

# **WAYS TO WORK NOW**

**BENE OFFICE GUIDE**

# CONTENTS

---

**1** WAYS TO NOW

---

**2** WAYS TO CHANGE

---

**3** WAYS TO RETHINK

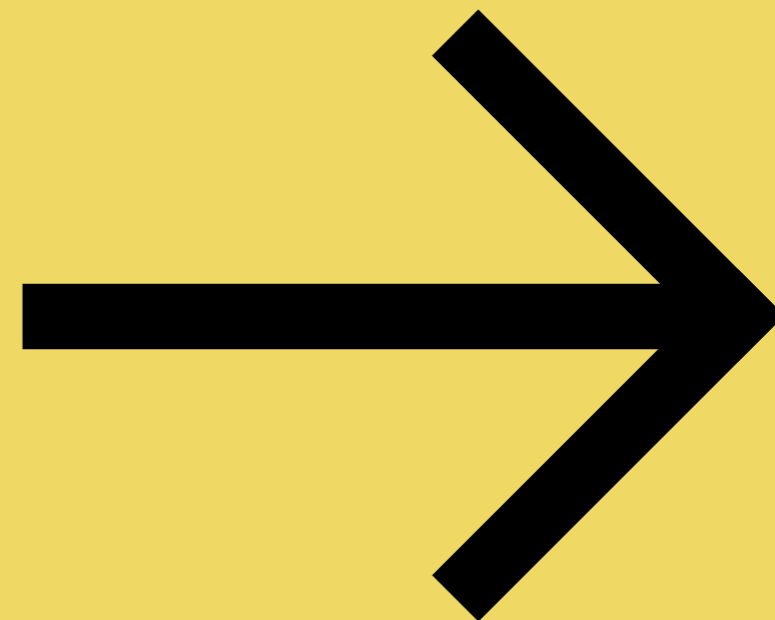
---

**4** WAYS TO EXPLORE

---

**5** WAYS TO EXPRESS

---

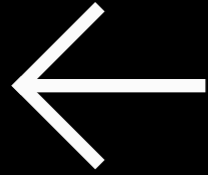


Dear Reader,

At Bene it's not just the future of work we think about, as in our Future of Work Reports, we also think about the practical implications for office design now. There are many different demands on offices today. There's no one-size-fits-all solution – every organisation has its own requirements.

Inspiring offices by Bene, whatever their characteristics, are based on clear principles of planning and design, developed over many years of experience and through intensive dialogue with our clients and partners. In this Office Guide we explain these principles.

We look forward to hearing your feedback and to discussing it with you.  
Your Bene Team



# WAYS TO NOW

OFFICES THROUGH THE AGES

1

**“The only constant  
in life is that  
everything changes.”**

HERACLITUS, GREEK PHILOSOPHER

**The history of the office dates  
right back to ancient times,  
but our working environments  
are changing more rapidly  
today than ever before.**

Office spaces reflect our working lives. For centuries they have been evolving, just as the definition of “work” itself has done. In recent decades, it is developments such as digitalisation, globalisation and automation that are shaping our world and consequently also ourselves. Our behaviours and needs have adapted in response to these developments, just as technologies, competitors, markets, and business models have. The coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated, once again, that current thinking and the procedures based on it can change overnight. Where in the past this kind of transformation took decades or even centuries, today it’s happening much faster.

**FROM ANCIENT TIMES THROUGH TO THE  
AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT:  
THE EARLIEST ORIGINS OF THE “OFFICE”.**

In the ancient world, knowledge work was already highly valued. However, there were no specific spaces allocated to “mental work”. The concept of the “office” (“burra”) first emerged in medieval monasteries. Monks working on precious manuscripts never laid them directly onto the roughly made monastery tables, but placed a protective piece of fabric – the “burra” – underneath.

The earliest forerunners of workspaces as we know them today did not emerge until the Age of Enlightenment. This was the period, as new machines were invented, when concepts like efficiency and productivity became increasingly important. Established processes, and the place of work too, changed radically. Merchants who had previously conducted their business activities in the back rooms of their homes were now moving into professional offices, business premises and secretariats.

**A NEW WORLD: FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES  
IN THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT AS A RESULT  
OF INDUSTRIALISATION.**

Industrialisation triggered fundamental changes all over the world. Businesses grew larger and people’s home life and world of work became clearly separated. The first office buildings were developed outside the towns and cities. Inventions such as typewriters and adding machines, the telephone, and the light bulb made offices more efficient and functionally effective. The market for office furnishings became more professional too. The first printed furniture catalogue was published.

New ways of working inspired new office structures which were better suited to the increasing complexity of internal procedures and processes. For the first time, entire departments and workstations were designed specifically to suit the specific work and tasks of individuals. Employees' positions were now evident from their surroundings: the workplace had become a status symbol. From the end of the 19th century onwards, a trend towards open-plan offices began in the US and spread around the world. The focus was on clear lines of sight, making it possible to supervise employees.

**THE SERVICE ECONOMY: COMMUNICATION IS KEY.**

In the 1970s, the transition from an industrial society to a service economy brought about another round of major changes in the world of work. Specialist departments were now accommodated in group offices. The spaces were no longer designed to allow monitoring by supervisors, instead the key component was active support for communication within the department.

In the 1980s, the arrival of computers brought about the biggest change yet. The digital age was under way. Cabling, technical equipment and server connections have been shaping office design ever since. At the beginning of the 1990s, e-mails and the world wide web were also revolutionising the way people communicated. Information could be found and sent in seconds. This meant employees needed to be based in the office, so that they could use the new technology.

**THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION: ALTERNATIVES TO THE OFFICE.**

From 2007 onwards, however, as smartphones began to spread around the world, there was competition for the office. Now anyone who wanted could carry their business documents and e-mails in their pockets. Suddenly work could be done anywhere. It became possible to work in "third places" such as cafés, airports and parks, and the mobile office has now become part of our everyday working lives. The coronavirus pandemic has intensified these developments further still, making the home office and remote working a key element of our work ecosystems.

**FROM 1900**



With industrialisation, people's home lives and the world of work became clearly separated. New technological breakthroughs such as the steam engine, light bulbs, typewriters, adding machines, and the telephone changed the world in fundamental ways. Mass production gave rise to new structures and processes, dramatically impacting on people's working lives. Office design concepts reflected the hierarchy and employees' status. Large office spaces were designed to allow workers to be monitored.

**FROM 1935**



The Johnson Wax Administration Building, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, was the first open-plan office building in the world. The aim was to imitate in the office what had happened with the assembly lines of the industrial revolution, and therefore to achieve maximum productivity. Interestingly, this trailblazing designer also placed a greater emphasis on architecture and interiors.

**FROM 1960**



The economic boom of the post-war period in Germany inspired new ways of thinking. The "Quickborner Team" pioneered the concept of a "Bürolandschaft" ("office landscape"). Rigid and ineffective structures were broken down using open spaces, with informally placed furnishings and partitions. A stronger focus was placed on building relationships between employees and on improving communication.

**FROM 1970**

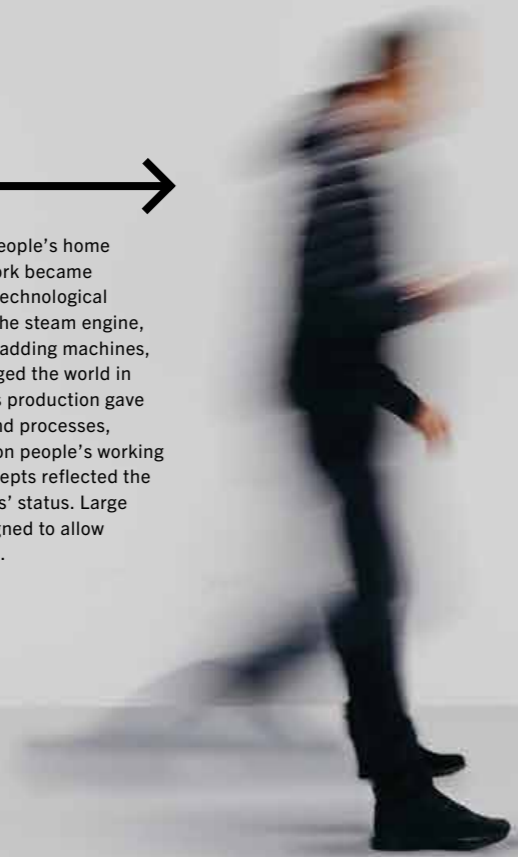


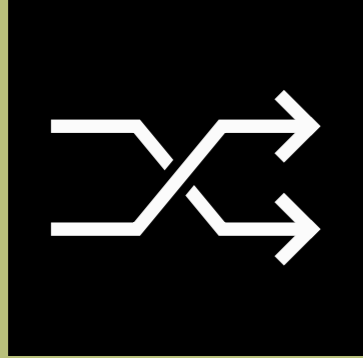
With the rise of the service economy in the 1970s, another significant structural change took place. Knowledge-intensive and communication-oriented professions became increasingly important. Then in the 1980s, computers were introduced in offices and by the 1990s, the internet and e-mails were significantly influencing people's thinking and activities. Technical equipment became essential to our day-to-day working lives and the office provided the necessary infrastructure for that. Mobile devices for work were a rarity.

**FROM 2000**



The digital transformation accelerated once again, bringing about fundamental changes to work and offices. The "new economy" is emerging, with messenger services and social media making new forms of communication possible. Smartphones are now used all over the world, creating competition for the office, for the first time since its emergence. Suddenly it is also possible to work on documents and e-mails in "third places" like hotels, cafés and airports. Work is no longer tied to the technical facilities available in offices. It has become clear that the requirements of an office, as well as its role in the ecosystems of our working lives, are changing





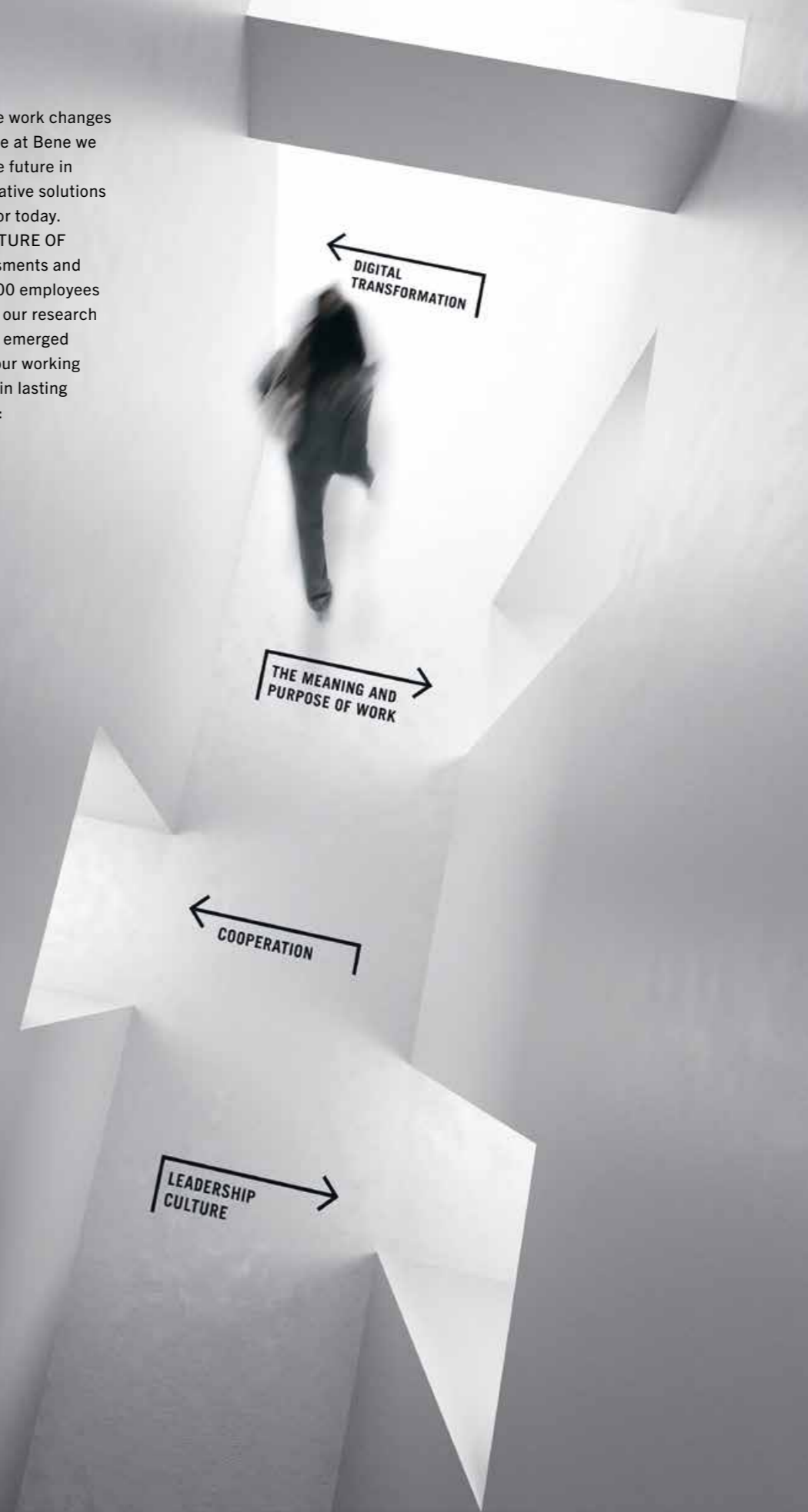
# WAYS TO CHANGE

FACTORS AFFECTING THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

We need to understand the future, with all its opportunities and challenges, in order to be able to develop new and innovative solutions, and to develop design concepts for office areas.

The nature of work and how we work changes constantly and inexorably. Here at Bene we feel it is vital to think about the future in order to help us develop innovative solutions and holistic design concepts for today. In our two reports on "THE FUTURE OF WORK", we present the assessments and opinions of 60 experts and 1200 employees from all over the world. During our research for these studies, four aspects emerged and crystallised which shape our working environments today, resulting in lasting effects on our day-to-day lives:

2



**“There is no alternative to the digital transformation.”**

JEFF BEZOS,  
FOUNDER OF AMAZON

**“In the next century, leaders will be those who empower others.”**

BILL GATES,  
FOUNDER OF MICROSOFT

**“There are only two ways to influence human behaviour: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it.”**

SIMON SINEK,  
BUSINESS CONSULTANT AND AUTHOR

**“None of us is as smart as all of us.”**

KEN BLANCHARD,  
ENTREPRENEUR AND AUTHOR

### 1. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Digitalisation has completely changed our lives – the way we communicate, work, our behaviour as consumers. During the coronavirus pandemic these trends accelerated even faster. The result: an enormous stress test for the concept of remote working, and in particular for the home office. These new experiences show that, thanks to the technological infrastructure available today, some activities, particularly routine tasks, can be done perfectly well in a home-based office. Companies have even reinvented the way meetings and business trips function. Today we can all see that remote working and home offices will remain an integral part of the office landscape even after the pandemic. At the same time, the central role of the office as a modern workplace is being emphasised and, more than ever, is becoming the focal point for social cohesion in the company.

### 2. LEADERSHIP CULTURE

In recent years, there has been increasing demand for leaders who see themselves more as supportive coaches for their teams. Even before coronavirus, the principles of flat hierarchies and trust between employees and bosses were emerging as key factors for optimal cohesion within a company. Those who had already empowered employees to self-organise their work clearly had an advantage during this crisis. For many companies, the pandemic marked the first time ever that large numbers of their employees were unable to come into the office. The resulting changes in the expectations and behaviours of employees and managers are forcing many companies to search for new solutions. The old habits of office-based ways to lead, manage, and retain employees cannot be practised in the same way in virtual environments.

### 3. MEANING & PURPOSE OF WORK

The “bigger picture” has become more and more important as a focal point for companies and employees. Where companies once purely pursued their own goals, e.g. manufacturing cars, today the philosophical and moral concept of the “meaning and purpose of work” is becoming steadily more important. People in the workplace are increasingly asking themselves: “What is the point of our work?” “Why are we doing this?” From the company’s perspective, the question that arises more and more frequently is: “What is the ultimate purpose of our company?” Generally speaking, from the employees’ perspective, this “purpose of work” is closely associated with personal wellbeing, contentment, and commitment to their work. However, what is actually seen as meaningful varies from one individual to another. There is no doubt, however, that the coronavirus pandemic has made the search for meaning in our lives even more central.

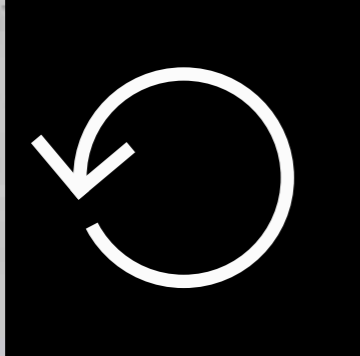
### 4. COLLABORATION

Collaboration, discussion, communication, and encounters are becoming increasingly important in many areas of the modern world of work. We are also seeing “silos” dismantled, in favour of interdepartmental, interdisciplinary project teams. These changes are also reflected in the demand for office premises. There are many different options for spaces designed for project-based work and teamwork, and companies need to tailor their approach to work and their processes in a way that facilitates optimal interactions. This makes it all the more crucial to create the ideal balance of open-plan structures and more protected areas, providing the right combination of distance and teamwork.



### LEARNING FROM THE FUTURE FOR TODAY

Since the coronavirus pandemic, the changes previously described have accelerated dramatically. The journey to the “future of work” has already begun – we are all underway. And while every company is at a different point along this journey, it is clear to everyone that standing still is not an option. So today we no longer talking about the “FUTURE OF WORK” as something that will not happen until the future. Our thinking is more about “HOW TO WORK NOW.” – with an increased focus on “now” and on working together to create innovative solutions as a direct response to the challenges of today.

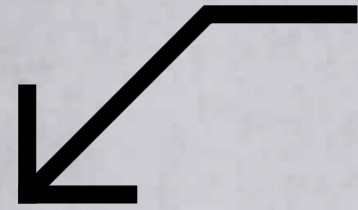


COMPONENT

**B**



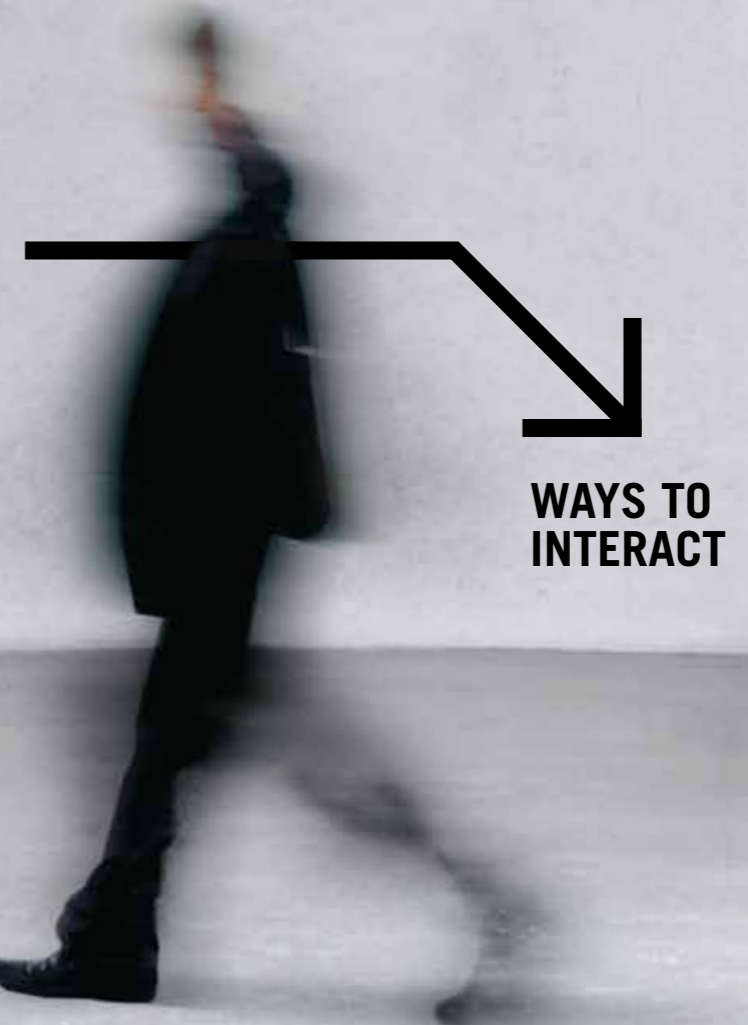
**WAYS TO MEET**



**WAYS TO RECHARGE**

# **WAYS TO RETHINK**

**CHANGING PERSPECTIVES IN OFFICE DESIGN**



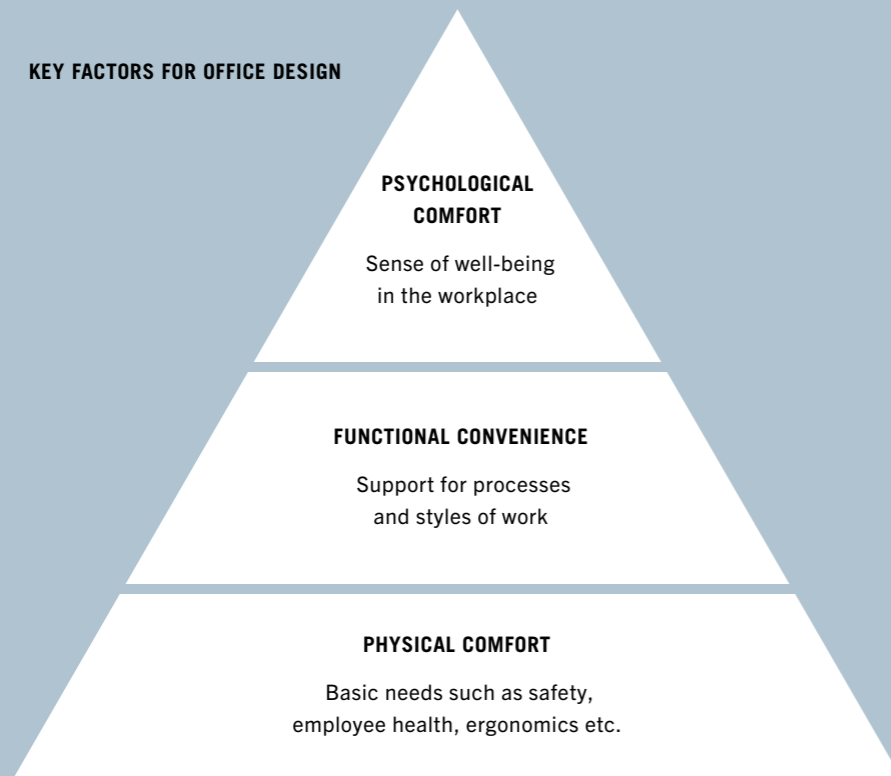
**WAYS TO INTERACT**

**The work environment influences employee satisfaction and performance. As well as physical factors, today increasingly more attention is being paid to functional as well as psychological factors in office design.**

In the early years of the 21st century, office design prioritised the physical comfort of employees – as well as the right kind of lighting and accessibility of the workplace. This resulted, for example, in the wide range of electrically adjustable desks and ergonomically designed swivel chairs – seating technology – that came onto the market.

Physical comfort remains an important aspect of office planning. However, functional and psychological comfort – “user wellbeing” – is becoming increasingly relevant. So, office design today is based on a holistic approach and many companies regard this as a key driver of future-oriented organisational development.

**KEY FACTORS FOR OFFICE DESIGN**



**“Architecture is the most powerful of all the arts.”**

OTTO WAGNER,  
ARCHITECT AND VISIONARY OF MODERNISM

A modern office helps the organisation, teams and individuals to carry out their tasks and achieve their aims. So, company and employee perspectives play an equally central role in today’s office designs.

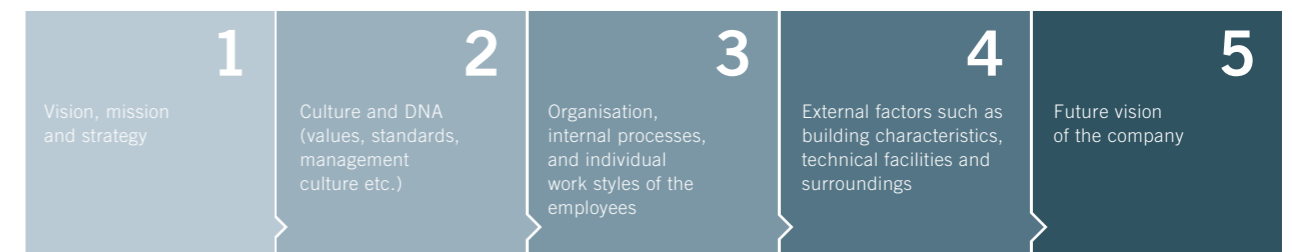
**OFFICE DESIGN CAN:**

- embody the company’s mission and vision as well as the company culture
- express the management culture and contribute to its ongoing development
- support work functions and tasks
- facilitate processes
- make a vital contribution to the way work is coordinated
- encourage and promote collaboration
- inspire and advance innovation
- affect the motivation of employees and support their individual working styles
- encourage the use and development of new skills and create space for individual and organisational learning and further development
- play a key role in protecting employees’ health and help to reduce stress and mental strain.

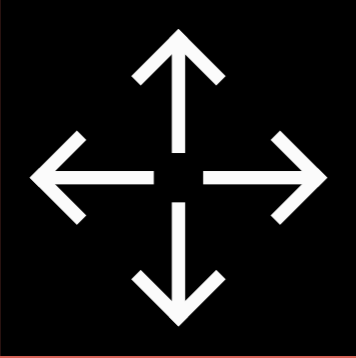
**RETHINKING OFFICE DESIGN.**

A well-planned office can provide support with various key aspects from both organisational and individual perspectives. It is clear, however, that standard solutions and bland office interiors following the “one-size-fits-all” principle, do not make sense here. Instead, modern office design looks at each company individually and creates a tailor-made, user-oriented concept which forms the basis for the design. Here it is essential to analyse the DNA of the company – at all levels of the hierarchy – as it is now, and to develop a profile of how the company wants to be in the future.

**ANALYTICAL STEPS ON THE WAY TO THE NEW WORKING ENVIRONMENT**







# WAYS TO EXPLORE

NEW EXPECTATIONS FOR OFFICE INTERIORS

**THE ECOSYSTEM OF "WORK" AND THE EXPECTATIONS WE HAVE OF OFFICE INTERIORS HAVE CHANGED.**

The working environment can be seen as a networked system in which all the components affect each other, and the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Since the coronavirus pandemic, the home office and remote working have become firmly established as integral components of this ecosystem. So today we talk about "hybrid working models".

The three components of home office, remote working and office are combined in different ways for each individual, depending on their work style and the processes they carry out, and so provide the basis for a more detailed look at office design.

OFFICE



HOME-OFFICE



**"Each new situation requires a new architecture."**

JEAN NOUVEL, ARCHITECT

4

REMOTE





As a core element of the “work” ecosystem, the office performs a variety of functions.

### **THE OFFICE AS REPRESENTATIVE**

For many centuries now, architecture has been a form of representation for companies and private individuals. From the pyramids of Ancient Egypt to castles and monasteries, and through to modern architecture, buildings stand as symbols of cultures and organisations. The “power” of such places is clear to see. If we visit a monastery, for instance, we unconsciously lower our voices. When we step into a noisy, bustling entrance hall, we join in the hurly-burly. Contemporary offices also express an organisation’s structure, the way it works, and its culture, and can have a significant effect on the way its users behave.

### **Making brand identity visible and tangible**

For external visitors too, the modern office provides an experience that goes beyond the reception area or the meeting room. The culture of well-known companies is reflected clearly in the architecture and interiors of their entire buildings. Seeing the way a company works from the inside creates trust and gives some idea of what makes that company “tick”.

### **Attracting and retaining employees**

As the place where the company’s story is told, the office provides the physical context and framework for continued development of the company culture. It is also important for attracting new employees and retaining existing staff. The office and the visible signalling of its design play a key role here. A modern office reflects the mission and spirit of the company and allows others to experience its culture.

### **THE OFFICE AS A SOCIAL PLACE**

When the coronavirus “lockdowns” and isolation confined us to the home office, the shortcomings of working from home became clear: we miss personal contact and interaction. While technology makes many things possible, it is no substitute for face-to-face encounters. Quick chats with the colleague sitting opposite, tangential input and inspiration from others, a chance meeting by the coffee machine – these things only work when they are spontaneous and when people are in the same place.

### **Fostering a sense of shared purpose and well-being**

A fundamental social need for humans is to feel part of a bigger picture. The office and colleagues offer a way for individuals to feel they belong to a community of like-minded people and allies. Personal interactions and a sense of mutual appreciation are also helpful, particularly in times of crisis.

Vital elements of communication and nuance – which are otherwise conveyed by facial expressions, body language or simply being present in the room – are often lost in virtual contexts. The modern office aids communication – dialogue and understanding work best in face-to-face conversation – and contributes to the well-being of its users.

### **Making room for new kinds of workplace**

As well as the increase in working from home caused by the coronavirus pandemic, there are other trends that highlight the importance of the office as a “social” place. Studies show that in future, “cloud-workers” and freelancers will increasingly assist with project-based work in companies, and that the younger generations want more flexibility to choose where they work. Here the office has a role to play with regard to integration into an organisation and for interactions between diverse cross-company teams. As a “social place” it creates a sense of identity and is a place to exchange ideas and make progress together.

### **THE OFFICE AS A PLACE OF POSSIBILITIES**

Our mobile and individualised lifestyles are also reflected in modern office landscapes. A well-planned office helps us in our day-to-day work and “flow”, by offering a range of spaces that are suitable for different activities and their respective practical requirements. The office can also help a company to function “ambidextrously”. It turns out that companies today need to be not just efficient, but also innovative. This ambivalence is also evident in the wide diversity of office design.

### **Creating needs-oriented solutions**

Tailor-made, individual office concepts provide the perfect support for company processes and offer the comfort, convenience and space needed for our particular activities. “Activity-based working” is a flexible response to the question of which function can be performed best in which setting. Essentially this means creating an environment where employees can choose freely from a wide range of settings, depending on whether they need a place for discussion, or a place where they can concentrate or relax. So modern offices support individuals and team work, by offering a customised range of spaces that are optimally designed for various different modes of work.

### **Efficiency and innovation, side by side**

For long-term success, organisations need to ensure they are both efficient and flexible. While the first of these requires “exploitation” – using optimised, often standardised processes – the second demands “exploration”, where freedom, creativity and flexible configurations are essential. So organisations today need to be structured such that the core business and associated core skills can be fully exploited and developed, while also allowing scope for exploring and developing new ideas. These contrasting, complementary requirements for “ambidextrous” companies are also embodied in their premises and workplace design.

### **THE OFFICE AS AN ENGINE OF INNOVATION**

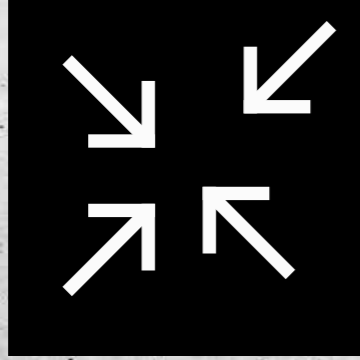
As a driving force for new products, services and business models, innovation is number one on the agenda for successful companies today. Ambition, creativity and collaborative work are fundamental prerequisites. Studies show that, in addition to the creative potential of employees, the organisational framework, objectives and resources, another key contributing factor is the immediate surroundings – i.e. the premises and their design style.

### **Creating inspiring environments**

Offices themselves do not make people creative, but they can offer an inspiring environment and act as a driver of innovation. If employees feel at ease and have a sense of security, then one of the cornerstones for innovation is already in place. Trust and the right company culture, combined with spaces where imagination can flourish and where there is room for new ideas – and which offer visual variety – are the seedbed for great ideas.

### **Making room for new innovation processes**

In recent years, innovation processes in companies have changed in many places. Agile methods, co-creation, open innovation, and prototyping are just a few of the buzzwords that regularly pop up in this context. We all recognise that these new forms of innovation process cannot be practised at the desk or in traditional meeting rooms. New organisational formats, agile methods and techniques ranging from traditional “brainstorming” to “design thinking” and “SCRUM” need an appropriate range of spaces and rooms, furnishings and equipment. With open-plan office structures, innovation labs, project areas, distinctly styled central zones and communication areas, work cafés etc., companies are actively encouraging communication, cooperation, networking, and creativity in teams and between individuals



# WAYS TO EXPRESS

INDIVIDUAL OFFICE DESIGN

# 5

## OFFICE AS AN EQUALIZER

WORK STYLES



### SOLO WORK

Lone activities requiring different levels of concentration.



### COOPERATION

Shared work in pairs or groups.



### DISCUSSION AND DIALOGUE

Targeted exchange of ideas and information on a particular topic.



### ENCOUNTERS

Informal exchanges between colleagues and with external contacts that are not results-oriented.



### LEARNING AND LEISURE

Education and training, informal learning, relaxation and recuperation.



### SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Defining the basics.



### INDIVIDUAL OFFICE DESIGN

All of these changes and considerations lead us to one conclusion above all: different companies have different requirements and therefore also need different office landscapes. The ideal combination of components and the individual design of the spaces depends on how work is done in a company. That means it is crucial to identify all the ingredients and their quantities, then create the appropriate recipe for office design.

Once the styles of work and their proportions have been defined, this determines the types of space required, which can of course include some designed to serve a number of purposes, or for hybrid use



**INDIVIDUAL WORK**



Individual workspace



Touch-down



Management



Think Tank

**COLLABORATION**



Innovation lab



Shared management



Team workspace



Open huddle



Workshop  
(analog / digital)

**MEETINGS AND DISCUSSION**



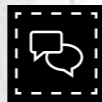
Phone booth



Closed meeting room



Open meeting space



Partially open meeting space



Town hall



Broadcasting box



Video conference room

**LEARNING AND LEISURE**



Training area



Quiet area /  
Recreation



Library

**INTERACTION**



Work café



Kitchenette /  
Coffee corner



Lounge



Outside area



Cafeteria

**SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**



Reception area



Coat rack



Lockers



Storage /  
Archive / Depot



Copier / Printer



WC

## ABOUT BENE

We plan and design spaces in which people not just work well, but in which they also want to work. Our product range offers furnishings for all spaces and places in the modern office.

We develop holistic concepts for our clients that provide answers to the changing challenges of the working world. We love design. Our high standards of functionality, quality and design can be felt in every product.

As an international brand with Austrian roots, we are proud to be represented in over 40 countries. Since 1790 and looking ahead into the future, we have and will continue to rely on the power of innovation to fulfil our role as a leading provider of inspiring work environments.

### IMPRINT

BENE GmbH

Schwarzwiesenstraße 3

3340 Waidhofen an der Ybbs, Austria

+43 (0)7442/500

bene.com

office@bene.com

Design:

Erdgeschoss GmbH

10/2021

**bene**

**INSPIRING OFFICES. SINCE 1790.**