



10 Spaces That Are No Longer Optional to Create a Great Workplace Experience

February 06, 2023 | By Janet Pogue McLaurin

Editor's Note: This blog is part of our [blog series](#) exploring insights from Gensler's 2022 Workplace Survey findings.

Everyone wants to know what amenities would bring people back to the office. As employees first started returning, many companies focused on spaces to bring people together, such as social spaces that spur casual interactions and create community. Food amenities ranging from break rooms to cafeterias are now table stakes, and are no longer differentiators. Fifty-eight percent of U.S. companies now provide a work café — and when they are equipped to work — work cafés are highly effective workspaces that contribute to a great experience. Amenities are no longer optional. The new role of the office is not only a place to get work done, but to provide a mix of work experiences for employees. Spaces for individual work, spaces for creative group work, and places to reflect and restore have the greatest impact on workplace effectiveness *and* experience.

We wanted to understand what spaces matter most to creating not only an effective workplace, but one that also provides a great work experience for employees. In our latest [U.S. Workplace Survey 2022](#) research, we analyzed the data from over 2,000 full-time office workers who are working in the office at least part of the time.

SPACES FOR INDIVIDUAL WORK

People need spaces that help them focus on their work at the office — free from noise, visual distractions, and interruptions. While some people can do some individual work like answering emails in common or social spaces, most people require access to more private spaces than an open plan desk for work activities that required deep concentration, writing, coding, or analytics. According to our research, the following spaces made the highest impact to support individual work:

1. Quiet Zone or Tech-Free Zone

Designating zones just for quiet work (no phone calls!) or that are tech-free are a change in policy or behavior and do not often require physical modification. In Gensler's Washington, D.C. office, we have a quiet zone at one end of our floorplate near the leadership area. Although people can still take phone calls and have more hushed conversations, it works well to keep noise at a minimum and encourage creative group work in other parts of the office.

2. Alternative Individual Workspace

Employees at the most innovative companies work beyond their desks. Choice has risen 24% this past year, rising to 72% of U.S. employees reporting that they have choice in where to work within their company's office environment. Providing alternate spaces for individuals to choose where to work within the office drives a more effective workspace, a better work experience, and better individual performance.



Armstrong World Industries (AWI) Living Lab, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Photo by Devon Banks.



3. Focus Room

U.S. office workers spend one-third of a typical work week working alone and say that 69% of this time requires deep concentration. The vast majority prefer quiet when they need to concentrate. Having ample access to focus rooms is one way to provide access to acoustical privacy and signal to others not to be interrupted.



TK Elevator North America Headquarters, Atlanta. Photo by Connie Zhou.



4. Library

Libraries are making a comeback, but it's not always about the books. Everyone knows the "rules" of a library — hushed conversations and allowing others to read, study, or work. Libraries function as a visual cue for how to behave, either in secluded areas or on full display within the work area.



McCann Worldgroup, London. Photo by Ryan Gobuty/Gensler.



Verizon at The Hub, Boston. Photo by Connie Zhou.

6. Maker Space

New ideas often need to be prototyped and tested in Maker Spaces designed to support hands-on discovery and exploration. Maker Spaces vary depending upon the industry, but can range from robotic labs like [Intel's Innovation Lab](#) in Costa Rica to the [Ion Prototyping Lab \(IPL\)](#) in Houston, which is an open experimentation area for anyone with a great idea. They can be outfitted with 3D printers, fabrication equipment, or even small batch manufacturing tools.



Tech Innovation Lab, Heredia, Costa Rica. Photo by Andres Garcia Lachner.



7. Project/War Room

Work doesn't always happen in a one-hour meeting or half-day workshop. Providing a dedicated project or war room can be an important space for some projects or initiatives. Project rooms can be used to present and visualize ideas, progress, and final deliverables, which may aid in alignment, communication, and speed. Depending on the work being accomplished, the room could be set-up for a wide variety of configurations for both individual and group work.

SPACES TO REFLECT AND RESTORE

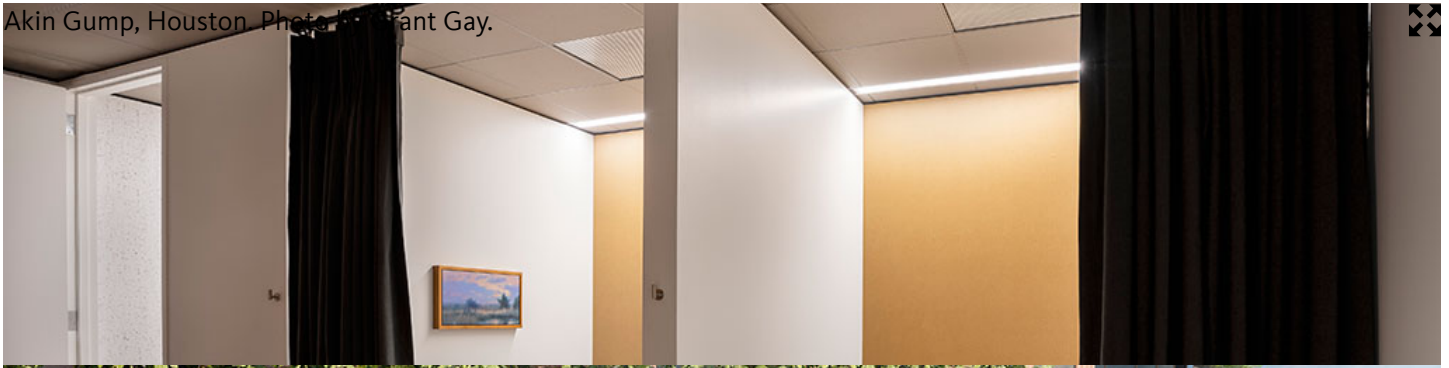
Employee well-being not only impacts a person's health and happiness, but it also impacts job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Every day in the office should be productive, valuable, and energizing. What if we could leave the office at the end of the day feeling like we made a difference and feeling healthier than we arrived that morning? The following spaces made the highest impact to effectiveness and experience, according to our research:

8. Rest/Nap Space

Some employees drink coffee as a mid-day pick me up, others use rest or a quick nap to boost their energy and productivity. **Forbes reported** that power naps can restore alertness, enhance performance, and reduce mistakes in the workplace. Companies with enhanced well-being programs are incorporating places to relax or even nap. Recharged employees are productive employees.



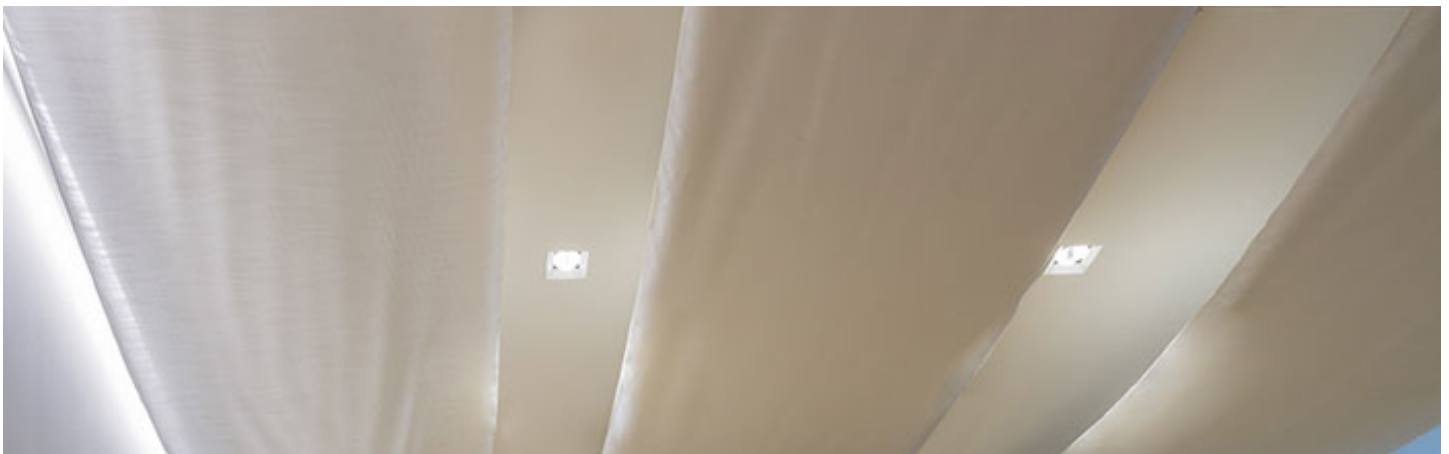
Akin Gump, Houston. Photo by Grant Gay.



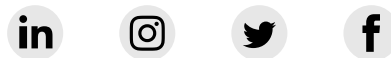
Springdale Green, Austin

10. Meditation Space

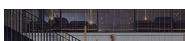
Mental health and self-care have never been more important. Taking a quick respite from the demands and pressures of the workday to meditate, pray, or decompress is valued by employees. Some companies have found that meditative spaces not only refresh their employees but the self-reflection sparks creativity.



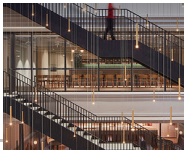
Adobe Campus Renovation, San Jose, California. Photo by Emily Hagopian.



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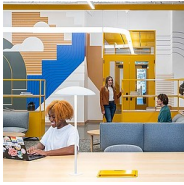


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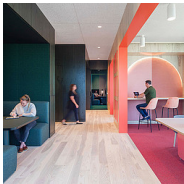
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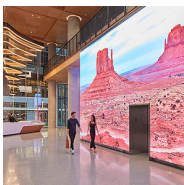
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