

WORKTECH™ ACADEMY

Trend Report

Q3 2024

BREAKING CONVENTIONS

Eight key ideas redirecting the future of work



Eight key ideas redirecting the future of work

Welcome to your Q3 2024 Trend Report from WORKTECH Academy, which highlights expert speakers at recent WORKTECH events who are breaking conventions

Our third Trend Report of 2024 draws on one of the deepest wells of knowledge in the WORKTECH Academy network – the ongoing series of WORKTECH conferences taking place in different cities around the world. These events bring our community together and provide a platform for progressive thinkers and advocates for change in work and workplace to share new ideas and directions.

For this report, we have chosen to highlight the work of eight keynote speakers at WORKTECH conferences in 2024 – in Basel, London, Amsterdam, Melbourne, Chicago, Paris and Manchester.

They range from architects, activists and academics to management consultants and global heads of real estate. The issues they explore are diverse, but what they all share is a singular commitment to breaking conventions, to raising the flag for new ideas that might put the debate around the future of work on a new path:

- **Reinventing real estate:** McKinsey's Jan Mischke opens this Trend Report with a call to reinvent the rules of urban real estate. If work is now hybrid, our cities, our neighbourhoods and our buildings must go hybrid too.
- **Cultural contributors:** Diversity and inclusion expert Toby Milden argues that organisations can only build diverse teams by focusing on cultural contribution and not just on cultural fit.
- **AI-assisted teams:** Dutch researchers Ella Hafermalz and Jana Retkowsky explain that managers need to get on board with Gen AI – and not just leave it to employees – to strengthen knowledge ties and improve team dynamics.
- **Community capital:** Marnix Mali of Booking.com suggests that social and community initiatives will be the next big wave to hit the ESG agenda, after an early focus on bolstering green credentials.
- **Designing our mood:** David Dewane of Geniant calls for more insight into the state of languishing – ‘the neglected middle child of mental health’ – if we are to design places and spaces in which people can flourish.

- **Four-day feat:** Philippe du Payrat of 4jours. work argues that a four-day working week aids wellbeing and breaks the convention that more hours will equal more productivity.
- **Mastering mindfulness:** Sean Tolram of HSBC says that creating a brain-friendly environment requires a radical rethink about how we approach stress in the workplace.
- **The where of work:** Our Trend Report concludes with a call to arms from workplace provocateur Agustin Chevez to escape the gravitational pull of the office – ‘the workplace of the future will not come through the continuous improvement of offices’.

These eight contributions not only signal a determination to chart a new course in a chosen area but also offer some practical advice and recommendations for how to embark on first steps.

We welcome your feedback on this Trend Report, and we look forward to discussing it with you in our quarterly online Trend Report Briefings and, if you are in town, at our first in-person breakfast briefing in London.

We also hope to welcome you to a WORKTECH conference near you soon.

Kasia Maynard and **Jeremy Myerson**,
WORKTECH Academy



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THE WHERE
OF WORK

'Our whole world is real estate. Profound change will affect our cities...'

- Dr Jan Mischke, McKinsey Global Institute



Dr Jan Mischke is a partner at the McKinsey Global Institute, McKinsey's business and economics research arm, based in Zurich. He joined the Institute in 2010 to lead its work on competitiveness and growth in Europe as well as on infrastructure and housing globally. Before this role, Mischke worked for 10 years as a consultant and associate partner with McKinsey, serving clients in 12 European countries in a wide range of industries including telecoms, logistics, high tech, automotive, media and financial services. He spoke at WORKTECH Basel on 9 April 2024.

Cities must go hybrid too

The profound impact of the pandemic on our cities is still being felt. It's time to rethink the rules of urban real estate, says Jan Mischke of McKinsey

Our cities are still reeling from the impact of the global pandemic which has seen flexible working erode office utilisation, suburban areas grow at a faster rate than the urban core, city centres suffer declining footfall, and developers no longer enjoying low interest rates, according to an analysis by Dr Jan Mischke of the McKinsey Global Institute.



A keynote speaker at WORKTECH Basel 2024, Mischke gave a macro-economic perspective on what's been happening in commercial real estate and what needs to change. There was good news from McKinsey's research that hybrid working is starting to settle at around 3.5 days in the office. However, an irreversible 10% global decline in office space use is predicted by 2030.

Larger firms in the knowledge economy, especially those in professional services, information and finance, have the lowest office attendance, according to McKinsey. New York, San Francisco and London are the three cities set to see the biggest reductions in workspace demand, although rising demand for urban residential space will offset some of the pain. Mischke's message was that 'our

whole world is real estate' – profound changes in how we use the built environment will mean profound changes in our wealth and the future of our cities.

Real estate is therefore in urgent need of reinvention to minimise damage to advanced economies and make cities more resilient. Jan Mischke highlighted a relationship between business mix and urban structure in managing economic shocks. Who is most at risk? Cities with a business mix of more knowledge workers, more commuters, larger firms and greater cultural acceptance of remote work are most vulnerable – especially when combined with an urban structure featuring more office buildings, steeper price gradients, less green space and less mixed-use.

Redesigning the working city at four scales

What can be done to reinvent urban real estate? At WORKTECH Basel, Dr Jan Mischke presented ideas that ranged in scale from the interior and the building to the city and the system. These models are gaining traction in different cities and organisations around the world:

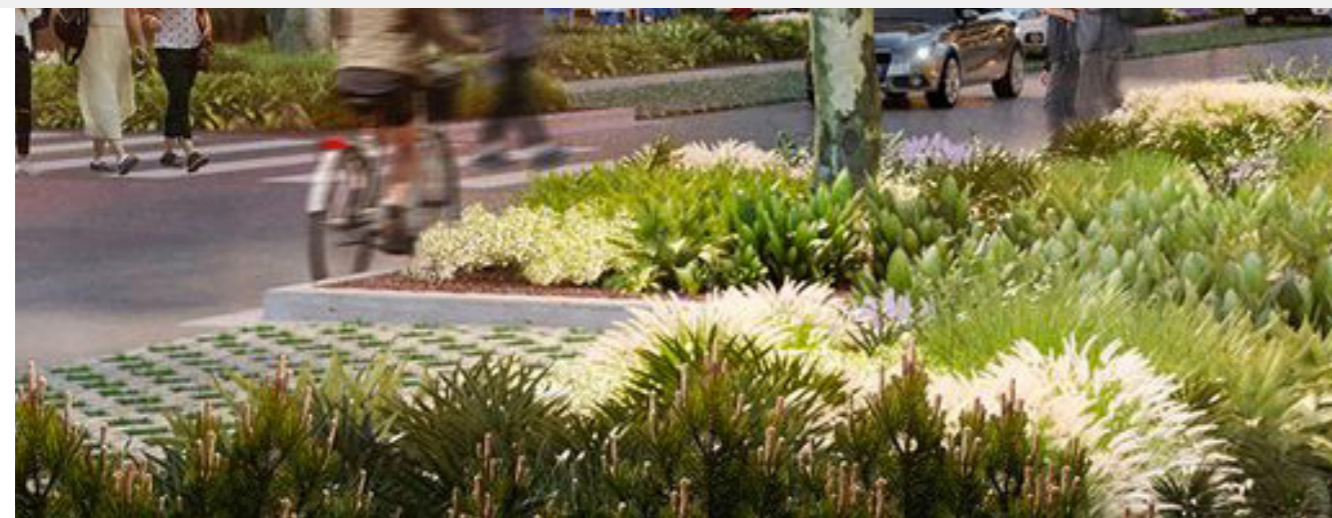
Floors: Office floors should be flexible and attractive. They should 'earn the commute' by providing hospitality-oriented workspaces that are magnetic in their appeal and can optimise experience whatever the level of office attendance. Technology should be deployed to collect data and really understand the use of space. There should be an emphasis on connectivity. Many companies are now following the strategy of 'magnetise, don't mandate' for the return to office.

Buildings: These should be 'hybrid buildings' that are adaptable and fit for new purpose. An easy commute and mixed-use locations should be prioritised. Where necessary, offices should be converted for other, in-demand uses, such as residential. As a rule, universal, neutral-use buildings should have the design, infrastructure and technology that allow for easy modification to serve different uses. More multi-family housing and retail space around suburban hubs should also be on the agenda.

Neighbourhoods and Cities: To create a healthier mixed-use environment, cities should reform restrictive zoning policies and prioritise user journeys and experiences. There should be a concerted drive to attract new uses to neighbourhoods, and to pilot and evaluate new approaches. Remember that inbound commuters are increasingly looking for mixed experiences as well as mixed uses in the city centre. More pedestrian-friendly green spaces should be created. There should also be a rethink of transit systems, which can benefit from smart systems and emerging tech.

Finance: The entire system of financing urban real estate requires radical readjustment and recapitalisation. Losses should be recognised, and capital reallocated to in-demand space. Capital should be secured for redevelopment of distressed real estate assets to realise their value. The whole drive to create a more 'hybrid city' in the era of hybrid working depends on risk and reward in the financial system that underpins it.

For more information, read the report **'Empty spaces and hybrid places: The pandemic's lasting impact on real estate'** (2023) by the McKinsey Global Research Institute.



A concept image of Glenfield Main Street, Sydney, Australia, prepared for the Glenfield Place Strategy. Image: Group GSA

Further Reading

- [Shaping Tomorrow's Cities: Fostering Resilient and Vibrant Urban Communities - CBRE](#)
- [From office block to housing block: is this the key to reinvigorate the city? - WORKTECH Academy](#)
- [Inclusive Cities Barometer - Cushman and Wakefield](#)
- [Why urban priorities should be aimed at adopting hybrid model - WORKTECH Academy](#)

‘If you don’t invest in an inclusive culture and meet the needs of top industry talent, that talent will not want to work for you....’

- Toby Mildon, diversity and inclusive expert



Toby Mildon is an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) architect and the founder of Mildon. Having previously worked at the BBC, Deloitte and Accenture, Toby has delivered successful initiatives with over 100 clients to date. With professional and lived experience, Toby’s mission is to shape diverse and inclusive workplace environments where everyone feels welcome, empowered and allowed to thrive. He spoke at WORKTECH Manchester on 18 June 2024.

Diverse teams built for impact

Organisations should build diverse teams by focusing on cultural contribution and not just cultural fit, says diversity and inclusion architect Toby Mildon

At a time when economic and geopolitical landscapes are constantly evolving, the business case for diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) practices to meet corporate objectives is stronger than ever. But many organisations are susceptible to a common bias in the recruitment process that prevents them from creating truly diverse teams, according to diversity and inclusion expert Toby Mildon.



McKinsey’s latest Diversity Matters report found ‘companies committed to diversity show a 39% increased likelihood of outperformance for those in the top quartile of ethnic representation versus the bottom quartile’. Despite a growing body of research and awareness of the benefits of building a culture of diversity, recruitment processes tend to favour those who are the right cultural fit for the organisation, not necessarily those who will make the biggest impact for the business.

Speaking at WORKTECH Manchester 2024, Toby Mildon presented four areas of the recruitment selection criteria: expertise, experience, personality and impact. He argued that we already assess expertise and experience in the initial stages of the recruitment process, but the final stages hinge on the personality or ‘cultural

fit’ of the applicant rather than how they will work to achieve the company’s vision and the impact this will have. This process creates bias and homogeneity within teams.

Instead, Mildon called for a critical reassessment of how organisations identify and nurture key talent, with a deeper understanding of how people at all levels in an organisation make their best impact. Drawing on the Game-Changer Index, or GC Index, Mildon explored the five different types of impact individuals can make to a team – from strategy to innovation and attention to detail. Organisations looking to diversify their workforce should consider the different types of impact that individuals make in their team and cultivate teams that can offer different energy levels to yield the maximum benefit for the business.

Balancing the energy impact for diverse teams

Getting the balance of energy right within teams requires a careful consideration of what each individual's strengths and weaknesses are. The Game-Changing Index – conceived in 2012 by Dr John Mervyn Smith and Nathan Ott – is a tool that is designed to determine an individual's natural inclination towards creating meaningful impact.

Unlike conventional profiling assessments, such as Myers-Briggs, that predominantly examine personality traits, the Game Changing Index specifically evaluates an individual's innate drive to effect change in five key areas.

The Game Changer: The game changer creates original ideas and plants the seeds for innovation to flourish. This type is constantly thinking about how to transform the future through new concepts and solutions.

The Strategist: The strategist makes sense of these ideas. Building on the ideas of the game-changer, the strategist will map out the future in a logical and methodical way to ensure the idea is viable and can be executed well.

The Implementer: The implementer brings the ideas and the roadmap to life, implementing the idea from the game-changer alongside the plan from the strategist to help build the future.

The Polisher: The polisher makes the plan brilliant. They will analyse and review the final idea for clarity and detail, and will fine-tune the idea until it is perfect.

The Play Maker: The play maker is integral to the entire process. These are the people who orchestrate the plan – they are the super-communicators, ensuring that everyone is aligned and shares similar objectives.

For more information, visit Game-Changing Index.



Further Reading

[Why diversity leads to better team performance – Forbes](#)

[Diversity matters report – McKinsey](#)

[Designing for diversity: healthy culture, healthy employees – WORKTECH Academy](#)

'Leaders need to understand how Gen AI tools can best be leveraged to support team dynamics...'

- Ella Hafermalz, associate professor, KIN Centre for Innovation, Amsterdam



Dr Ella Hafermalz is an associate professor at the School of Business and Economics at the KIN Centre for Innovation. Ella has a PhD in Information Systems and Work and Organisational Studies from the University of Sydney Business School in Australia, and also holds degrees in teaching, media and communications, and cultural studies from the University of Melbourne. She spoke at WORKTECH Amsterdam on 9 May 2024.



Jana Retkowsky is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the KIN research group, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. She is working on a postdoc project together with Prof Dr Marleen Huysman and Dr Ella Hafermalz. The project is funded by the Digital Society. She spoke at WORKTECH Amsterdam on 9 May 2024.

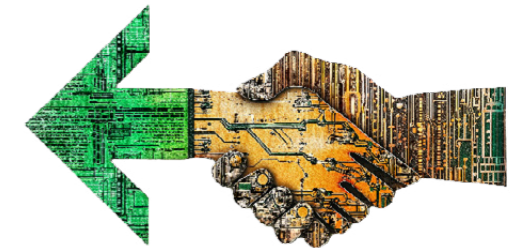
Leveraging Gen AI at leadership level

Integrating Gen AI tools requires a top-down approach to strengthen knowledge ties and team dynamics, say researchers Ella Hafermalz and Jana Retkowsky

Since its explosive introduction to the workplace at the end of 2022, ChatGPT has become an invisible, yet powerful, additional team member of most knowledge workers across the world. Despite their sudden ubiquity, Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT are still unregulated and often misunderstood, leading to unvalidated work, broken knowledge ties and disruptions to team dynamics, according to researchers Dr Ella Hafermalz and Jana Retkowsky from KIN Centre for Innovation based in Amsterdam.

Speaking at WORKTECH 24 Amsterdam, Hafermalz and Retkowsky cited research they conducted alongside fellow researcher Marleen Huysman, entitled 'Manging a ChatGPT-empowered workforce: understanding its affordances and side-effects'. The research found that two out of three employees don't tell their manager that they are using ChatGPT to help conduct their work. ChatGPT has become the AI-powered elephant in the room and without proper regulation or understanding from leadership, knowledge work – and team dynamics – can be seriously harmed.

Hafermalz and Retkowsky identified that ChatGPT has become so engrained in its users' work that it has become unclear what aspects of their work are human and what are AI generated. At this stage, employees are working with ChatGPT, and similar tools, in the same way they would work with a colleague or manager by



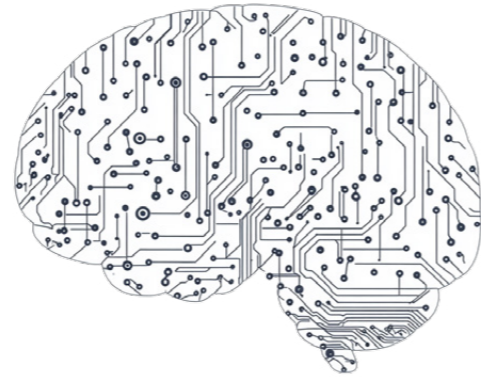
asking it to perform tasks or clarify instructions. In this scenario, the researchers highlight three areas of impact for Gen AI on knowledge work: breaking knowledge ties, limited oversight of knowledge quality and restricting learning opportunities.

Despite the potential pitfalls of integrating Gen AI into daily workflows, the researchers argue that banning or feigning ignorance of these tools will be more damaging in the long term. Instead, managers should learn how to use the tool to understand its capabilities and limitations, leveraging it to maintain and strengthen knowledge ties and team dynamics.

The guerilla usage of Gen AI within work teams isn't going away – leaders need to get involved now to manage the potential polarisation in their teams between employees who are skilled at using Gen AI tools, and those who aren't. A top-down approach, where standards and policies are set in place, will ensure that Gen AI tools are used fairly and leveraged to enhance the future of work, not inhibit it.

Working alongside Gen AI

In their research Ella Hafermalz and Jana Retkowsky highlighted three prominent side effects of Generative AI and its implications for managers and knowledge work, and connected these to actionable recommendations for managers and leaders.



SIDE EFFECT	IMPLICATIONS FOR KNOWLEDGE WORK	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGERS
Gen AI offers immediate assistance with tasks; employees turn to it instead of to each other or their managers.	Broken knowledge ties leading to isolated workers and siloed knowledge.	Repair and retain knowledge ties by designing social interactions. For example, discuss work routines, encourage live collaboration, and facilitate social interactions.
Reliance on Gen AI for searching information, writing a first draft, and validating work can be risky; intertwinement with Gen AI means employees cannot tell where their knowledge ends, and AI starts.	Lacking oversight of the quality of knowledge can lead to hallucinated content reaching clients, a lack of validation of knowledge, and social checks and balances are missing.	Get involved to set the standards. Managers should use Gen AI to understand the possibilities and limitations of it. They should also leverage key users to provide guidance to those who are less confident and ensure that Gen AI policies are dynamic and responsive to changes.
Skills and tasks required to perform knowledge work change, e.g. first drafts can be generated quickly but need to be edited carefully.	Reconfigured work roles mean that assessing and developing employee performance becomes a key challenge as people's roles shift in response to changing capabilities.	Look to the horizon and understand how Gen AI can help in the long-term. Managers should hold open conversations about Gen AI's role in knowledge work with their team and revisit talent and development initiatives, while emphasising the importance of live experiences for new hires.



Further Reading
[How Generative AI is changing the nature of team dynamics - WORKTECH Academy](#)
[How AI will open new doors to designing the future workplace - WORKTECH Academy](#)
[Generative AI and the Future of Work - Deloitte](#)

‘When you have grown so big, it’s like an elephant that tries to hide behind a tree...’

- Marnix Mali, Booking.com



Marnix Mali leads the global Real Estate and Workspace Services team at Booking.com. With a background in international HR, he held general management roles across various multinational companies and continents before joining Booking.com in 2012. His primary focus is to optimise physical workspaces to enhance employee success and productivity, leveraging data and experimental approaches. He spoke at WORKTECH Melbourne on 26 March 2024.

Social impact real estate on the rise

Social initiatives that play to the wider community also play well with employees and the ESG agenda, says Marnix Mali of Booking.com

The Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) agenda is today a high priority for company leaders, with much of the focus aimed at bolstering green credentials. However, investment in social initiatives is the next big wave to hit the corporate roadmap – bringing far-reaching benefits beyond the organisation itself, according to Marnix Mali, director of real estate and workspace services at Booking.com

Speaking at the WORKTECH Melbourne 2024 conference, Mali argued that workspaces that actively engage with their surrounding community, support sustainability initiatives and consider their social impact can benefit the business, employees, and the local and regional economy. Mali used Booking.com’s new global headquarters in Amsterdam as a testament to how investing in the social fabric of a workspace can provide significant benefits for the business and the economy.

Booking.com’s new 65,000 square foot headquarters is home to 7,000 Amsterdam-based employees. As one of the largest offices in Western Europe, the single-tenanted space embodies connectedness and openness, and considers the social impact of its presence in the city centre. Booking.com made use of a dedicated team of workplace leaders and employees to co-create a vision for the new office. Looking to common sustainability trends in workspaces globally – ranging from



commuting incentives and biophilic design to zero waste initiatives and modular furniture – the Booking.com headquarters sets a new standard, embodying a bold vision for the future of sustainable practices.

Alongside its commitment to sustainability, Booking.com has taken an innovative approach to its social initiatives. Mali comments: ‘When you have grown so big, it’s like an elephant that tries to hide behind a tree – it’s better to come fully out and work together with the city and the community’. The travel booking company is partnering with not-for-profits such as Refugee Company and Techgrounds to activate the 1,500 square metres of open restaurant and leisure space on the ground floor of the building. A new 900 square metre restaurant will offer job opportunities for refugees and be fully open to the public, as well as including additional meeting rooms for workshops and an event space that will feature community-based programming.

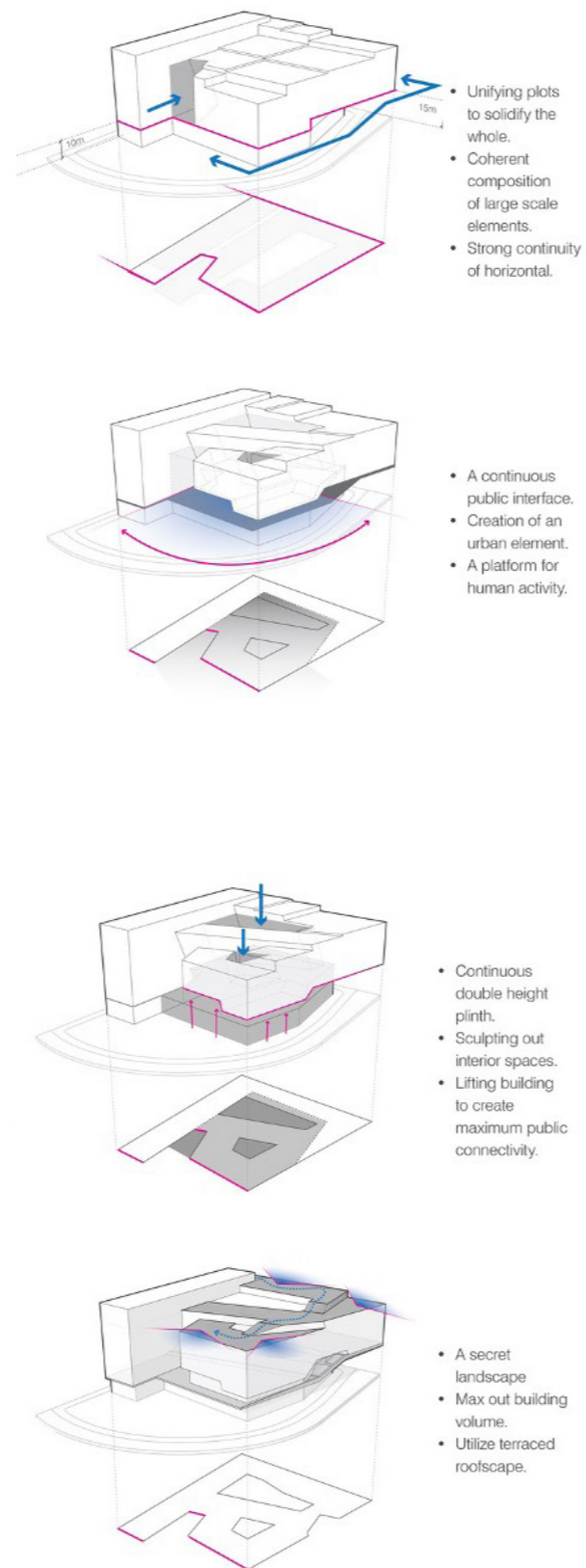
What to consider when leveraging the workplace for social impact

When leveraging resources to promote people-centred workplaces for employees and the wider community, inclusive design needs to be a key consideration. The Booking.com campus looks at the overall composition of the building to understand how it can meet the needs of employees and the public, whilst supplementing this with sustainability initiatives and social impact-fuelled partnerships.

Location: The Booking.com campus sits in the heart of Amsterdam, at the Oosterdokseilandon – a large urban project that encourages people to meet, work and play. The headquarters is mindful of its presence in central Amsterdam and aims to reflect the attributes of the city. Externally, the architecture is a nod to the industrial history of Amsterdam’s harbour, reflecting the water and sky alike, whilst the vibrancy of the interior reflects the city’s lively central neighbourhoods.

Partnerships: There is a commitment to working with companies that have values aligning with Booking.com’s own, from supporting developments in the job market to training new talent. The company is seeking to create new opportunities for communities that can often face difficulties in obtaining equal access to the job market. To this end, it has partnered with **Refugee Company** (a volunteer organisation that aims to help people from refugee backgrounds develop new skills and build professional networks) and Techgrounds, (a social impact enterprise that address mismatches in the tech labour market).

Sustainability: Sustainability is a key element of corporate responsibility towards the wider community. The Booking.com headquarters approach to sustainability initiatives represents a forward-thinking strategy for addressing environmental concerns. The roof of the Booking.com building boasts 832 solar panels, with all the heating and cooling managed by cutting edge WKO (‘Warmte Koud Opslag’) technology to store and extract hot and cold air deep underground during summer and winter without using any gas.



Booking HQ, Amsterdam. Source: Hufton+Crow

Further Reading

- [Booking.com, Amsterdam: a smart approach to adaptable growth – WORKTECH Academy](#)
- [Booking.com’s Amsterdam Campus – Booking.com, Youtube](#)
- [The impact of Booking.com in the Netherlands – KPMG](#)
- [2024 Consumer insights and sustainability benchmark – 3BL](#)

'Languishing is this weird middle ground in mental health that nobody likes to talk about'

- David Dewane, Geniant



David Dewane is the co-founder and Chief Experience Officer (Space) at Geniant. David has a background in ecologically and socially equitable design and trained at the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems in Austin, Texas. This foundation in applied research has allowed him to contribute to cutting-edge architecture projects at all scales, from corporate campuses to small refugee shelters. His current role at Geniant is focused on creating transformational experiences for companies by accelerating the synthesis of the digital and physical worlds. He spoke at WORKTECH Chicago on 17 July 2024.

From languishing to flourishing

The design of place is critical to helping organisations flourish. But first we need to understand why they are languishing, says David Dewane of Geniant

Place is critical to improving our psycho-physical wellbeing and our productivity. But in the drive to use workplace design to take employees from a state of depression to a state of flourishing, organisations can too easily overlook the 'weird middle ground' of languishing, according to architect David Dewane, Chief Experience Officer (Space) at Geniant.

A keynote speaker at WORKTECH Chicago 2024, Dewane gave an in-depth analysis of what 'languishing' means – it's the neglected middle child of mental health – and how to design spaces that lift organisations out of it. He quoted the sociologist Corey Keyes, who has a new book out on the subject, to describe its main characteristics: life circumstances feel dictated by external factors; an inability to see strengths and weaknesses; feelings of boredom and unease; job seems pointless in the grand scheme; brain fog; disconnection from community; emotionally flat; and pseudo productivity.

Designing a great workplace can help organisations to stop languishing and start flourishing. Dewane used the analogy of the



tuning fork (borrowed from Jerry Seinfeld): 'You have a rhythm, a frequency, a vibration as a human being. When you are in a place where your frequency and vibration match with the place, then you are comfortable.'

To support and retain their most productive staffers, Dewane says that companies should provide workplaces with two key components: a 'hotspot' with access to other creative people, enablers and specialist domains, where they will spend around 20% of their time; and second, a 'flow field' of self-organised environments personalised to the unique rhythms of the individual, where they will spend around 80% of their time.

How to stop a state of languishing in your company

What can be done to steer organisations to a state of flourishing by design? At WORKTECH Chicago, David Dewane quoted sociologist Corey Keyes' five 'vitamins' of flourishing: growth and learning; fostering warm relationships; encountering some sense of awareness, which could be via prayer, meditation or simply meeting like-minded people; having and living a purpose; and a sense of play.

Dewane then set out three key transformational steps:

- **Research:** Understand your people. Develop a strategy that is unique to your company, based on qual and quant data, personas, journeys, and demonstrated behaviour. Start wherever you can.

- **Co-design:** Design spaces where the frequency and vibration of your people meet the rhythm of your business. Maximise growth, warm relationships, awe, purpose and play.
- **Optimise:** Measure. Listen. Keep changing to make people happier. Develop rugged flexibility, stay consistent through ups and downs, respond not react.

Dewane identified Solaris AI as the new workplace that does most to live up to these ideals around flourishing. Solaris AI is an office for startups in San Francisco where, says Dewane, people are really present and energy is high.

Best square mile in the world to build a startup

Solaris provides world-class services for builders in San Francisco's Hayes Valley, Lower Haight, and North Mission neighborhoods.

Solaris AI

An office designed for focus and AI startups

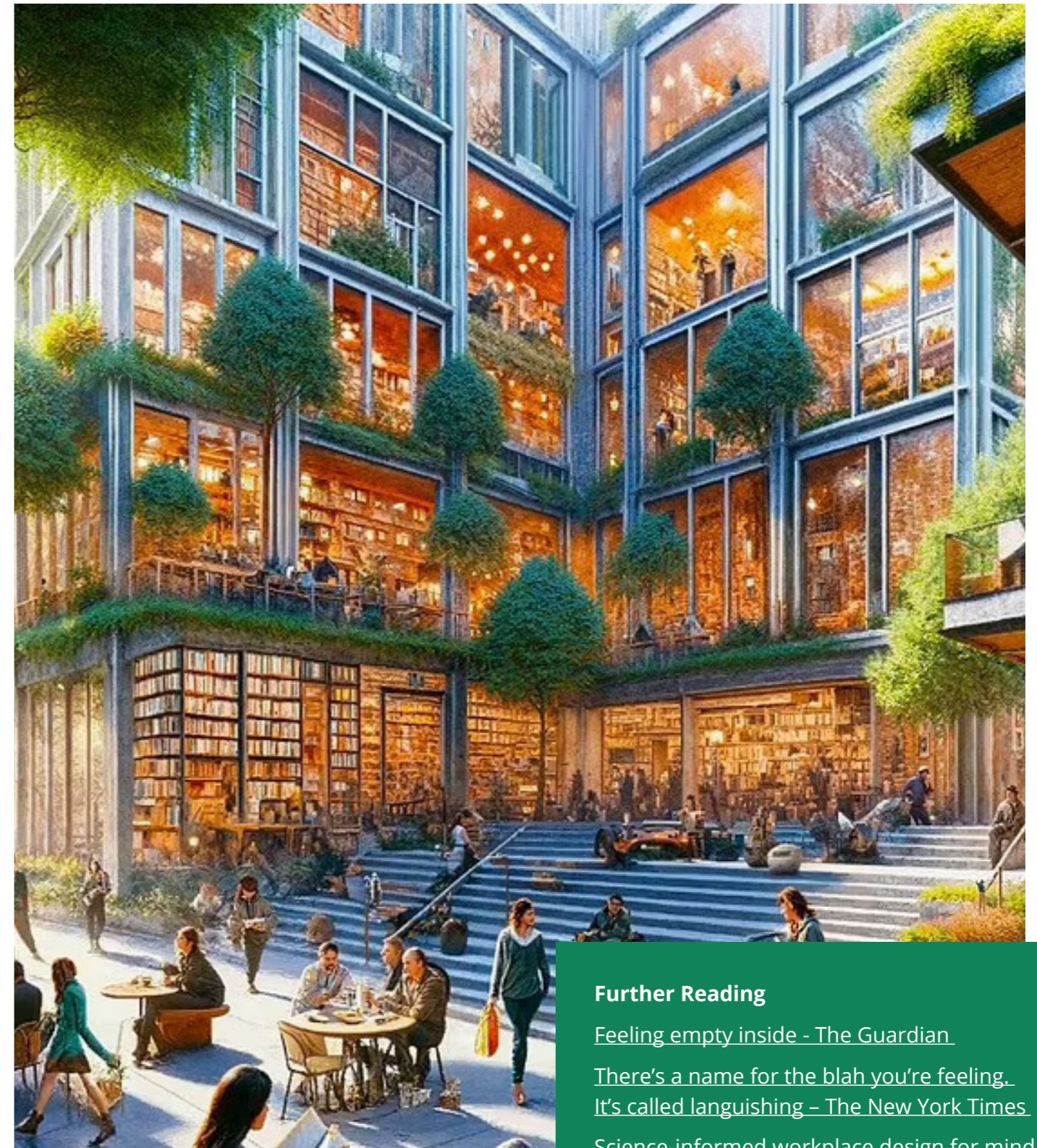
Learn more ↗



DirectorySF

A private housing directory to find sublets and roommates in tech

Learn more ↗



The proposed Square Mile campus will be a 15-minute neighbourhood for people to live, work and build community.

Further Reading

- [Feeling empty inside - The Guardian](#)
- [There's a name for the blah you're feeling. It's called languishing - The New York Times](#)
- [Science-informed workplace design for mind and body - WORKTECH Academy](#)
- [The Eudaimonia Machine - Designing Productivity - Holtby Turner](#)

'The four-day week today: a buzzword. But tomorrow it signals a new paradigm ...'

- Philippe du Payrat, 4journs.work



Philippe du Payrat is the founder of [4journs.work](https://www.4journs.work) and [mavoie.org](https://www.mavoie.org), a non-profit start-up supported by Google.org. A firm advocate for inclusivity and equality, he pledges himself to build the future of work by breaking silos and giving equality of opportunity to all. An ESCP business school alumnus, Philippe has worked in critical positions in the mobility scale-up industry, food tech, and as a freelancer for a variety of seed/series start-ups. He spoke at WORKTECH Paris on 4 April 2024.

Four-day future for disengaged employees

A four-day working week aids wellbeing and breaks the convention that more hours will equal more productivity, says Philippe du Payrat of 4journs.work

As employees reach unprecedented levels of disengagement and burnout, deteriorating levels of wellbeing at work are affecting both individuals and organisations alike. These issues are not constrained to any specific sector; they also affect almost every aspect of the modern workforce, from staff turnover rates to a reduction in productivity.

According to Philippe du Payrat, co-founder of [4journs.work](https://www.4journs.work) (the French partner of 4 Day Week Global), reducing the number of hours spent working is the way forward. Speaking at WORKTECH Paris 2024, du Payrat explained that the rapid deterioration rates of employee engagement and wellbeing can be reversed by implementing a new work schedule that reduces the number of hours spent working to free up one day a week, without a reduction in salary.

According to data presented at the conference, 34% of employees suffer from burnout (three times as many as before the Covid-19 pandemic). This number dramatically decreases to just 9% for those working on a full-time reduced hour model such as a four-day workweek, according to research by [Infinite Potential](https://www.infinitepotential.com).



The four-day workweek is gaining steady traction around the globe, but its implementation has largely been confined to capped trials and reduced-scale implementations at smaller companies which may have more agency in advocating for a shorter working week. Du Payrat challenges the traditional interplay between work and life, asking fundamental questions such as: what role do we want work to play in our life? How can we re-energise work? And what kind of society do we want to live in and commit ourselves too? The four-day week challenges long-held assumptions about productivity output being dependant on the number of hours worked.

Implementing a smarter schedule

At WORKTECH Paris, Philippe du Payrat touched on the many different variations of the four-day work week that exist. From staggering a four-day work week to implementing the policy flexibly, there are several different ways in which a shortened week can be implemented to benefit organisations.

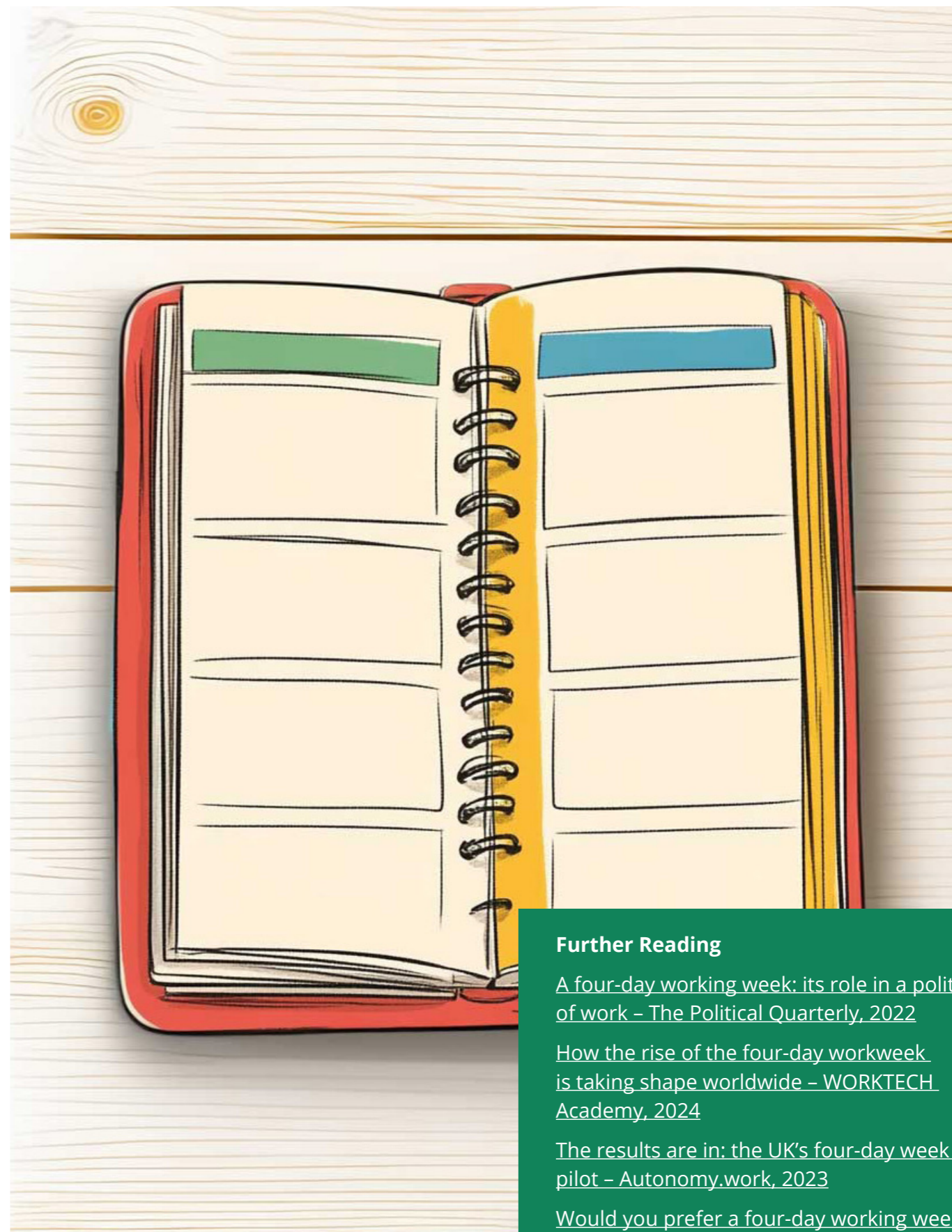
Environmental benefits: for organisations looking to reduce their carbon footprint and move forward on their sustainability journey, the implementation of a four-day working week could be the ticket. **A study conducted** by the University of Massachusetts Amherst found that a 10% reduction in working hours cut an individual's carbon footprint by 8.6% overall, prompting Juliet Schor, an economist and sociologist at Boston College, to argue that a shorter working week is key to cutting global carbon emissions.

A series of four day working week trials that took place in 2022 coordinated by 4 Day Week Global **confirmed the findings:** with one day less at work, time spent commuting fell from 3.5 hours to just under 2.6 hours, with an overall reduction in people commuting by car. With offices operational for fewer days, a reduction in energy

usage can offer further environmental benefits for companies looking to focus on sustainable models of working.

Productivity gains: a pilot of the **four-day work week at Microsoft**, Japan has demonstrated the ways in which implementing a shorter work week can make a company more efficient. The reduction in working days led to a meeting diet for the company – the standard duration of a meeting was cut in half from 60 to 30 minutes, and required attendance at these meetings was capped at five employees. The results? According to the company, the five-week trial resulted in a 40% increase in productivity.

Wellbeing wins: for companies looking to support the wellbeing of employees, the four-day work week can help **reduce work-related stress**. Organisations that took part in the series of trials across the world in 2022 **reported an increased revenue** of around 8% over the trial, which was 37.55% higher than the same period in 2021. Employee absenteeism was reduced, the number of people resigning was lower, and even hiring was on the rise. For companies looking to champion efficiency alongside employee wellbeing, a four-day working week could be the answer.



Further Reading

[A four-day working week: its role in a politics of work – The Political Quarterly, 2022](#)

[How the rise of the four-day workweek is taking shape worldwide – WORKTECH Academy, 2024](#)

[The results are in: the UK's four-day week pilot – Autonomy.work, 2023](#)

[Would you prefer a four-day working week? University of Cambridge, 2023](#)

‘Mindfulness is a preventative medicine – it helps in building mental strength’

- Sean Tolram, HSBC



Sean Tolram is the head of mindfulness at HSBC and the co-founder of My Trained Mind. He combines his corporate experience with principles of mindfulness and neuroscience to help people succeed in the modern workplace. He is also a certified mindfulness teacher and has an ICF accreditation in brain-based coaching. He spoke at the Unworking Conference 2024 in London on 5 June 2024.

How to build mental resilience

Creating brain-friendly environments requires a radical rethink about how we approach stress in the workplace, says Sean Tolram of HSBC

The rate of employee burnout is at record levels. Gallup’s most recent survey reports that three in four US employees experience burnout at least some of the time. Yet employees are continuing to work in ways – and in environments – that put their brains into a constant state of threat and prevent them from performing their best work, according to Sean Tolram, head of mindfulness at global bank HSBC.

Speaking at the Unworking Conference 2024 in London, Tolram argued for an urgent rethink of how to build mental resilience in the workforce. While corporate wellness initiatives are well equipped to offer employees access to healthier food, cheaper gym memberships and ergonomic workstations, they rarely tackle the issue of the stress at the root cause. To reduce stress in the workplace, Tolram calls on the practice of neuroscience and mindfulness to prevent burnout from occurring in the first instance.

Work today centres around email threads, relentless meetings and feedback conversations, which can cause a low to moderate state of constant stress. The human stress response is designed for short bursts – switching on when necessary, and then off to allow for recovery. Without recovery time, stress continues to build until it becomes chronic. Inevitably, this turns into burnout.



Mindfulness is something employees can leverage in the moment, allowing them to recognise the symptoms of their stress and make a conscious decision about how to address them. In contrast to the traditional outlook on wellbeing at work, mindfulness does not solely set out to offset stress with alternative activities such as the gym or socialising, but rather it works by engaging the brain to provide individuals with a heightened sense of awareness of how they can take control over their working environment.

Mindful practice starts with leadership. The biggest barrier to mindfulness is how hard it is for people to change habits. Each generation takes on habits that they’ve experienced from their leaders, meaning outdated practices continue to live on as they get passed down. ‘It’s time to break that cycle,’ says Tolram, ‘because we can no longer rely on work practices and wellbeing strategies from 50 to 60 years ago.’

How to leverage mindfulness in a global organisation

Mindfulness at work requires a reset in how employees think about work and the environments they work in. In the case of HSBC, there were several factors that contributed to the success of the program:

Collect data: Collecting data on the success of the program is important. For example, HSBC tracks the number of requests it gets for mindfulness sessions. At the end of 2023, the number of requests had increased by 100% year on year. This data is supplemented with pre- and post-session surveys. The data from this shows that people who participate in mindfulness sessions have a 30% uplift in stress resilience.

Create templates and guidelines: For global organisations, mindfulness programs should be

delivered in a safe, consistent and responsible way. Trained mindfulness champions should use consistent templates and guidelines, which are then tailored to specific needs within the workplace community.

Lead by example: Leaders must incorporate mindful practice into their workstyle to impact change. An example is learning how to give feedback mindfully. Studies show that feedback only leads to different behaviours 30% of the time because the brain is in a state of threat and is not receptive to guidance. For managers, offering feedback into a 'towards state' centred around reward can lead to much better outcomes.



Further Reading

[How to create brain-friendly workplaces through mindfulness - WORKTECH Academy](#)

[Designers should practice mindfulness to create mindful design - WORKTECH Academy](#)

[How to prevent employee burnout - Gallup](#)

[The HSBC mindfulness program - Mindful Workplace Community](#)

HSBC's UK headquarters, Birmingham. Image courtesy of TP Bennett

'The workplace of the future will not come through the continuous improvement of offices'

- Dr Agustin Chevez, University of Melbourne



Dr Agustin Chevez has dedicated his career to understanding the notion of work and uncovering environments that best support our working lives. His work has been presented at various international forums and in industry and academic publications, including his latest book, *The Pilgrim's Guide to the Workplace* (Springer). After working at leading design firms in Australia and delivering research insights worldwide, Agustin works closer with organisations to help them navigate the evolving context of work and their workplace. Agustin is an Honorary Fellow in the School of Management and Marketing at the University of Melbourne. He spoke at WORKTECH Melbourne on 26 March 2024.

Escaping from the pull of the office

If we want to build the workplace of the future, we need to transcend the machinery of office development, says workplace provocateur Agustin Chevez

How can we create the workplace of the future if we are constantly being dragged back down to earth by the machinery of a property industry that is focused on developing and delivering offices? That was the question that Dr Agustin Chevez, Honorary Fellow in the School of Management and Marketing, University of Melbourne, sought to explore as a keynote speaker at WORKTECH Melbourne 2024.

Chevez explained that using the term 'workplace' as a synonym for 'office' was unhelpful as the office was a relatively late invention in the long evolution of working life. He also gave his own twist to a famous statement by the management professor Oren Harari – 'the electric light did not come from the continuous improvement of candles' – by adapting it thus: 'The workplace of the future will not come through the continuous improvement of offices.'

Chevez used the metaphor of the space program to describe the 'workplace velocity' needed to 'pull free of the gravitational pull of the office'. To investigate how to gather speed and reach this velocity, Chevez has assembled a high-profile panel of experts across the Australian workplace sector to help guide a long-term research study that is engaging three specific groups: end users



– from individuals to the many configurations they form; providers – those who make the workplace happen through design, finance and development; and a third group comprised of interested parties affected by workplace change – people in transport, hospitality, retail and city management.

The research is ongoing, but Chevez shared some early findings which revealed the need to develop new forms of value that go beyond measuring the workplace in terms of space utilisation and dollars per square metre. He concluded: 'The office benefits the status quo. As an invention it's dated – work has stretched its capabilities. People will benefit from reinventing how we procure work environments.'

Solving the Rubik's Cube of work

To explain how organisations can transcend traditional office solutions and deliver the workplace of the future, Dr Agustin Chevez adopted the metaphor of a Rubik's Cube of Work in his presentation at WORKTECH Melbourne 2024.

The different stakeholders in the workplace – principally employees, organisations and developers – are configured in a 'Cube of Work' which has been disrupted by various crises, from the climate emergency and the Covid-19 pandemic to the rise of Generative AI. Each time a crisis occurs, the Cube of Work is reconfigured in a new way.

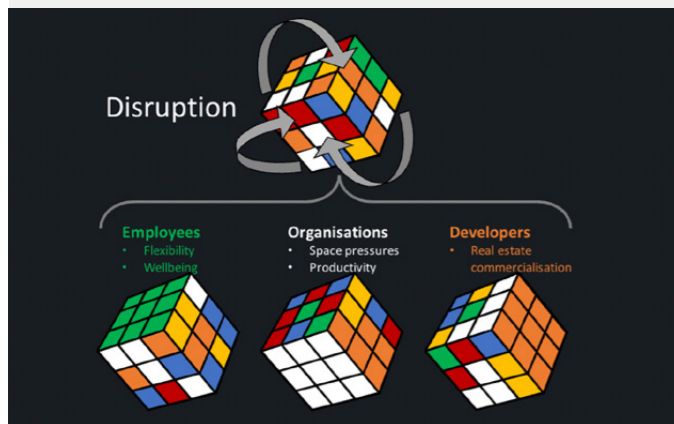
property sector was key to solving the puzzle so that commercial logic could be combined with social logic in creating new work environments.

What form might these new work environments take? WORKTECH Academy's own research has revealed an emerging ecosystem of work settings beyond the formal corporate office, including but not limited to:

- suburban satellite offices
- workspaces in pubs and bars
- high street work/retail hubs
- coworking floors in office towers
- transport work hubs
- outdoor work areas
- libraries and other civic infrastructure

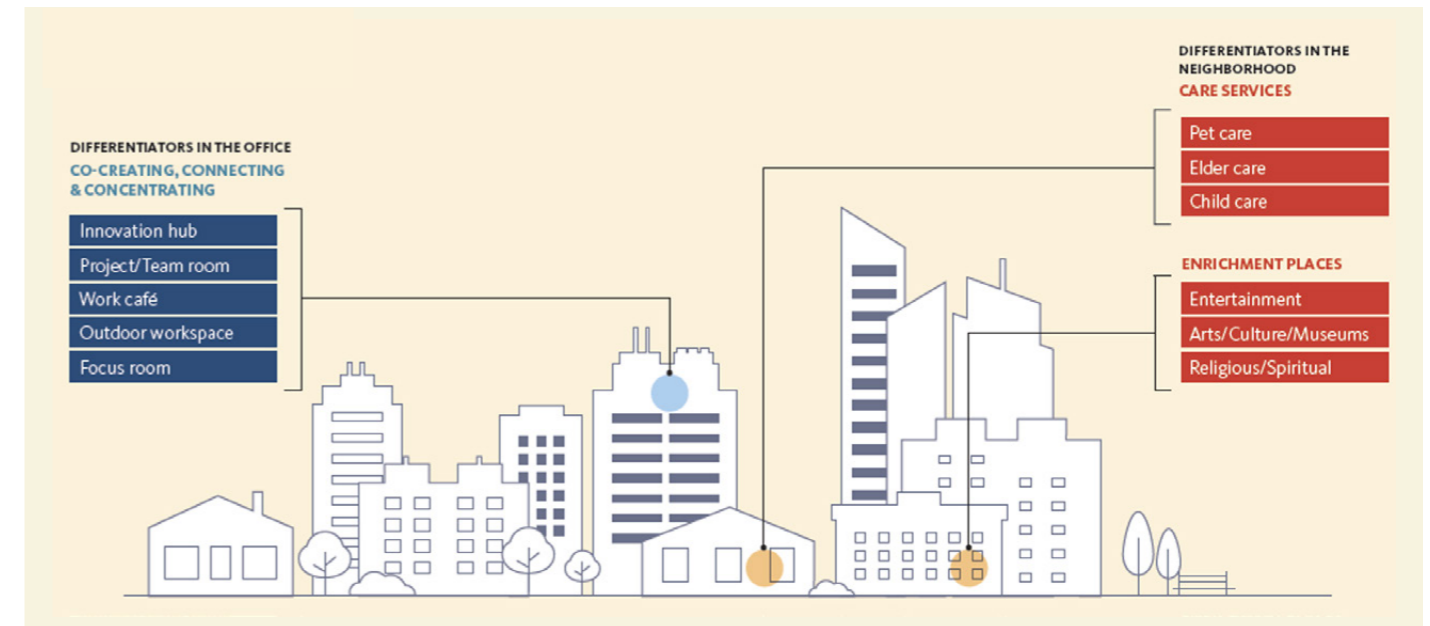
According to Gensler's Global Workplace Survey 2024, exceptional organisations differentiate themselves by creating an 'ecosystem of spaces in and beyond the office'. This ecosystem might ideally combine spaces in the office to co-create, concentrate and connect with neighbourhood care services and 'enrichment places' offering art, culture, entertainment and spirituality.

This model, based on data from 16,000 office workers across 15 countries and 10 industries, is an example of envisaging a future workplace in which the Rubik's Cube of Work has been reconfigured.



Caption: The Cube of Work. Dr Agustin Chevez

The puzzle is enormously complex and putting it back together each time is difficult. There is often conflict between different stakeholders and a lack of alignment – for example, 'the ESG agenda is good and fine until it gets in the way of profit!' Chevez argued that understanding the balance between power and interest in the



Above: Workplace ecosystem. Gensler Research Institute. **Below:** outdoor working is on the rise



Further Reading

[A Pilgrim's Guide to the Workplace: a research journey – WORKTECH Academy](#)

[Gensler Global Workplace Survey 2024 – Gensler Research Institute](#)

[Isn't it time to rethink office space valuation metrics? – WORKTECH Academy](#)

[The Future of the Office Has Arrived: It's Hybrid – Gallup](#)



On Our Radar

Here is a selection of external links to articles, podcasts and books on subjects that are on WORKTECH Academy's radar this quarter:



Are we heading for a four-day week?

In this video, co-founders of marketing agency Literal Humans discuss their experience of adopting a four-day week into the company and future plans for the initiative.

[Read more](#)



Alain Delon's forgotten fling with furniture

This article explores the furniture collection designed by the late French film actor and producer Alain Delon in the 1970s for the French design house, Maison Jansen.

[Read more](#)



Design for better health and wellbeing

A new book by architect Alessandro Carus shares wisdom on incorporating wellbeing design strategies to improve mental and physical health illustrating the power of human recovery.

[Read more](#)



Exploring the creative mind

In this video series from Haworth, design experts discuss the human-centric future, the end of the global mega-trend and the dialogue between humanity and nature.

[Read more](#)



Workplace Geeks Podcast with Rob Harris

In series 3 of the Workplace Geeks podcast, the hosts sit down with Rob Harris to discuss the evolving landscape of London's real estate market and how it relates to the future of work.

[Read more](#)



The Urbanist podcast on lifelong neighbourhoods

In this podcast episode, Andrew Tuck discusses what makes a location liveable, from youth through to adulthood, by way of a recent survey on lifelong neighbourhoods in London.

[Read more](#)



Deloitte's 2024 Sustainability Action Report

Deloitte has documented current trends surrounding sustainability reporting, the state of environmental, social and governance reports and disclose readiness for both public and private US companies.

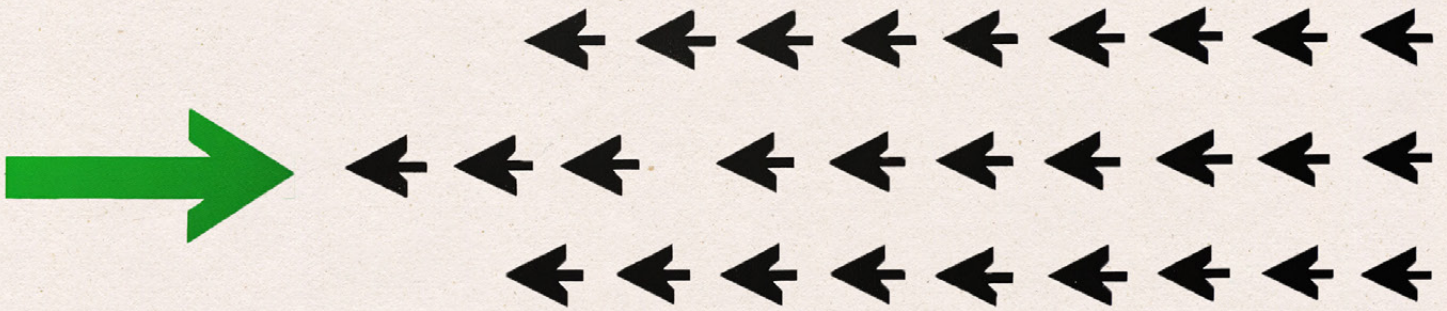
[Read more](#)



Are office spaces set to expand?

This article looks at the results from a new survey by CBRE highlighting that more employers want to add office space after shedding it during the pandemic and the transition to hybrid work.

[Read more](#)



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