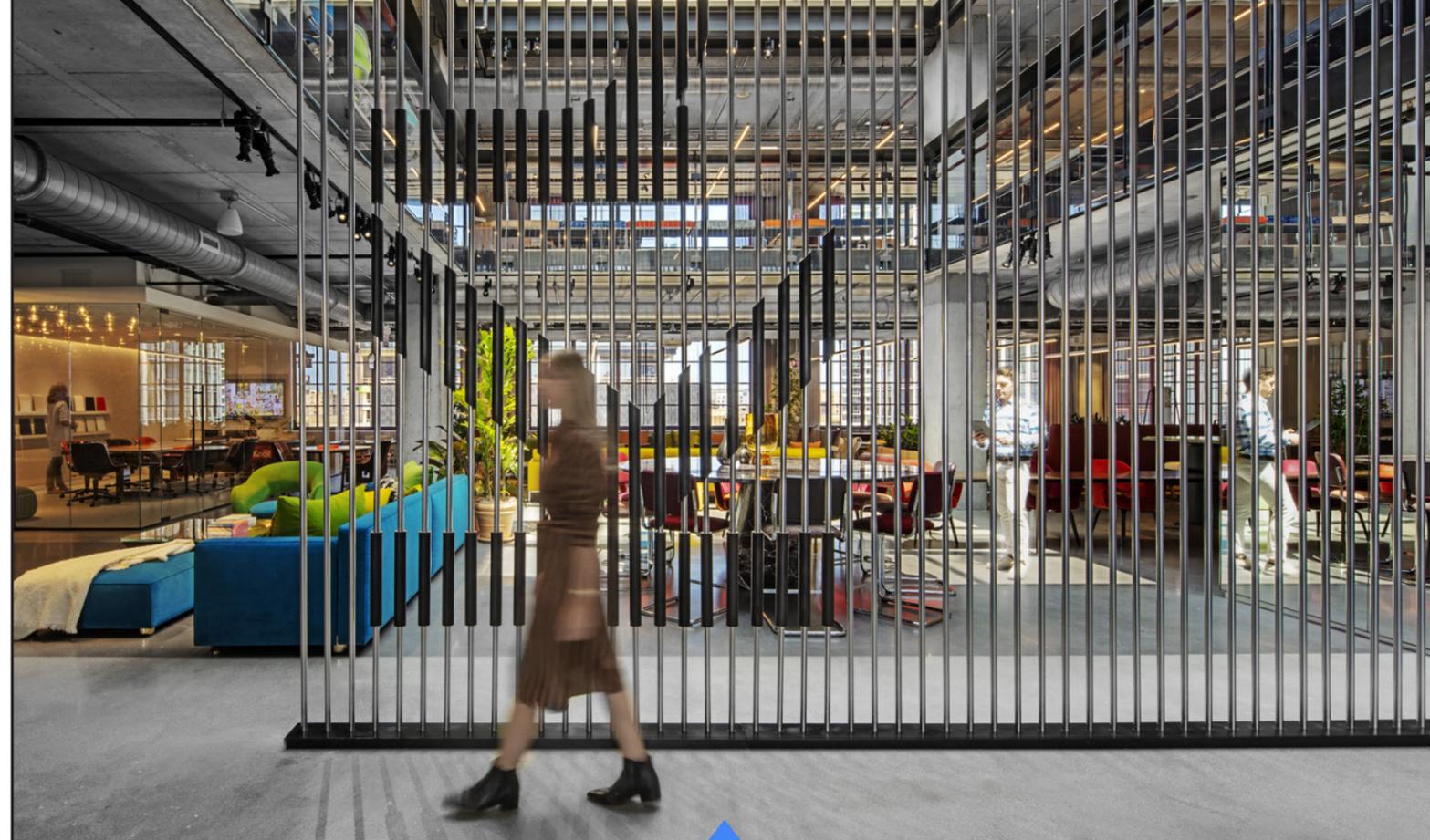
• Software and Software Service

Now more than ever, organizations need to adopt a scheduling technology to assist those coming back to the office, but to also enhance the experience for remote or hybrid workers. Using a desk reservation tool can assist in creating a holistic experience for hybrid workers, as well as the workers with designated workspaces and remote employees. Space scheduling technology helps teams collaborate more effectively, assists with wayfinding, and creates an overall better experience for employees returning to the office. It's also imperative to include feedback assessments and survey within the software services to understand how people are using the space and how it is evolving over time.

• Training and Support

The final layer of any type of technology considerations is training and support for all teams. Ensure dedicated time to educate employees on new or pre-existing tools that haven't been visited recently. A refresh on how to use the existing tools and their purpose can be beneficial to all staff members. Most importantly, ensure support is more readily available to all.

If your future workplace includes a combination of flexible, hoteling, and/or dedicated seating, you need a tool to manage all of it. At Gensler, we are using strategic planning tools like our Wisp space management software, new technology, and data-driven insights to help clients get back to the office and optimize their workspaces for the hybrid era.
[Learn more about Wisp](#)



Knoll Chicago Showroom, Chicago, IL

LEVERAGING INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE

When testing new design and technology, our clients have found a few innovative examples to support hybrid work between those in the office and those in remote locations.

• Acoustics Research

In an office where speakers, headsets, and camera-enabled meetings are becoming the norm, our clients are researching solutions for common acoustical issues. For example, one global engineering firm uses a variety of noise reducing interventions and technologies to create an ‘almost silent’ open office solution.

• Furniture Design Expectations

As the shift to the hybrid workplace continues to evolve, traditional desking will be replaced with more multipurpose, collaboration, and amenities spaces. These new space types present opportunities to innovate and enable new ways of working.

• Power Cell Technologies

Some of the traditional challenges around technology in the office have circled around battery life, the number of cords in group settings, and self-powering devices. New technologies can better support hybrid work based on demands for all-day battery, flexible powered surfaces, or autonomous battery chargers.

While the future is still undefined and the journey to return to the office will be different for everyone, early adopters continue to lead the way. Now is the time for organizations to take stock of their current space, infrastructure, and people. These are critical baselines to begin the workplace transformation. As data continues to be collected about the hybrid workplace, the future of work, and the space in which we work, organizations will continue to test, experiment, and learn. The newest amenity is being with people, which means the experience of being together will continue to carry more weight and importance than the square footage per person metric of the past.

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