# Office Trends 2020

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## References

- [GASS Architecture Studios](#)
While the current global pandemic may have sped along the process, the workplace has been in a constant flux since its inception.

As we find ourselves in the midst of the most significant and fast-paced re-invention of the workplace in our time, GASS Architecture Studios draw knowledge from a diverse network of global sources in order to understand the latest and most influential workplace trends of 2020.

This document aims to concisely capture, translate and explore the multiple implications that the fast changing workplace has on the modern workforce. As we adapt to the challenges of recent events as well as plan for the future of our companies, these trends stand to make the most influential impacts on the future of our workplaces.
TREND

0 1

adapting the open plan
“Research continues to show that employees feel most productive when they have control over their own work environment. No one-size-fits-all mold can adequately be calibrated to the range of jobs and employee preferences out there. Adjustability and variety go a long way toward keeping employees happy and productive.”

Mike Coons
(forbes.com 20190827)

Trend 01: Adapting the Open Plan

Today’s open plan offices occupy a mere 5% of the total workplace composition. Projections estimate that by 2030 the open plan office will exist in 30% of workplaces. While the open plan typology remains a successful way to increase staff interaction, many employees report that the open plan typology poses problems such as unwanted noise distraction and lower levels of concentration.

Trends found to combat this issue include the following:
A shift in technologies has fast become the norm across all facets of life. In the workplace, laptops and cordless phones remain key to allowing employees to disconnect from their desk and not have to be in one place for the entirety of the day.

Adapting the workplace technologies need to allow people the opportunity to “plug and play” from wherever they are in the office.

This trend deals with the need for flexibility and adaptability of space.

Dynamic Flexibility allows the complete transformation of rooms with relative ease.

This is achieved through:
- lightweight, easily movable furniture
- movable walls
- adjustable lighting + technology

TREND 1.1: DYNAMIC FLEXIBILITY

TREND 1.2: TECH-ENABLED SPACES
As mentioned previously, the open floor plan is here to stay. However, employers need to offer their staff various breakaway spaces. These spaces offer employees the flexibility of choosing between various types of workspaces to suit specific types of work. The goal here is to serve every type of employee as well as every type of working scenario with an appropriate space - thereby allowing people to curate their office environment.

**PRIVACY BOOTHS**

These booths promote focus work through the introduction of small individual pods/booths within which staff are able to work temporarily within soundproof walls with access to power outlets and ventilation.

**BRAINSTORM | IDEATION HUBS**

Areas expressly for innovation, that allow for things like pin ups and sticky notes and concept diagramming.

**HUDDLE ROOMS**

Where more sensitive discussions can be held more privately

**STANDING DESKS**

Stand-up meeting locations where you can quickly spread out plans or designs and immediately collaborate
TREND

02

FLEXIBLE + CO-WORKING OFFICE SPACES
TREND 2.1: CO-WORKING OFFICES

1 office, multiple and alternating tenants

Co-working spaces are very popular lately. These spaces allow professionals to use office space and meeting rooms for a monthly fee. These spaces promote a sense of community, comfortability and shared values (ambius.com; 2020)

This office environment combines features such as restaurants, game rooms, comfortable furniture, fitness areas, showers etc. into a typical office.

Companies like google and Facebook have incorporate these elements.

Trends combine the traditional cluster tables of an open plan office with various other seating options such as private booths for use for short periods of time to get away from loud noise.

TREND 2.2: FLEXIBLE WORKPLACES

1 office, 1 tenant, no assigned desks

Also described as “agile” work environments,

No assigned desks but offers a variety of work environments such as open plan offices, collaboration zones, breakout spaces, relaxing quiet rooms.

Offers staff the opportunity to choose their own work environment based on their activity.

Gives staff members a sense of control and ownership over their work environment.

- Open plan office design
- Dynamic, multi-use meeting areas
- Technology resource spaces
- Unconventional creative spaces
- Lots of glass
- Plants and greenery
- Portable green wall dividers
- Lightweight, mobile furniture
- Plenty of desk space / no cubicles
- Comfortable couches and chairs
- Coffee & espresso bars
TREND
03
WELLNESS DESIGN
TREND 3.1: PHYSICAL + EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

A major focus found within most developing workplaces is a focus on wellness - physically, mentally and environmentally.

Newly developing wellness trends include the introduction of spaces and techniques such as:

WORKPLACE CULTURE + A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

“At the end of the day, organizations are trying to design for a community that reflects their culture,” Webb says. “And this idea of using community as a design strategy impacts corporate culture, wellness, productivity and retention.”

NAP PODS

Nap pods (or sleep pods) are special types of structures or chairs, often used in corporate/workplace environments and universities, that allow people to nap. Users use the pods to take private sleep breaks, often aided by technology and ambient features. Their supposed efficacy is rooted in research that suggests that 20-minute naps could reduce signs of fatigue, boost energy levels and improve focus.

MOTHERS ROOMS

Steering away from the dark, isolated, storage-like spaces that most office spaces currently use. Cutting edge mother’s rooms (or nursing rooms) provide ample light and amenities that allow mothers to pump in a more comfortable and private environment.

ON SITE GYMS

A workplace gym can be an absolute asset to your employees, providing a much-needed outlet for stress, a culture of wellness, and a sense of teamwork and camaraderie among your employees.

RECREATIONAL ROOMS

Recreational spaces, particularly those that offer a chance to exercise, play games and decompress, will help boost your company morale and energy.
TRENDS 3.2: ENVIRONMENTAL WELLBEING

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

The integration of recycled, sustainably sourced, and green building materials into a space and establishes a more harmonious relationship between nature and our buildings.

ENVIRONMENTAL WELLNESS DESIGN

Similar to sustainable design practices but focuses on the interior workings of the building, specifically through its integration with various programs and online platforms such as:

1. LEED
2. WELL
3. Building Standard
4. FitWel
5. Living Building Challenge

BIOPHILLIC DESIGN

Design inspired by nature and the natural world by incorporating patterns, forms and elements of nature into the building design.

includes features such as:

1. sustainably sourced materials such as stone and wood
2. abundance of plants
3. vertical gardens
4. bio dynamic lighting
5. nature inspired flooring
6. green walls / moss walls
“You want to create an office space where people don’t want to run home at 5 o’clock.”

Kane and Aventajado

**RESIMERCIAL:**

adj.

A layout and furnishing style that brings the homey feel of residential furniture into the workplace. Resimercial design celebrates commercial quality, residential-inspired features over the sterile and standardized feel of corporate furnishings.

More and more companies are attempting to incorporate elements of residential styling in order to mimic a homely feel within the workplace. Creating a “home away from home” has proven to increase staff morale and happiness within many companies as they are able to associate a more comfortable and familiar relationship with their workplace.

This trend borrow stylistic elements from the hospitality industry, such as:

1. spaces such as canteens, bar areas, game rooms
2. sourcing furniture from local vendors
3. comfortable seating
4. soft ambient lighting
5. fireplaces
6. soft and plush elements
7. Residential-inspired accessories like rugs, lamps, flower pots and throw pillows
With 70% of professionals now working remotely at least one day per week, the need to enhance a sense of company culture and community is essential to employee morale. The office is critical to our humanity. We are social creatures and crave connections with other people—even at socially-distance lengths.

CREATING COMMUNITY + CULTURE

Innovation is often driven by chance encounters that take place in the workplace. Physical / face-to-face encounters spark new ideas that would most likely not be the case over the planned, agenda-based nature of video calls.

IN-HOUSE INNOVATION

The office also helps us get out of the house and experience somewhat of a variety in daily activity. Healthy boundaries are also maintained by separating work life and home-life, i.e., leaving one’s work at the office and ensuring a focus on personal / family life while at home.

VARIETY
As is the case with every industry, the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the building industry remains immeasurable. Clear consequences are developing, though, one of them being an obviously heightened attention to sanitation, hygiene and social distancing.

A building material’s surface plays an important role in limiting the spread of bacteria and infection. Choosing buildings materials that cannot be cleaned or which contribute to the spread of micro-organisms can deeply impact the indoor environment and the building user.

When considering which materials to choose, it is key to evaluate how a building’s products will influence its environment.

**BACTERIAL LIFESPAN ON VARIOUS MATERIALS**

**LOW RISK MATERIALS**

The surfaces and elements that make up the spaces we inhabit can easily house bacteria of all kinds, and their level of adherence depends directly on their physical and chemical composition. From our own cell phones to door handles, to our desks and food handling counters, an interior space is full of bio-contaminated places. And although hand washing and disinfecting surfaces be effective in mitigating the spread of these bacteria, choosing the right materials can further enhance the health and hygiene of the place we live in.
RISK ZONES

HIGH CONTACT SURFACES + OBJECTS

1. LOBBIES + ENTRANCE PORTALS
   - doors, walls, floors, counter tops, railing, switches, interactive devices and POS

2. KITCHENS + CANTEENS
   - appliances, handles, knobs, taps, counter tops

3. ABLUTIONS
   - doors, taps, flushing mechanisms, hand driers, surfaces

4. COMMUNAL OFFICE SPACES
   - work surfaces, electronic devices, doors, floors

CERAMICS:
- naturally non-toxic
- a compact surface that doesn’t trap mites, mold, and other irritating substances
- the surface is impermeable and resistant to stains, while still accepting even the most aggressive chemical detergents.

MICROBICIDAL PAINTS:
- prevent the nesting of microorganisms
- color and act on the presence of pathogenic elements, preventing proliferation
- contribute to improving the quality of the air, lowering the levels of formaldehyde present within interiors

PROTECTIVE ACRYLIC SCREENS:
- offer protection from both sides of the barrier but at the same time need to allow good communication.

- MATERIALS COMPOSED OF NATURALLY ANTIBACTERIAL METALS

preferred metals which effectively reduce the lifespan of bacteria

SILVER  COPPER  GOLD  ZINC

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**TREND 4.3: ANTI-COVID SPATIAL CONFIGURATION**

**REDUCING DENSITY**
- Open plan just further apart
- Zig-zag configuration
- 6 foot office

**DIVISIONS + DISTANCING**
- Screens where spreading further is not possible
- Reduce face-to-face orientation

**CLEAN IN | CLEAN OUT**
- Hot desks not shared
- If hot desks are used they need to be cleaned after each use

**ADAPTING COMMUNICATION + INTERACTION METHODS**
- Smaller meetings at a time
- Meet in the open

**COMMON AREAS**
- Individual seating in lounge
**MEETING SPACE ADAPTATIONS**

**PRE-covid scenario**

1. Reducing density by removing seating
2. Consider replacing a single table with smaller, individual tables
3. Define a one-way circulation pattern
4. Consider adding screens between seats to limit exposure

Spatial context: Fixed walls and entryways in an enclosed space limit the space available to provide adequate physical distancing and safe circulation patterns — particularly for generative work.

- Enclosed space: Formal Conference
  - Capacity: 10 pax

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**POST-covid scenario 1**

- Capacity: 6 pax

Spatial context: Fixed walls and entryways in an enclosed space limit the space available to provide adequate physical distancing and safe circulation patterns — particularly for generative work.

+ Reducing density by removing seating
+ Consider replacing a single table with smaller, individual tables
+ Define a one-way circulation pattern
+ Consider adding screens between seats to limit exposure

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**POST-covid scenario 2**

- Capacity: 4 pax

Spatial context: Fixed walls and entryways in an enclosed space limit the space available to provide adequate physical distancing and safe circulation patterns — particularly for generative work.

* Text and graphics summarised from Steelcase publication: Together Again: The Future of Shared Spaces

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COMON AREA ADAPTATIONS

1. develop staggered schedules to avoid congestion
2. reducing density by removing seating
3. consider replacing shared tables with smaller, individual tables
4. define a one way circulation pattern
5. avoid face-to-face interaction
6. consider adding screens and biophilic elements to limit exposure

PRE-covid scenario

open space: Staff Canteen
capacity: 20 pax

Spatial context: Open space settings provide more flexibility to allow for adequate physical distancing and safer circulation patterns.

POST-covid scenario 1

capacity: 10 pax

LIMIT EXPOSED BY ADDING SCREENS

POST-covid scenario 2

capacity: 10 pax

LIMIT EXPOSED BY ADDING SCREENS

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TREND

05

DIGITAL TRACKING +
THE SMART CAMPUS
**TREND 5.2:** INTEGRATED SMART TECHNOLOGIES

Integrated smart technologies record energy data and automate energy use, enabling the building to learn from employee behaviors and remember their preferences.

**PLAN MEETINGS**

Rooms, even entire floors, can turn themselves off during periods of infrequent use, and staff can customize their personal lighting and audiovisual systems with custom apps and sensors that are deployed all throughout the interior space.

**TRACK SPACE DATA**

Rooms, even entire floors, can turn themselves off during periods of infrequent use, and staff can customize their personal lighting and audiovisual systems with custom apps and sensors that are deployed all throughout the interior space.

**TRACK EMPLOYEES**

Operational efficiency: gathers data on how the building is being used so as to make suggestions on how it can be used more efficiently and sustainably.

Spatial statistics: gathers data on how specific spaces are being used by the building's occupants, in terms of frequency, capacity, etc.


OFFICE TRENDS 2020