

The Outlook for Corporate Work Environments in a Post-Pandemic World

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Work-from-home has been one of the most often debated subjects in recent years. The impact of changing working practices in a post-pandemic environment on corporate infrastructure has been discussed extensively. But things might not be as cut and dry as you might believe. In recent years, change has been the only constant, and corporate infrastructure is undergoing certain structural adjustments.

A FUNDAMENTALLY STRONG ECONOMY WITH HEADWINDS

In July 2022, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [reported](#) a 3.5% unemployment rate. This is roughly the same level as in February 2020, just before the pandemic began. It is also [estimated](#) that with the most recent addition of 528,000 new non-farm payrolls in July 2022, U.S. employers will have fully recovered approximately 22 million jobs lost during the pandemic.

Looking ahead, the recently enacted Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act has the potential to boost job growth by allowing local businesses to expand more rapidly with improved infrastructure. According to the CRBE 2022 Market Outlook Report, which was released in December, 2021, 1 million new office-related jobs are expected to be created in the near future.

High inflation and rising interest rates will be a challenge in the short term. However, the overall picture is not entirely bleak.



A TRANSITION TO HYBRID WORK

Employees will spend 24% less time in the office than they did before the pandemic, according to the [CBRE U.S. Occupier Sentiment Survey of 2021](#). The same poll revealed that a large proportion of companies anticipate creating a hybrid work strategy in the post-pandemic environment. Businesses are making plans in response to the change in their employees' mentality, even in the construction industry.

Another important factor is technological advancement. The quality of remote work tools available today is far superior to what it was a few years ago. This serves as a catalyst for the concept of remote work. While some duties, such as responding to emails or writing documents, may be part of the work-from-

home component of a hybrid model, other jobs, including program and construction management, which often call for physical presence and contact, may be performed from the office.

WHAT ARE EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVES ON THE HYBRID MODEL?

In theory, hybrid work appears to blend the best elements of both worlds. At certain times, one is permitted to work from home, but employers may also require employees to return to the office. [Research by McKinsey](#) of 5,000 full-time employees found that the majority of them prefer to work from home occasionally. According to [Gallup Poll](#), the vast majority of workers who engaged in remote work wish to keep doing it in some capacity.

However, there are significant worries that employee burnout brought on by remote work may be a problem. There is a theory that disrupting daily routines by switching the place of work every few days results in a week with no rhythm or regularity. Such concerns must be resolved by effective communication regarding the expectations of employers, the laws for hybrid work models, and working-hour regulations.


UPGRADING THE INFRASTRUCTURE WITH TECHNOLOGY

Certain kinds of equipment that were unusual in offices a few years ago will now be considered standard. Better cameras, audio equipment, and walls that transform into whiteboards or presentation screens are a few examples. Other improvements include better lighting for video conferencing. According to the [JLL Future of Work Survey 2022](#), 69% of the firms polled have either implemented or will soon implement technology that supports in-office collaboration.

Facilities that offer shared workspaces might also have interactive walls and office settings that can be customized for a particular user. Even if it's just for a day or a week, such changes can produce a particular workplace aesthetic that gives users the impression that the shared workspace is their office.

So, what does the future hold?

Offices are more than just places where people work. They are places where important interactions take place. Such interactions are critical for promoting innovation. Meaningful collaboration among employees, which requires them to be physically present with one another, is critical for increased productivity. As numerous business leaders across industries have pointed out, remote work models cannot replace such interactions. According to the [JLL Future of Work Survey 2022](#), 72% of respondents believe that an office will remain central to an organization's work ecosystem.

Instead of going back to the way offices were before the pandemic, organizations should leverage their experience with it to make dramatic changes. In the post-pandemic age, there will be a move toward a hybrid work-from-home/work-at-office approach. Tenants now have more negotiating power because typical CBDs are among the areas most impacted by the pandemic. To attract tenants, traditional lease conditions might need to be more lenient. Businesses could anticipate more flexible contracts that allow them to increase or decrease their square footage, sublet empty space, and receive greater tenant improvement allowances. We might see that collaboration and interaction activities occupy a larger share of workplace space than solo desk/office use. We may be witnessing a truly new way of working that can strike a balance between work and home. 



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