IA INTERIOR ARCHITECTS

The Shape-Shifting Workplace

Collaboration Areas

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OVERVIEW

The Shape-Shifting Workplace

The response to the global pandemic has made it clear that remote work will remain a significant feature of the workplace in 2021 and well beyond. In fact, for many professionals remote work has become the preferred way to work. A list of factors, now familiar, have made it irresistably attractive to a large segment of the population. However, although remote work can increase productivity, it may not be able to support the level of collaboration required by a highly creative workforce nor the innovation demanded by a competitive market. And many of the positive dynamics synonymous with the workplace that depend on face-to-face interaction—for instance, planned or serendipitous communication and opportunities to build social capital and trust—have been notably lost. Remote work has taken a toll on organizational culture and for many diminished the quality of their professional identity.

So, what happens next? For a plethora of enterprises, we see a bespoke hybrid model that combines remote and on-site work. What that will ultimately mean for the future of work remains to be determined as companies work through and experiment with the model and consider the needs of staff, the development of organizational culture, and the pursuit of goals. Still, drawing on research, industry resources, and working with our colleagues and clients, we recognize a constellation of tools and practices that will benefit any organization in planning and implementing its next steps for the workplace. In this paper we take a look at those tools and practices and their effective use by three well-known organizations.

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44% No Change

13% Mix of WFH / WFO to free address

6% All assigned to desk share

38% All assigned to a mix of WFH / WFO

Potential shifts in an organization's overall occupancy strategy from pre to post Covid.
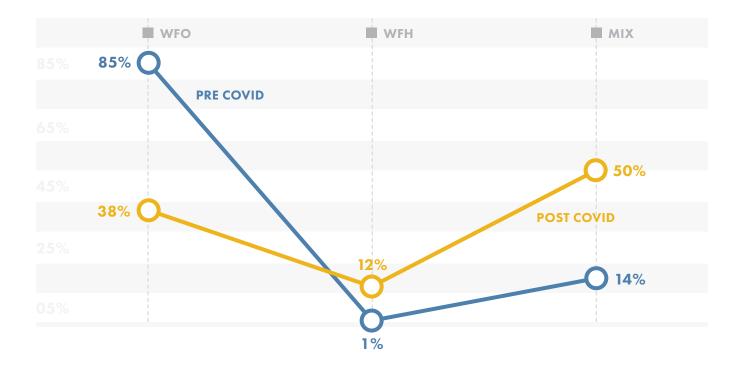
MORE THAN EVER BEFORE, UNIQUE IS THE OPERABLE CONCEPT REQUIRED TO CRAFT A BESPOKE MODEL THAT EMBRACES REMOTE AND ON-SITE WORK.

Accurate identification of work modes and what it takes for staff to do their best work will have to be weighed against company culture, goals, and production. Surveys, focus groups, pilot programs, all classic tools, as well as sharing among organizations the findings of research, will be critical in determining what work can be done remotely and what work will be done at the office by necessity or choice. Adjustments will be made, plans revised. Overall, a human-centric approach with an emphasis on

wellness and diversity and some form of immersive brand environment—be it a hub visited periodically or a workplace frequented a few times a week or fulltime—will be crucial to encourage comradery, support mission and brand, and strengthen company culture. This last point should be at the top of any organization's guiding principles because research makes it clear that a cohesive workforce focused on mission is arguably an enterprises' most powerful asset.

(Opposite) Level of mobility breakdown, identifying where employees work within an organization.

IA has collected data from a representative mix of clients who are developing or changing existing workplace standards and long-term strategies in response to current business and workplace demands. The matrix and metrics in this paper represent a sampling, snapshots in time, as many of our clients progress towards moving the workplace forward based on observations, lessons learned, and new industry data.
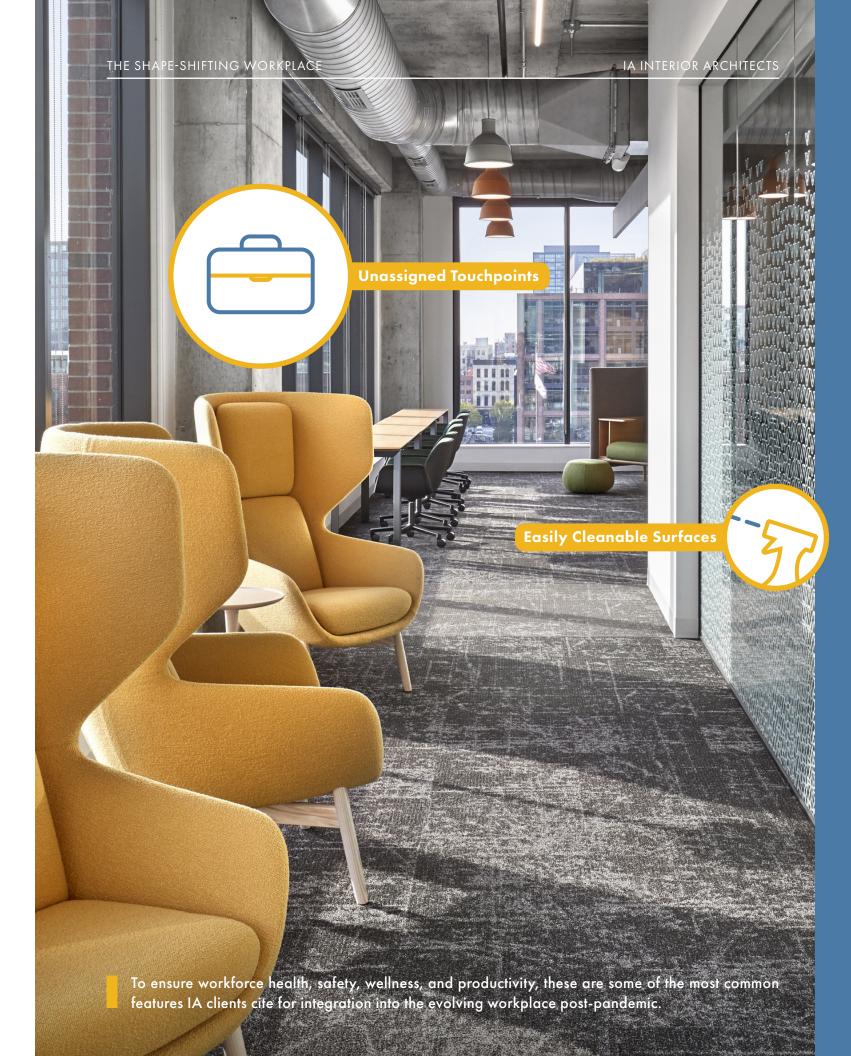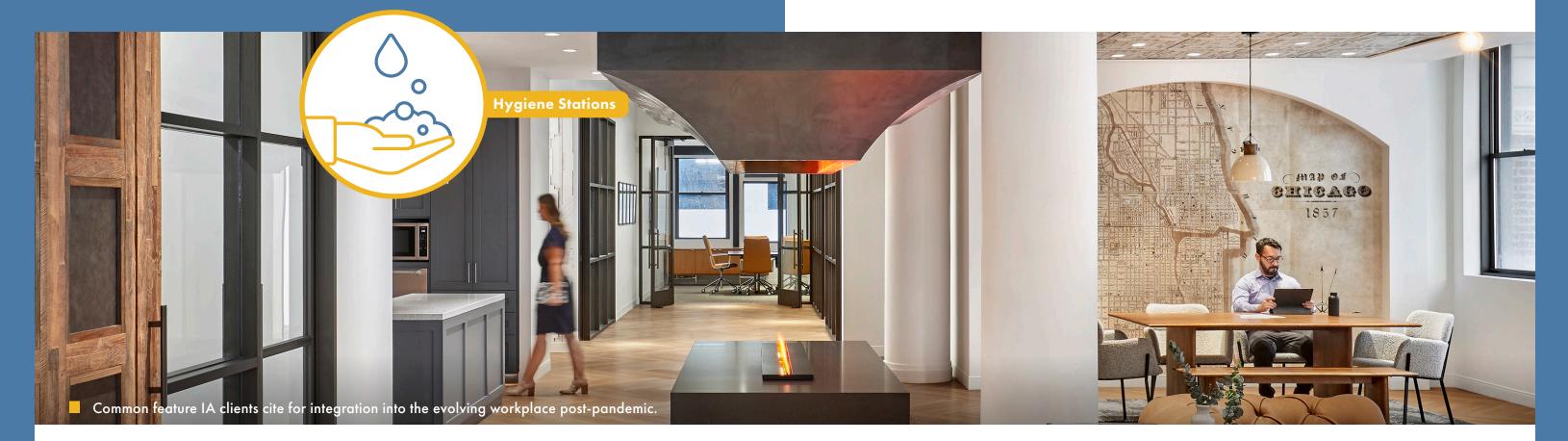
WFO — WFH — MIX

85%

PRE COVID

50%

38%

12%

POST COVID

14%

1%

At the end of 2020, three companies that we work with, Salesforce, McDonald's, and TIAA (Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America), joined IA for a webinar that explored their organizations' unique pre-pandemic and long-term approach to the evolving workplace.

The differences in their choices and scenarios here reviewed speak to flexibility and the harnessing of familiar tools and procedures to create bespoke solutions for the persona, work style, and objectives of each organization.

■ Three examples of other IA clients and their future plans toward moving the workplace forward.

INDUSTRY	WORKPLACE STRATEGY	SOLUTION
Consumer Products	Support employee interaction in the office; encourage individual work to occur at home.	Shared spaces doubled (more touchdown tables, desks and flexible meeting areas); individual space reduced by 75%.
Technology	Intentionally design the office as a magnet for culture and innovation, while supporting an equitable WFH experience.	Mix of WFH/WFO. At office focus on neighborhoods of choice, with a variety of workspaces.
Technology	The office is primarily where work happens.	Blended WFH/WFO. More built-in architectural and furniture flexibility to support quick changes depending on team needs.

Unassigned Touchpoints

Easily Cleanable Surfaces

■ To ensure workforce health, safety, wellness, and productivity, these are some of the most common features IA clients cite for integration into the evolving workplace post-pandemic.

Hygiene Stations

■ Common feature IA clients cite for integration into the evolving workplace post-pandemic.

SALESFORCE IS LOOKING AT WAYS TO MAKE PHYSICAL SPACES MORE SYMBIOTIC WITH THE VIRTUAL WORLD AND OFFER A PARITY OF EXPERIENCE FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS.

By the beginning of 2020, Salesforce had already established a culture of remote awareness—18% to 20% of staff were working remote permanently and the company was accustomed to video calls—making the transition to full-time remote work seamless during the global pandemic. However, for Salesforce the workplace is not going away. Instead, it will evolve into a more communal space, a vibrant environment that inspires collaboration and interaction, while also accommodating focus work.

The company's decision-making process to develop a long-term strategy has been three phased. Phase one marked the move to company-wide remote work and a crisis response as Salesforce delivered PPE to the global and local community, as well as made grants available to help local businesses. For phase two, data played an instrumental role, informing a gradual return to the workplace, with smaller offices testing scenarios that will provide lessons learned to benefit larger offices. Local case rates and healthcare infrastructure data, coupled with internal data from leadership and employees, was used to gauge the level of readiness required to return. Phase three asked the question *what is the new normal*? Without enough accumulated data to answer that question and make solid assumptions around the best course of action, Salesforce reached out to local and world-class industry business partners to ideate on new workplace strategies and lessons already learned.

In determining the way back to the office, sharing data is a definite plus for companies, although direct feedback from employees, as always, is critical. Surveys are a common part of Salesforce's culture and key to understanding the success of workplace performance. With the majority of the company's employees continuing to work from home, there has been an even greater reliance on surveys, especially those focused on health, wellness and safety, to ensure the company can take care of its people both in the office and remotely.

Productivity has increased but diminished team collaboration has been a challenge. Salesforce has leveraged this and lessons learned as an opportunity to revamp its workspaces with creativity and innovation at the forefront. Pilot testing scenarios continue, especially to identify flexible furniture solutions that enhance collaboration and creativity.

For the company, the tasks and time allotted to work revolve around three major personas defined by

The workplace is not going away but instead will **evolve into a more communal space.**

work type: Office-based employees are full-time on site because of their job requirements, although many who are able to work remotely prefer to work in the office because their home office may not fully support how they need to work. The second persona, full-time remote, is referred to as the Salesforce@Home Program. And lastly, the majority of Salesforce's employee population makes up the third persona, which enjoys flexibility, coming into the office a portion of the week, typically for collaboration, presentations, face-time with customers, and more.

Equity has always been a critical part of the Salesforce employee experience. For example, stipends and certain expenses are provided to outfit a home office for those in the Salesforce@Home Program. Furthermore, the company recently partnered with customers to provide discounts on customer products to outfit employee home offices. As the role of the home office expands, there is a heightened emphasis on creating a consistent experience that reflect's the company's culture, whether in person or at home.
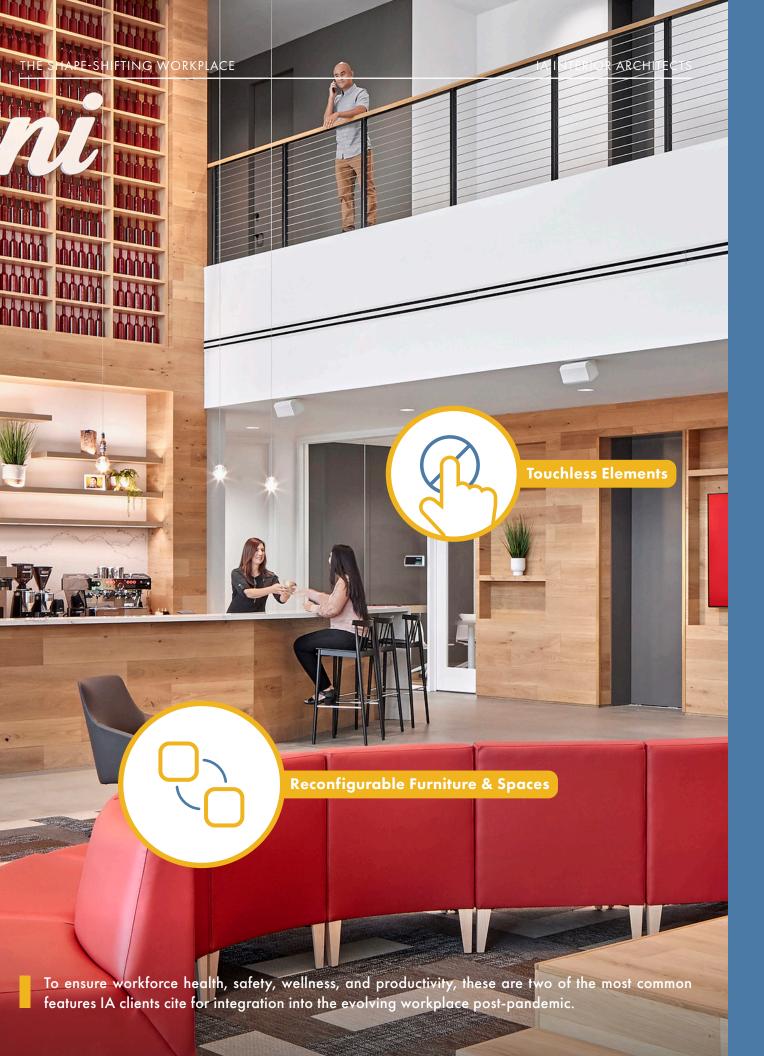
In addition, the company is looking at ways to make physical spaces more symbiotic with the virtual world and offer a parity of experience and connectivity for all participants. Whether this means virtual team members can dial in and be part of collaboration

spaces or that all large meetings are virtual instead of a hybrid of face-to-face and virtual is yet to be determined.

Part of the company's continued real estate strategy is to create communal hubs by locating offices in urban centers that are easily reached by public transit. This is reflected by the company's nine global Salesforce Towers currently open or under construction in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, Atlanta, Indianapolis, Dublin, London, Tokyo and Sydney.

Critical to Salesforce's success is change enablement and the company believes that the more you share with employees, the better the outcome. At the end of the day, your people are your most valuable asset and everyone plays a part in driving company culture. It's a journey and together there's an incredible opportunity to create an even better workplace and shape the future of work.

In determining the way back to the office, **sharing data is a definite plus for companies.**

Touchless Elements

Reconfigurable Furniture & Spaces

To ensure workforce health, safety, wellness, and productivity, these are two of the most common features IA clients cite for integration into the evolving workplace post-pandemic.

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Improved Indoor Air Quality

THE CASUAL INTERACTIONS AND IMPROMPTU CONVERSATIONS THAT HAPPEN WHEN WALKING THROUGH THE OFFICE ARE HARDER TO DUPLICATE IN THE VIRTUAL WORKPLACE.

McDonald's shifted to activity-based work in 2018 as part of the company's move to downtown Chicago and established standardized remote work policies to further enhance their workplace culture at that time. Employees at corporate headquarters could choose to work from home one to two days a week, shift their start times earlier or later through establishing "core hours," and were encouraged to utilize video conferencing to increase connection in virtual meetings. Adopting these changes prior to the global pandemic allowed for a fairly seamless transition to full-time remote work for many McDonald's corporate employees.

Like many other companies, McDonald's is in the process of determining how the workplace will evolve post-pandemic in a way that will foster a positive and collaborative culture, and support employee well-being. The company has taken a data-driven approach—surveying every function to understand what is working well, what is not working well, what aspects of remote work should be retained, and what can best be supported by an in-person environment.
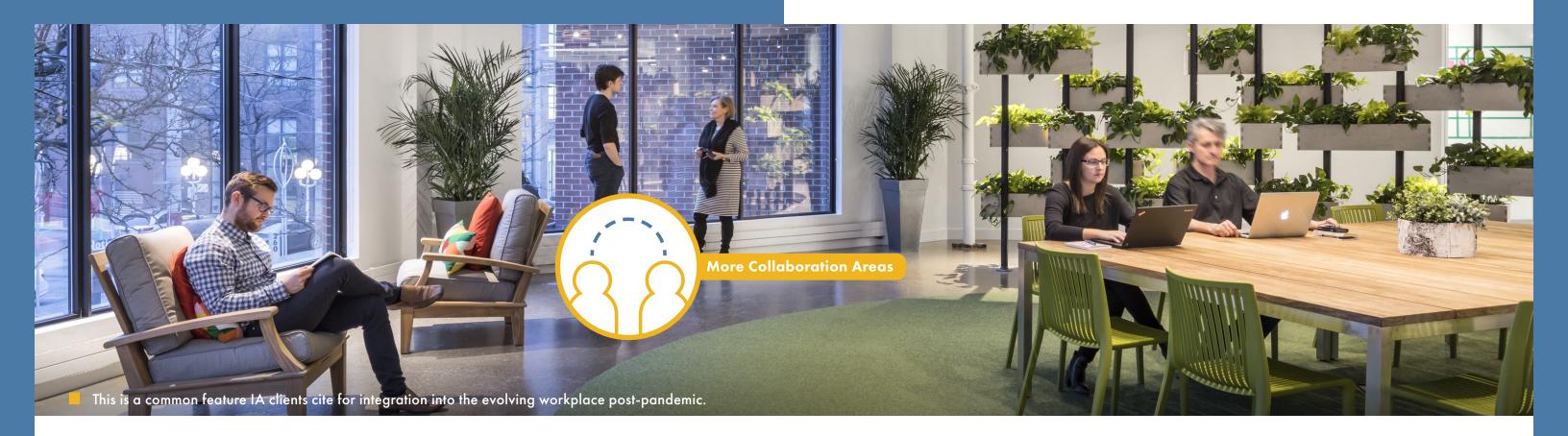
Surveys, focus groups, and attraction and retention statistics have been key to measuring success. Occupancy data technology is also key to understanding how employees will utilize space post-pandemic. Along with internal data, external benchmarking has provided a broader understanding of how other organizations are navigating the evolving workplace. Although the transition to mostly remote work during Covid-19 was successful for McDonald's corporate employees, the company still places a high value on face-to-face interaction. The casual interactions and impromptu conversations that happen when walking through the office are harder to duplicate in the virtual workplace. McDonald's has also found that certain activities, such as brainstorming, can be more difficult to accomplish in a remote or hybrid setting. While McDonald's will continue to offer its corporate employees flexibility, the company has a strong belief that there will always be a place for the office going forward.

It is apparent from the evolving workplace that culture can be hard to keep alive and thriving with a large remote workforce.

More Collaboration Areas

■ This is a common feature IA clients cite for integration into the evolving workplace post-pandemic.

TIAA'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY IS A DYNAMIC WORKPLACE APPROACH THAT SHIFTS THE FOCUS AWAY FROM WHERE ASSOCIATES WORK TO HOW THEY WORK.

Pre-pandemic TIAA had instituted a remote work program, but subsequent mergers and acquisitions left many of its offices feeling empty, and almost half of staff had been with the company less than five years. As a result, TIAA set in motion a return to the workplace for nearly all associates, with a commitment to modernized offices and a truly special place to work. Just months after 95% of associates returned to the workplace, the pandemic hit, forcing 99% of the workforce to work from home full-time.

Today, TIAA's long-term strategy is a dynamic workplace approach that shifts the focus away from where associates work to how they work. Flexibility is a key component of this approach seen through the lens of work styles, choice, and furniture. Three

types of work styles, based on role profile criteria, have been identified to meet the varied ways in which associates work: full-time remote, full-time in the office, and a mix of both. To ensure associates have what they need to be effective while working outside of the office, a stipend is provided for items such as chairs, monitors, and other technology.

At the workplace, a wide variety of individual, meeting, community and support space types provide associates choices to best fit their preferences and the task at hand. Space types include new additions such as libraries, common areas, privacy booths, outdoor terraces, amenities, and increased meeting rooms and technology. Furthermore, furniture solutions intended to last 10 to 15 years, are reconfigurable to evolve

with business and health changes over time, avoiding the need to reengineer expensive furnishings. For example, a six-foot-by-six-foot workstation can easily be reconfigured into a benching solution.

Personal safety and wellness have long been top TIAA priorities; the pandemic increased opportunities to further consider how best to support them in the workplace. Open ceilings that increase the sense of spaciousness, access to natural light and outdoor spaces, a carefully chosen color palette, and art and graphics all contribute to a sense of psychological safety and distancing. Fitwel certification will further validate the company's intentions and efforts, demonstrating that the new workplace has been designed with associates top of mind.

Productivity has remained strong and sometimes even increased, despite policy and physical workplace changes. Moving forward, ongoing evaluation, leveraging lessons learned to benefit other TIAA offices, and change management will be important

Ongoing evaluation—leveraging lessons learned to benefit other TIAA offices—and change management will be important in sustaining a truly special place to work.

in sustaining "a truly special place to work." What used to be common practice, constructing a new office and essentially keeping it the same over the life of the lease, has changed. Now more than ever, TIAA is engaging the workforce to provide feedback. Surveys, labs, sensor technology, and focus groups will help to measure the effect of various solutions and concierge services, providing real-time observations and feedback. Also, a strong partnership with the Human Resource and Technology teams has enhanced communications, helping to ease the adoption of the new workplace environment and ways of working.

For TIAA, the office is here to stay. The company is confident that as it continues to align decision making with guiding principles and leverages lessons learned, the new workplace model will be flexible, memorable, and successful.

A strong partnership with the Human Resource and Technology teams has enhanced communications, **helping to ease the adoption of the new workplace environment and ways of working.**

Outdoor Workspace

To ensure workforce health, safety, wellness, and productivity, this is a common feature IA clients cite for integration into the evolving workplace post-pandemic.

CONCLUSION
The Shape-Shifting Workplace

Salesforce, McDonald's, and TIAA are representative of the plethora of organizations that will support a hybrid workplace, combining both remote and office work this year and beyond. And we can broadly identify tools and practices that these and other organizations can utilize to realize best outcomes and create a unique workplace model that reflects their company values, culture, and workforce.

As always, proven expertise equipped with proprietary methods, tools, and resources can help deliver optimum strategies and solutions. And, of course, IA is here to further that effort, partnering with our clients in the exciting journey of creating the next steps and future of their workplace. For more information visit: ⬈ www.interiorarchitects.com

■ THE EMPLOYEE / HUMAN CAPITAL

Minimize solutions based on assumptions; **give employees a voice and solicit feedback.**

Understand the human element; **implement options for personal choice, engagement, wellness, and sustainability** aligned with the organization's style and persona.

Implement **effective change management** with a holistic approach, clear communications, and empathy to support different levels of adoption.

Establish **immersive face-to-face environments for the development of social capital**, where employee and organization joyfully co-identify with the joint adventure of their mission.

Adopt **virtual technologies to ensure inclusiveness** and collaboration.

■ WORK PROCESS & WORKSPACE

Partner with other internal teams and subject matter experts to **optimize different viewpoints** and support the development of the workplace.

Assess role profiles by **determining functional work patterns** to establish the ways in which employees will work. Pilot test for performance.

Identify how the organization works and works best weighed against company culture, goals, and production.

Leverage lessons learned, as well as the research of other organizations and industry sources.

Create **flexible workspace infrastructures** that can quickly accommodate change.

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