

# Future World of Work

Reimagining offices  
through the  
language of colour



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# Chapter 1

## The future of our workplaces

“In the midst of every crisis,  
lies an opportunity”

– Albert Einstein

It's so tempting for us to talk about 'returning to work' or 'back to normal'. Or even the now slightly overstated 'new normal'. But really, there is nothing normal about any of this. It's been a catastrophic and a rather lengthy crisis that the world and its people have gone through. And now we are finally looking ahead to the possible future – there is nothing

'normal' about it. But as Einstein once pointed out; in every crisis there is also opportunity. Opportunity for reflection, opportunity for growth, and an opportunity to reimagine the future. Because really, we are not going 'back' at all. We are absolutely moving forward.

Just as psychologist Dr. Wedell-Wedellsborg declares: the final stage should be about rebuilding and forging a new path. The very concept of working and workplaces has been disrupted. Our understanding of productivity isn't the same and our sense of place has shifted.

We now have the chance to look at what did and what didn't work in both the traditional workplaces and the newly created ones – and use this to rethink our approach and possibly even redesign them for the future.

Really this crisis has presented us with an exciting opportunity to consider our working environments and refocus based on the people that work within them. Imagine what workplaces might look like if we not only designed them with their people in mind – but also went a step further and considered all the different preferences of these people. Imagine if we took this insight and used it to create supportive environments that encourage people to bring their whole 'self' to work.

“Every crisis has three phases: the emergency, a regression, and, finally, a recovery. Don't think of recovery as just going back to work and adopting your old habits. Create new meaning. [...] Find a realistic sense of optimism — “What should we change?”

– Dr. Merete Wedell-Wedellsborg

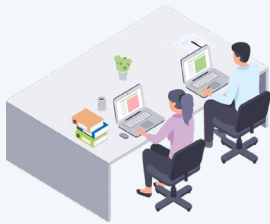
## Part 1: The office

With the multitude of different workplace options now, we started to think: *How can we really help people be their best self in the environments they work?*

This playbook is the first part in a series looking at the ways we can reimagine the future of work through the language of colour (more on that in Chapter 3) and how this can be the start of a conversation between our

organisations, its leaders and their teams.

This isn't a 'how to' but instead a 'how can we' – looking at our environments and working practices through the lens of people and their preferences. *How can we really shape the future of work by putting people first?*




'Making the shift from 'survive to thrive' depends on an organisation becoming distinctly human at its core – a different way of being that approaches every question, every issue, and every decision from a human angle first.'

– Deloitte







## Chapter 2

### The purpose of the office

All around the world, businesses have been forced to transition online in one way or another. With this shift, employees have started to realise the benefits and pitfalls that come with remote work and, as a result, the expectations of the workforce have shifted, too. The fact is, it is no longer an option to simply just return to the office and expect staff to carry on as if nothing happened.

- Forbes

Fully remote, back to the office, or a mixture of both with hybrid working?

These are the questions a lot of organisations have been facing, so it's only fair to think: *What will happen to the corporate office? Will they slowly disappear?*

It's unlikely offices are going anywhere for now, but they will certainly need to evolve. For many, it's likely the office will become **part of a wider workplace ecosystem** – one of the many options of physical spaces that, together with technology and processes, help to create the whole picture of working life.

But if we've successfully worked from

home for a year or more, *why exactly should we be back in the office at all?* This is the question a lot of employees will be asking, and the organisations may have to work hard to give a good answer. Even a hybrid model might have people scratching their heads asking why they would travel in at all, to simply sit at a desk all day and do exactly what could have been done from the comforts of their own home.

The answer to the question lies in rethinking the purpose of the office...

'When the pandemic winds down, companies will have an opportunity to deeply explore not just how their people return but also *why* they return to the office.'

– Work Design Magazine



*For many, it's likely the office will become part of a wider **Workplace Ecosystem** – one of the many options of physical spaces that, together with technology and processes, help to create the whole picture of working life.*

## What will the office be for?

“Over the past year, no area has undergone more rapid transformation than the way we work. Employee expectations are changing, and we will need to define productivity much more broadly” – Satya Nadella, CEO at Microsoft

Traditional offices, whether open plan or consisting of multiple rooms or cubicles, were built on the concept of productivity. The idea that giving people a uniform space to work away from home and away from distractions would make for a productive workforce. But what the last year has taught us is that our concept of productivity, or what space is needed to enable it, is not the same for us all. Who's to say whether you find working at home more distracting than you do a busy office surrounded by people?

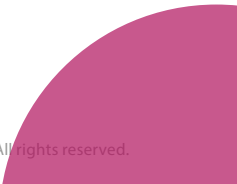
Traditional office buildings assumed that a uniform approach for everyone would get the most out of their people and have

them fully focused on their tasks. A uniform set up, for a not very uniform workforce.

Redesigning office spaces around people is nothing new. Except now we've had the added advantage of entire populations of employees who have tested the 'other' option and weighed up what works best for them. It was a forced experiment in remote working, but one where the results and learnings now sit with the individuals.

And if there is the option to work from home as well as the office, it has us asking:

**What is the office for?**





'Office environments will be curated to increase flexibility of function, to provide inspiration, to support learning and mentoring, to reinforce purpose, to embody corporate culture and to accommodate meaningful experiences for employees'

– Work Design Magazine

The corporate office will no longer just serve as a focused workspace for people, and instead become a hub or 'mothership' of sorts, as John Howkins puts it in his book *'Invisible Work: The Future Office is in your head'*. We have the chance to rethink these spaces and bring in more of the elements that people felt were not as strong with remote working such as: collaboration, connection and culture.

What if the focused work and tasks were completed at home and offices become the centre for *innovation, culture, teamwork, learning and connection instead?* Workplaces that give people both

a quiet space if they need it, but also places to have meaningful coaching conversations or collaborative ideation sessions with their team.

The Workplace Design Magazine talks about implementing more human-centric design and paying attention to individuals' needs in the future design of office spaces. What this looks like for each organisation and its individuals will vary widely. We should be looking to start somewhere though, and reimagining what the true purpose of your office will be in the future world of work is a great starting point.



'McKinsey research has shown that companies are rethinking the employee experience in ways that respect individual differences, while they also adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. When they drill down to find employees who need more and varied types of support, they can also act in ways that create widely shared feelings of well-being and cohesion across the workforce.'

– Deloitte Report 2021

## Key takeaway

Reflect on the learnings from the past year, and ask the right questions: *what worked well, what didn't? What have people missed from the office, what haven't they?* Use the feedback to help establish first what your organisation's workplace ecosystem might look like for your people. Looking at the whole ecosystem, where does the corporate office fit in? Even if you aren't refurbishing, there is a chance to reset its purpose for the people who will be using it and to create a new sense of place for the future.



# Chapter 3

## Through the lens of colour

Rethinking our office spaces with our people at the heart of it requires us to better understand our people and their preferences for working, communicating, and connecting with others. But how do we do this if we are relying on our people to be able to first understand this about themselves, and then clearly communicate it with their leaders?

*The language of colour may just be the answer...*

### What are colour energies?

The psychologist Carl Jung analysed behavioural preferences and came up with the three sets of dimensions that have an influence on the way we show up: the attitudinal, decision making and perceiving dimensions.

At Insights, we took this theory developed this into an easy to understand, four-colour model that gives people the language (and a starting point) to explore and communicate their preferences in the workplace.

The model consists of four colour energies – *Fiery Red, Sunshine Yellow, Cool Blue and Earth Green*, and is a quick way to identify sets of behaviours. It represents:

**#1**

**How we make decisions**  
(Thinking and Feeling)

**#2**

**How we interact with the world or where we get our energy from**  
(Introversion and Extraversion)



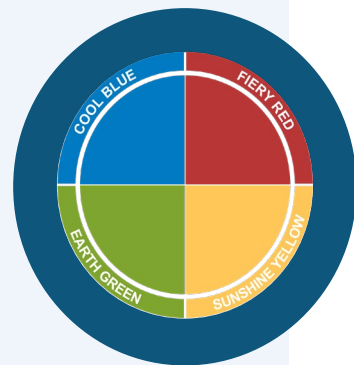
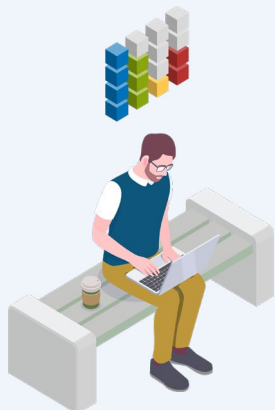
The combination of these preferences make up the four colour energies:

**Extroversion + Thinking = Fiery Red** characterised by an external focus on action, direction, results and speed

**Extroversion + Feeling = Sunshine Yellow** characterised by an external focus on people, involvement, collaboration and ideas

**Introversion + Feeling = Earth Green** characterised by an internal focus on values, relationships, trust and support

**Introversion + Thinking = Cool Blue** characterised by an internal focus on knowledge, quality, reflection and consideration



While people have a natural preference to use one of the colour energies above others, we are a mix of all four and can choose to access any of them when we need to. It's this mixture and our ability to dial up or down particular colour energies that often makes us wonderfully unique – creating those nuances for how we like to interact with others, how we are energised and what motivates us.

For example, I might be someone who loves to collaborate with others and get involved with coming up with visionary ideas and talk these through (sometimes loudly) with everyone. But give me a task and a deadline, and I

might need a quiet space to really knuckle down and get this done to guarantee the results that I need.

Giving people this insight into their own behaviours and a language to easily describe their differences to others is a powerful tool in the modern workplace. The colours act as an affirming and non-judgemental way to talk about preferences and behaviours. They let people start conversations about how they experience the workplace, and how they experience others. This enhanced self-awareness can help people reflect on who they are, who they want to be in the new world of work and what help they might need to get there.

"I've been using psychometric tools for over 10 years now with all the industry leading providers and the significant difference that I find with Insights Discovery is that it gets closer to people's hearts."

– Prakash Santhanam, Global Learning and Development Consultant at Elanco



## But how can colour energies really help us in reshaping the future world of work?

If we take an office environment and look at it through the lens of colour energies, it can help us think about how we can create spaces to suit the different preferences and working styles of our people.

Designing workplaces in this way will not only support people's

natural (or lead) preference better but will also encourage them to tap into their other, maybe less familiar colour energies.

Imagine offices that help people bring every part of themselves to their work – and what could be achieved in a more authentic and inclusive workplace!

### Key takeaway

Colour energies can be the starting point for people to better understand themselves and others in the workplace. It can give them a common language to use across the business to better value their differences and start a dialogue on who they want to be in the future world of work. It can also be a framework for reimagining workspaces – ensuring offices of the future factor in people's preferences and behaviour. To learn more about colour energies and the Insights Discovery model visit [www.insights.com](http://www.insights.com)





# Chapter 4

## Self-awareness and the 'whole self'

When we look at personality types to redesign the workplace, there is the danger that we only take the very surface level information (or the lead colour energy) and limit this to a space.

For example, you might wrongly assume that someone with a preference for introversion would rather work in isolation or be fully remote. But you might not be aware of their busy home environment, or their strong preference for connecting with people. Being completely isolated from their team

might be the opposite to what they feel they need to be their best self, or efficiently complete their tasks. This is why it's important to consider the full picture or the 'whole' person.

A recent McKinsey & Company study showed that chief human-resource officers in Europe are looking to shift to employee-centric policies to attract and develop talent. One of the ways to do this is to create a better, and more inclusive employee experience – one that allows people to bring their whole self to work.

As abstract as it sounds, it just means that people at all levels in the business feel safe enough to speak up, to not have to have two versions of themselves (a 'work' me and a 'home' me), to feel supported by leaders, connected to colleagues and a sense of belonging at work.

**But how do we bring this to life in the workplace? How can we create environments that not only support this culture of belonging, but also add to it?**



# 98%

of chief human-resource officers said that a key area they want to focus on is to 'let employees bring their whole person to work'

– McKinsey & Company

Increasing self-awareness might help people to first understand themselves better, before thinking about what might help or hinder them bringing their whole self to work. Understanding their own preferences for behaviour, their strengths and even blind spots might give them a good insight into how they currently show up at work.

This also might help them think about who they want to be in the new world of work, and what areas they want to work on. It might be that they want to work on being a more empathetic leader to connect better with their team. Or it might be that they want to focus on meeting their objectives more efficiently and achieving that promotion. Self-awareness

can be the key to making fully intentional choices about our own development and priorities.

By creating work environments that encourage growth and access to all areas of ourselves, we are also creating a culture of development within our teams. When we look at people's colour energies, personal growth can often come from consciously working on and learning to dial up and dial down colour energies.

If we can reimagine our offices to support this kind of personal growth, through the culture, working practices and the very fabric of the buildings we work in, we have a great opportunity to create the very best working environments for the future!

## Key takeaway

Self-awareness is key to people being able to understand who they are, what they need, and what might be preventing them from bringing their 'whole' self to work. As people become more aware of their preferences, they're better able to develop themselves and set a path for professional growth, supported by the new workplaces that encourage a learning culture.





## Chapter 5

### Reimagining the office with colour

Many organisations will be looking at their office spaces and assessing what needs to be done to accommodate an existing or new working model. Maybe everyone is returning to the office, but they might have outgrown their space or be transitioning to hot-desking? Many will be implementing a hybrid model where the office still plays a key role, but people are also working from home for a few days every week.

Whether the answer is to refurbish or not, there are ways in which existing spaces within an office can be reshaped to make them 'fit for the future'. These offices will have to balance different functions, priorities, team needs and individual preferences. It can be a juggling act to ensure that these sometimes-conflicting needs are met in the new workspaces.

When we look at our physical spaces through the lens of colour energies, we have a framework for considering

this delicate balance of conflicting and complementary preferences within the workplace. This isn't about taking our knowledge of one specific colour energy or personality type and assigning it to a space. It's about designing with all four colour dynamics in mind and ensuring everyone has access to all of these.

Let's explore what this could look like in practice, and what is needed to achieve this people-centred approach to reshaping our future offices.

'It has to balance two functions that conflict: the need for standardisation and procedure, and the need for flexibility and diversity. The need for privacy and the need for openness. A well-functioning team working towards a shared objective and individuals who follow their own instincts.'

– John Howkins on the Future Office



# Reimagining the office through colour energies

1. Focus ●●
2. Meeting ●●
3. Collaboration ●●
4. Learning ●●
5. Reflection ●●





## Colour dynamic design

As well as things like natural light, fresh air and adding lots of greenery into the office, there are other ways we can create better workplaces – one of these might be designing and organising spaces to encourage a particular type of work or activity.

Collaboration spaces will likely be the focus of the future offices according to Business-Live, but this won't eliminate the need for other more focused areas. It will be about ensuring there is a balance of both. This is how we imagine designing workplaces in the future world of work...

'People need places and spaces and opportunities to reconnect, share experiences, and have all those little conversations that rekindles social life at work.'

– Dr. Merete Wedell-Wedellsborg



## Focus areas

Let's not jump to the smoothie bars and pinball machines quite yet. The office might be evolving but there is still a need to have areas where you can focus on a particular task and get things done. This might be in the form of a small cluster of desks for a team to work at, or it might be a smaller 'focus' area consisting of one large desk in a quieter area away from the buzz of people.

A step further might be to create some focus rooms or booths and allow people to visibly move themselves into a space for thinking and completing their task. With things like digital or smartboards up on the walls in these spaces, people can also easily display their priority lists, agile working boards or results to talk through.



## Meeting areas

Ever want to turn an office meeting into something that feels more like a TED Talk? A meeting room with amphitheatre seating will do the trick! Ensuring your meeting spaces can cater for the larger team or office meetings is vital, as well as having the right technology. Capturing or streaming office meetings via video conferencing will help those that are remote on a particular day to engage too.

While there is still a need for a room or space designated for meetings, we imagine there will be more of an increase in the more 'casual' meeting areas. This might be in the form of a group of sofas for a team huddle, or in a smaller booth for a coaching or mentoring conversation. Creating spaces for both whole teams to come together and for one-to-one interactions, ensures you are capturing a range of working uses and preferences.



## Collaboration spaces

Ok now you can picture juice bars and spaces with pinball machines! While we probably all immediately picture the likes of Google or Apple offices when we think of collaborative office spaces, there are many ways to bring these to life – with or without beanbags. The magic of collaboration is it can happen anywhere in the office really but having both informal and more formal settings for colleagues to come to together in, will aid this further.

Having some open areas such as a kitchen, breakfast bar or café style seating can support peer-to-peer conversations and often create those moments where we bump into someone and enrol their help on something we're working on. Include designated collaboration spaces for teams to use, for example, a huddle space around a large table, a project room with whiteboards and digital boards to easily display plans, or even a larger desk with two or more seats to work together on one computer.





## Knowledge and Learning spaces

The future of offices will likely also find some purpose in being a learning hub for their people. While virtual learning sessions still very much have their place, the office has a chance to bring teams together in person for learning too. Creating a knowledge hub in an office gives people space for training, workshops, mentoring, coaching and even individual learning. It might not just be skills or career-based learning, but also a space for people to learn more about the company, its products and values. A space to showcase the company and its people and for guests to also see the evidence or value your organisation brings.

Creating spaces for workshops and training is one element, but also creating some smaller spaces such as your own office library or comfy area for reading and learning, can add another dimension to your office spaces. Creating spaces where people can immerse themselves in learning, whether through books, conversation with others or transformative team sessions – can help to engage people in development and embed this within the culture.



## Reflection spaces

Whether it's a space to quietly reflect and think about the tasks ahead or a space for creative thinking to come up with the next innovative idea – what we know is that this type of thinking is very rarely performed best at our desks. Offering either calmer spaces for working alone, or quieter spaces for meaningful conversations, there is a need to provide space for both connection and reflection that can't as easily happen amongst the hub of desks currently dominating office spaces.

This may be a patio outside, an indoor courtyard, a little quiet nook, or a room with a large window to the outside. These calmer spaces can facilitate both the need to look internally and visionary thinking. It might just be a seat with a view, or an area with inspirational images and a whiteboard for drawing ideas. It might be an area designed for individuals to use alone, but also where they can easily bring others in either for conversation or ideation sessions.

# Office mobility

Reshaping our offices to include these different aspects of people's preferences, can encourage people to feel a sense of comfort from having an area that feels like it fits with their natural working style. But for people to engage with all of their colour energies and for their physical environments to encourage this kind of development, there is a key requirement: *movement around the office.*

We learnt quickly from hot-desking models that even if you tell people that 'you no longer have an assigned desk and should sit where there is space' – we are creatures of habit and most of us tend to gravitate back to the same desk each day. Whether it's comfort, routine or familiarity, people like to know where their base is in these large office hubs.

By reimagining our offices through the lens of colour energies, the key to success will be encouraging people to make use of the different spaces and not just gravitate to one area. As part of the new purpose of your office, you can work to create this culture of movement and exploration for the people in

their workspaces. If you ever step inside a hub or co-working space for start-ups, you instantly see the buzz of innovation as soon as you enter. It's a space people aren't tied to but can freely move around it to build connections, focus on tasks, have those important conversations, or run ideas past others that they wouldn't have even met had it not been for that space. This is how we imagine the offices of the future: hubs of innovation, collaboration, learning and connection.

Amy Cuddy, social psychologist, talks about the importance of giving people agency in the return to workplaces. Having had the chance to reflect and learn more about themselves and how they work, it's vital we give them the choice to decide what this looks like in their workplaces. By offering a range of spaces in the offices to suit different preferences, you are giving people the choice to decide where and how they work in the office.



## Key takeaway

Our future offices will need to balance the needs of both the organisation and its people, as well as the sometimes-conflicting working preferences of its individuals. By designing spaces that tap into different preferences you have a chance to reshape the office environment with people at the centre of it.

Encouraging movement through the office will play a key role, allowing people to experience different spaces that encourage them to draw on all dimensions of themselves.



**“We may have an idea at our desk but we are more likely to have it somewhere else. The number of people who say they do their best work in the office is always reported than being fewer than half. The number who say they do their best work at their own desk is around a quarter.”**

– John Howkins

## Conclusion

We have reached an extraordinary moment in the disruption to our working world – one where we now have the chance to rebuild and reimagine what our future workplaces might look and feel like. We’ve been gathering and using our offices in very specific ways for decades and now on some level, we have the chance to rethink that. A chance to question what works and what doesn’t, especially now we’ve all had the opportunity to experience what not being in the office looks like.

People across the organisation have had a tremendous amount of time to reflect and consider what works for them and what they might need from their office space going forward. If we can tap into this and ask the right questions, allowing for people to contribute and share their learning, we have the opportunity to create meaningful office hubs –

or ‘motherships’ that bring to life all the elements like connection, collaboration, culture and learning.

You can use the Insights Discovery model and the colour energies as a basis for starting this dialogue of ‘what might my ideal environment look like in the future world of work?’. Increasing self-awareness will play a huge role in the modern workplace as we look to create more inclusive working environments. It is likely that to hold onto and attract new talent, organisations will need to become more people-centric – from establishing their policies, through to their daily working practices and right down to the spaces they create in the workplace. Giving people the agency, flexibility, and autonomy to choose where and how they work within the office will give people a new drive to use this space.

# Key takeaways

Reimagining offices  
through the language  
of colour

## #1

**Reflect on the learnings** from the past year, and ask the right questions: what worked well, what didn't? What have people missed from the office, what haven't they? **Use the feedback** to help establish first what your organisation's workplace ecosystem might look like for your people. Looking at the whole ecosystem, where does the corporate office fit in? Even if you aren't refurbishing, there is a chance to **reset its purpose** for the people who will be using it and to create a new sense of place for the future.

## #2

**Colour energies** can be the starting point for people to better understand themselves and others in the workplace. It can give them a common language to use across the business to **better value their differences and start a dialogue** on who they want to be in the future world of work. It can also be a framework for reimagining workspaces – ensuring offices of the future **factor in people's preferences and behaviour**. To learn more about colour energies and the Insights Discovery model visit [www.insights.com](http://www.insights.com)

## #3

**Self-awareness** is key to people being able to understand who they are, what they need, and what might be preventing them from bringing their 'whole' self to work. As people become more aware of their preferences, they're better able to develop themselves and **set a path for professional growth**, supported by the new workplaces that encourage a learning culture.

## #4

Our future offices will need to balance the needs of both the organisation and its people, as well as the sometimes-conflicting working preferences of its individuals. By **designing spaces that tap into different preferences** you have a chance to reshape the office environment with people at the centre of it. Encouraging movement through the office will play a key role, allowing people to experience different spaces that **encourage them to draw on all dimensions of themselves**.



# Resource list

3 Lessons Learned - World's biggest pilot in remote work | Perked

Global Human Capital Trends Report: The social enterprise in a world disrupted | Deloitte UK

Change Management Is Key To Guiding Your Business Towards A 'New Normal' In 2021 | Forbes

The Purpose of Place, the Power of People | Work Design Magazine

The Next Great Disruption is Hybrid Work – Are We Ready? | Microsoft

Invisible Work: The Future Office is in your Head published 2021 | Book by John Howkins

'Back to human': Why HR leaders want to focus on people again | McKinsey

Leading into post covid recovery | Harvard Business Review



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