

HAWORTH

# Work from Anywhere: Where Does the Best Work Happen?



## What We Know about How Work Happens

Work is happening from an integrated ecosystem with three physical locations: office, home, and third places. Based on our research, Haworth understands what activities can and should happen in each of these locations, with the office as the hub for connection and collaboration.

Most employees have shown they can fulfill the majority of their responsibilities without incurring the costs of commuting to the workplace. And most organizations struggle to explain the value of coming together with coworkers in a well-designed space. When given the choice, people are drawn to places that make them feel comfortable and productive.

Therefore the “office” is increasingly becoming a place of social context—more collaborative than ever and a place to bond. After all, interaction with colleagues makes us happier and more engaged at work. These activities are just as critical to the creative process as high-focus work—and significant for innovation to occur.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, collaboration is what makes going to the office rewarding for many people. In a survey by JLL, 55% consider collaborative working to be the primary purpose of the office.<sup>2</sup> Organizations that communicate the value and clear purpose of their office space demonstrate that for some activities being physically present in the workplace is essential.

As business leaders contemplate how to best accommodate a hybrid work model, they are actively planning spaces that support both remote and in-person tasks and workstyles.<sup>3</sup>

## What We Have Learned

Hybrid work is not a phase—considerations and conversations around it are here to stay. To support the hybrid work model, changes are imperative to help people be more effective and make spaces more efficient.

Haworth has identified five themes that organizations should consider as they plan future office design. These themes emerged from a compilation of our own research, third-party research, and hundreds of conversations with our customers.

While all five themes are important to everyone, each organization is unique in its approach—from culture and goals to geographic location and workforce demographics. It’s not a cookie-cutter paradigm—each will implement a work from anywhere strategy in their own way.<sup>4</sup>



**Immersive  
Technology**



**More  
Collaboration**



**Focus to  
Restore**



**Space  
Shift**



**More  
Human**

Primary Purpose  
of Office Space

**55%**  
for collaborative  
working.

**53%**  
to meet with clients  
and suppliers.

**52%**  
for innovation  
and creativity.

Source: JLL HR Perspectives,  
How Can You Make "Hybrid"  
Work for You?, 2022

1. Haworth white paper, Optimizing the Workplace for Innovation: Using Brain Science for Smart Design, 2019  
2. JLL HR Perspectives, How Can You Make "Hybrid" Work for You?, 2022  
3. Haworth Future of Office Overview, 2022  
4. Haworth Hybrid Workplace Research, 2023

## Hybrid: Freedom to Choose

From our conversations with those in charge of workplaces throughout North America, we consistently hear questions tinged with concern:

- How do we optimize employee engagement and productivity when employees work from multiple locations?
- How do we build a space that draws people in, attracts and retains talent, and supports the key functions of in-person work?

To help answer these questions, Haworth surveyed workplace experts across the company and uncovered six insights for understanding hybrid work.

1. **Hybrid is the New Normal.** Nearly 80% of organizations surveyed have adopted hybrid work policies.
2. **Focus on Human Performance.** Employees are demanding hybrid work and organizations are pursuing it to improve attracting and retaining talent. People (not facility costs) are the driver.
3. **There's Still Uncertainty.** Organizations with hybrid policies are still experimenting and trying to figure out what works best. Despite the ambiguity, many are acting now and making space changes.
4. **Acoustics Matter:** Distractions allowed by poor acoustics are still a major problem, particularly as the office gets noisier with increased collaboration between in-person and remote workers.
5. **Tech Can Make or Break Hybrid:** Incorporating the best technology into spaces well-designed for hybrid interactions is imperative—but should be balanced with in-person collaboration.
6. **Location Has an Impact:** Hybrid policy is different based on sociocultural factors. Consider obtaining the pulse of the local market to learn what employees in each area most value and expect.

Top workspace elements that are working/not working to support hybrid policy:

**64%**

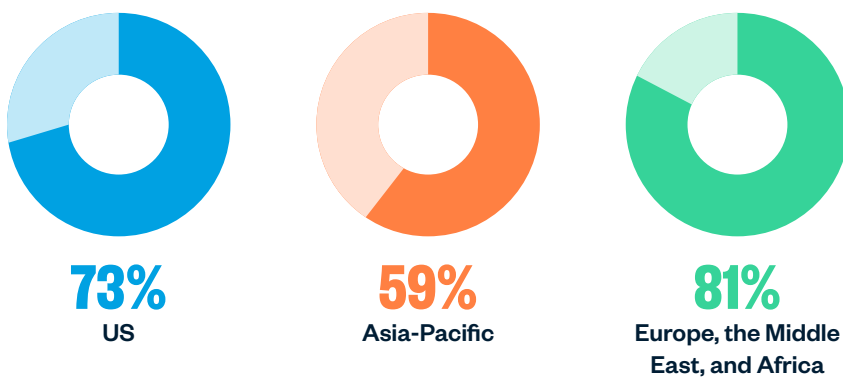
of our workplace study respondents said virtual collaboration technology is working.

**48%**

of respondents said acoustics is not working.

Source: Haworth Workplace Study, Understanding + Navigating Hybrid Work, 2023

## Global Presence of Hybrid Policy

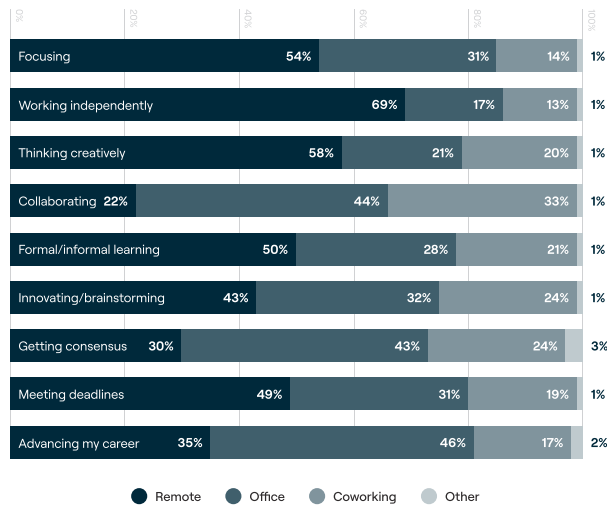


Source: CBRE Research, Q1, 2022

Whether working hybrid or in an “office-only” way, the majority of survey respondents agreed that they have freedom over where they do their work. Having the freedom to choose spaces that support specific activities helps employees feel empowered and do their best work.

## Where Hybrid Workers Are Most Productive

Almost two-thirds (62%) say their company has implemented at least some degree of flexible work. Midsize companies (501–5K employees) are leading the way, with 70% implementing flexible work policies—more than any other size company.<sup>5</sup>



**67%** of our workplace study respondents have made or intend to make space changes to support hybrid work policy.

Source: Haworth Workplace Study, Understanding + Navigating Hybrid Work, 2023

## A Blended Experience

Work from Anywhere is the ecosystem that gives organizations and employees choice in where and when work happens—across three primary locations: home, office, and third places. This autonomy provides variety in the work experience, which can help fuel creativity and innovation. However, for innovation to be fully realized, people need to come together. An organization’s Work from Anywhere ecosystem must offer a balance of virtual and in-person connection that best supports teams and the work being done.

A well-tuned Work from Anywhere ecosystem supports organizational culture, connection, collaboration, and employee well-being—so people can work fluidly. It also serves as an attraction and retention strategy for talent, offering improved work/life balance through flexible work schedules and locations.

## Work from Anywhere Ecosystem

Through this ecosystem, we leverage technology and adapt spaces to support virtual connections for people, including those working off-site at home and in third places.



5. Owl Labs, State of Remote Work, 2022

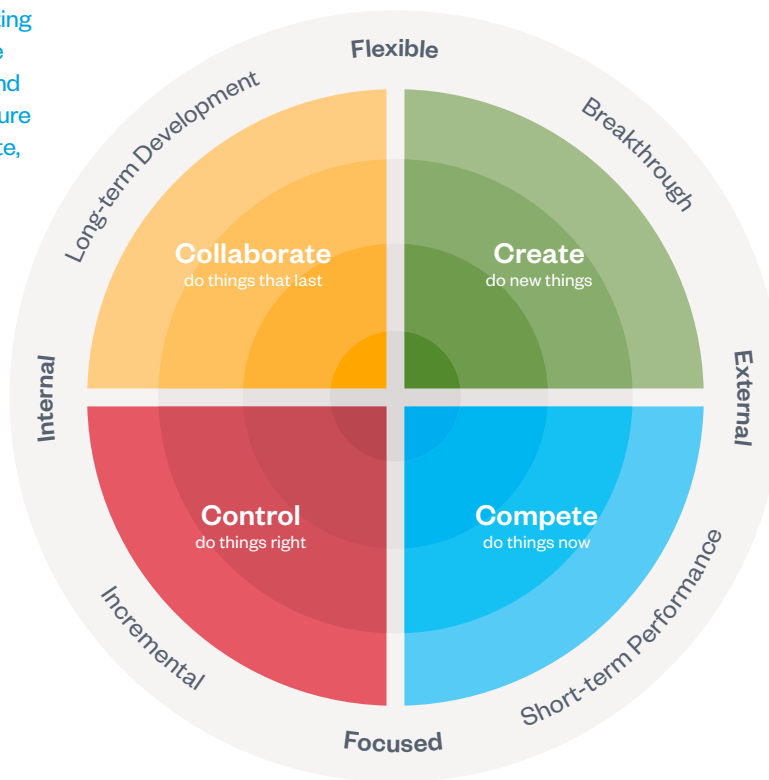
## Organizational Culture & Collaboration

Preserving an organization’s unique culture to empower its workforce and leverage its space is essential for success—and even more important today. Culture serves as a guidepost for people’s needs and organizational goals. It also drives innovation. To enhance the performance of your people, organization, and facility, it’s important to understand cultural implications—what people value and how it affects space.

People need to work well with each other to meet organizational goals. If they can’t, their organization will be less effective. Although groups may have preferred ways of working together, all will need to collaborate in various ways—and it’s important to understand what brings them together.

## Competing Values Framework

Leveraging the Competing Values Framework™, we look at organizational and individual needs by culture type: Collaborate, Create, Control, and Compete.



## Impromptu Conversations

Going to the office, people are naturally likely to bump into others. These chance interactions may be a simple “hello” or conversation about the weekend. They not only help bonding between coworkers, but they can also prompt a segue to work-related questions or a reminder about a forgotten task. Impromptu conversations save the time of sending an email and often give people the context they need for better work outcomes.

Source: Haworth Spark, 5 Things We Miss When We’re Not in the Office, 2022

## Build Community

The office provides the place for all workers to build social networks and a sense of community. It can also be a place to foster psychological well-being and mediate stress with support from that network. At the foundation of humanity is a shared truth: We are social beings that require physical connection and community. People across generations require face-to-face interaction—especially younger workers who are building their careers and seeking mentorship—and the workplace is one venue that supports these activities.

## Improve Team Performance

With the pressure to stay competitive and innovate, organizations know effective knowledge sharing improves team performance. Teams also perform better when they have a designated team workspace.<sup>6</sup> That’s why collaborative work is ideally conducted in person. It relies on a key social capital resource: psychological safety—the ability to engage honestly without fear of negative consequences. Aligning virtual and physical workspaces with organizational culture and team goals supports team interactions to facilitate those goals.<sup>7</sup>

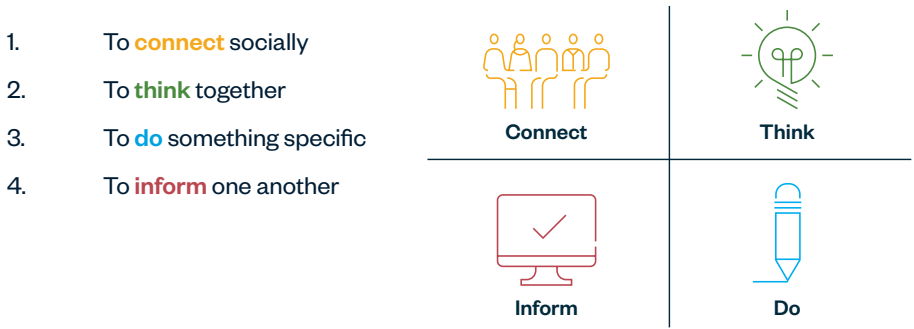
Research continues to build evidence that we are social, thrive in communities, and often accomplish more together than alone. These tenets are inherently intertwined in the workplace. Why we gather with one another at work can be distilled down to four reasons<sup>8</sup>:

## A Place to Call Home

High-performance teams perform best when they have a place to call home—in virtual, physical, and hybrid environments. When the workplace supports a team’s unique and specific interactions, teams can dial in just the right amount of information and coordinate efforts when needed.

Source: Haworth white paper, Beyond Collaboration: Prepare for High-Performing Teams, 2021

## Collaborative Modes Framework



Although it can be done via video, people working together simultaneously on the same task is better done in shared space, face-to-face. Collaborative technology still does not fully replicate the information-rich context found in workspaces where teams gather. What’s more, virtual teams must put more effort, time, and intentionality toward developing and maintaining their social connections.

6. Sawyer, 2007  
7. Haworth Research on High-Performing Teams, 2019  
8. Haworth white paper, Aligning Organizational Culture & Collaboration Spaces, 2020

## Improve Well-Being

Supporting people’s physical and psychological health builds confidence and enhances performance, which is critical in a time of uncertainty when stress levels are through the roof. Well-being is an enduring state that can lead to productive, engaged, balanced, and healthy employees—and it’s directly affected by many features of the overall physical environment, including amenities like food and fitness centers, and space design that promotes movement.

### Minimize Stress

Uncertainty and constant change lead to stress in many areas of life. Research from Zippia concluded that 83% of US workers suffer from workplace stress, with 25% saying their job is the #1 stressor in their lives.<sup>9</sup>

Defined as a physical, emotional, or psychological strain induced by change, stress can cause profound physical and mental health effects including burnout: exhaustion, disengagement or negativity toward one's job, and reduced productivity. The resulting financial impact of burnout to organizations is astronomical, with an estimated \$322 billion cost measured by lost productivity.

When people adapt to stressors and perceive them as challenges to overcome, they withstand their damaging effects. They become resilient. Therefore, the remedy for negative stress is resilience—the ability to bounce back from adverse conditions.

Haworth’s research explored how resilience is shaped by where we work and live. Resources that can help build resilience at work include the objects and conditions of the external environment, as well as intrinsic things valued (e.g., skills and energy). Workplace features can provide support for external resources through user control, varied spaces for work, a pleasant ambience, and workspaces that are sensible and easy to navigate.

## Objects & Conditions for Resilience

Haworth’s research found that organizations can make the largest impact on stress and resilience in six workplace design resource categories:



User Control



Accessibility of Coworkers



Tools & Tech



Space Variety



Ambient Qualities



Legibility

# 83%

of US workers suffer from workplace stress.

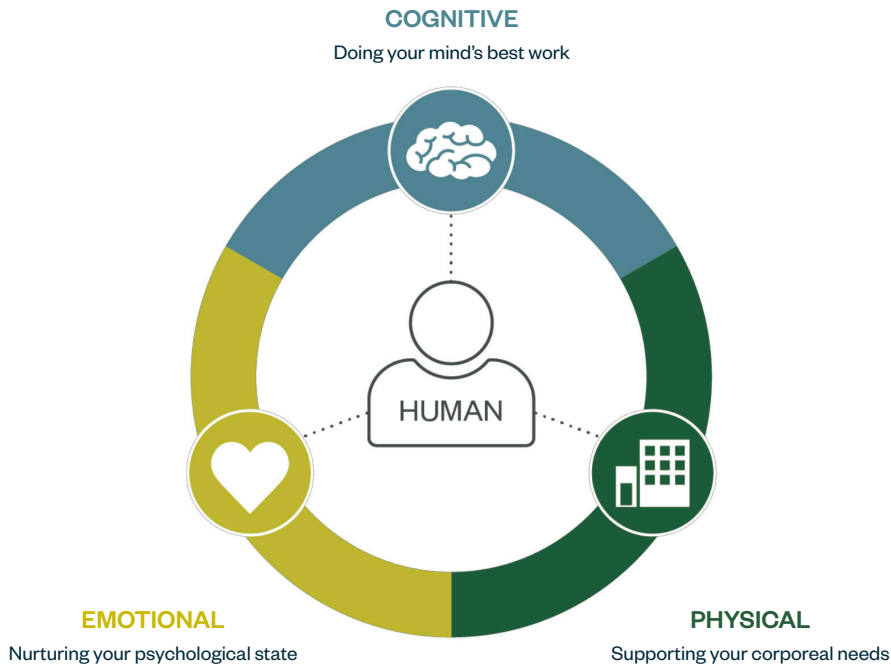
Source: Zippia, 40+ Worrysome Workplace Stress Statistics: Facts, Causes, and Trends, 2023

## Enhance Human Performance

When people feel strong emotionally, they tend to better manage the stressors of everyday life and recover more quickly—oftentimes leading to an ability to cognitively process information better. Haworth’s studies identified 10 Affordances vital to human performance. To create a work experience that nurtures well-being, the Affordances that relieve stress and provide security take precedence when people are challenged with new ways of working.

## Why Affordances Matter

The workplace is much more than a container for people. And it’s much more than a tool used to perform a task. A well-designed workspace participates in performing the task, enabling optimal human performance—cognitively, emotionally, and physically. Affordances are the elements in the workspace that influence the physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of people.



## 10 Affordances to Support Human Performance

### Cognitive

- **Embedding** – Opportunities to place and retain appropriate mnemonic artifacts
- **Externalization** – Options for creating, recording, and expressing thoughts within the physical environment
- **Access** – The means to gather, organize, store, and retrieve information
- **Insulation** – The means to manage both irrelevant and meaningful stimuli

### Emotional

- **Authenticity** – Familiar, meaningful, and engaging surroundings
- **Well-being** – A sense of personal control and safety
- **Affinity** – A feeling of connectedness with coworkers and others

### Physical

- **Anthropometrics** – Furniture, fixtures, and spaces suitable to the worker’s physical characteristics
- **Ambient(s)** – Healthy and supportive (appropriate) environmental conditions
- **Movement** – Various opportunities to change posture, position, and location



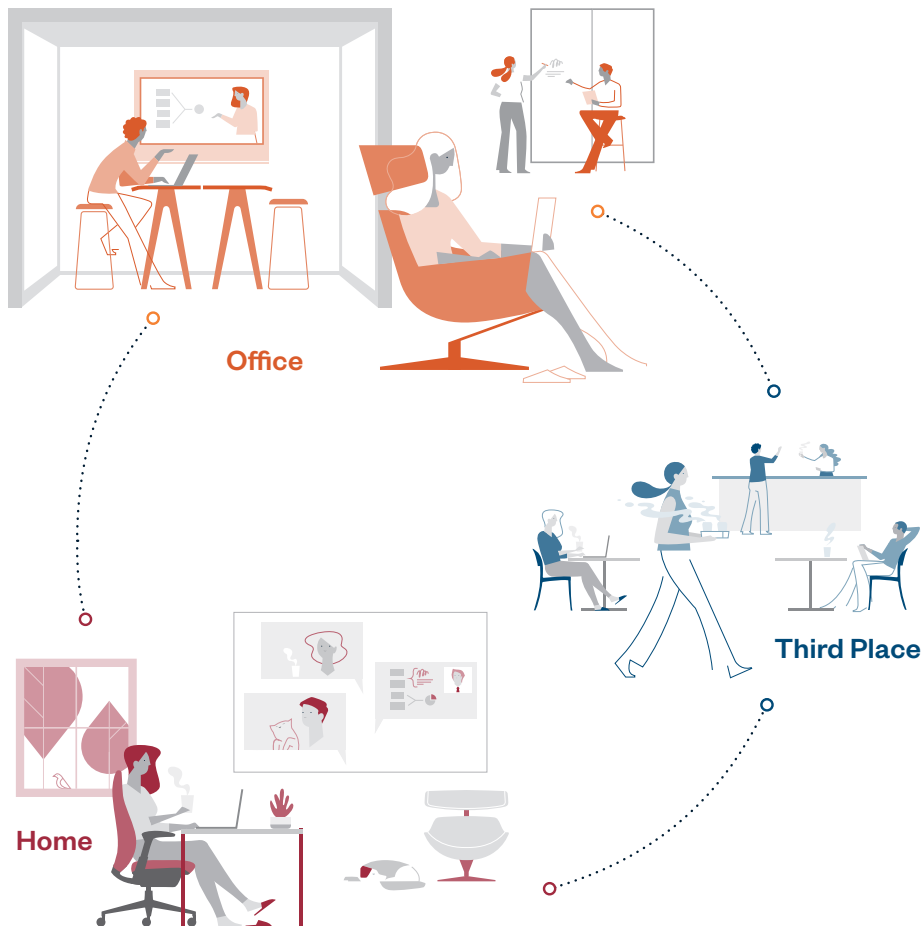
## Flexibility & Adaptability

Flexible workplaces enable space to change as rapidly as people and organizations require. They complement a Work from Anywhere ecosystem that conveys support of employees' diverse workstyles, further engaging them to perform from wherever they work. Creating structure by building in flexibility provides the organization the elasticity to react to short-term, unplanned events, which helps manage uncertainty for employees.

### Work Fluidly

Each space in the ecosystem has its advantages—individuals and teams will choose the right space based on the task required and where they feel most productive. As we embrace this new ecosystem, we look to better understand what works and what does not. This perspective allows us to rethink the design of the office, home, and third places to maximize their potential moving forward.

### Work from Anywhere Balance



Advantages of each space in the ecosystem:

#### Office

Team brainstorming, social interactions, impromptu connections, creativity, access to materials, face-to-face meetings, reflection time during commute

#### Home

Focus work, reading, virtual meetings, scheduled calls, no commute

#### Third Place

Meetings over coffee, socializing, focus work, touchdown when traveling, work hub locations

## Organic Workspace

To support the Work from Anywhere ecosystem, the workplace floorplate needs to respond—creating environments that provide connection and adapt for occupancy levels. Organic Workspace is Haworth’s perspective and process for understanding the work environment and how people use it.

We start by looking at the entire ecosystem—where interaction and collaboration take place—right down to the individual workpoint—whether in the office, home, or a third place. Then we help our customers create solutions that ensure people perform their best and organizational culture is supported, while leveraging existing products and enabling reconfiguration with ease and reduced cost.

## Finding the Right Balance

The office continues to evolve to keep pace with the experience and expectations of what it means to go to work. Ultimately, we expect work to change for the better. Not every job requires a daily presence in the office. With an emphasis on the office as a hub for innovation, real estate utilization has shifted. Space is optimized for activities that foster collaboration and creativity to drive innovation. Digital technology is leveraged to support a Work from Anywhere ecosystem.

The epicenter of what makes work happen is the office, designed to help people perform their best. Supporting the evolution of your workplace is an ongoing process. Starting with the office, we will partner with you to explore the right balance for your ecosystem. We can provide flexible solutions to accommodate a continuous flow of work in multiple environments, allowing people to be effective and real estate to be efficient.

Our survey data shows approximately:

**79%**  
of organizations have hybrid work policies.

**8%**  
of organizations are considering adopting hybrid work in the future.

Among those with a hybrid policy:

**38%**  
of organizations averaged 3 days per week in the office.

**22%**  
of organizations have no standard practice.

Source: Haworth Workplace Study, Understanding + Navigating Hybrid Work, 2023

