

# The Future Workplace



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Pondering the future of work is not new. It is a journey we have been on for decades and most of its aspects are well-established, from how and where we work, to greater focus on employee wellbeing and experience. What is new is the profound transformation that has occurred for many of us during the pandemic. Workforce preferences were already changing and many of these trends have accelerated. The offices we return to will need to support these and additional changes delivered by mature occupation of the new normal.

#### Remote work is here to stay

The way we have lived and worked during the past year has meant that working styles have changed for most of us. Having proved and improved remote working, we know that we can work from anywhere and that for some activities, we are much more productive working outside of the conventional workplace. Recent surveys have indicated that on average employees would like to continue working from home, or from a local remote location, 2.5 days per week.

Hybrid or distributed working models will change the property portfolio mix for many organisations, the cultural and collegiate relationships of these portfolios and the dynamics and structures of organisations required to support them. We are moving to a clear emphasis on the workforce and not the workplace.



#### Offices remain important

Whilst remote working desires have increased, most of us have missed the collaboration, social interaction and sense of community that meeting colleagues in the office regularly brings. We want these to return, but at the same time we have concerns about the safety of workplaces. Recent Public Health England data reveals there were more Covid-19 outbreaks in offices in the second half of 2020 than in supermarkets, construction sites, warehouses, restaurants and cafés combined.

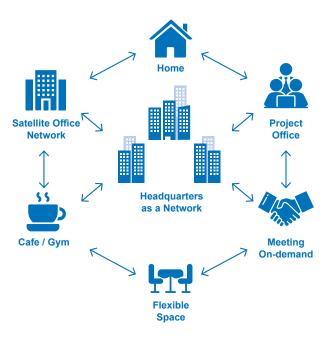
Confidence will be built from increased vaccination, lower community transmission and the integration of longer-term pandemic secure service provision. Thorough risk assessments will be needed to determine appropriate cleaning and sanitisation regimes, utilising all the knowledge and experience that professional cleaning companies have built up throughout the pandemic. If co-working spaces, regional offices and a central headquarters are part of a new flexible workplace ecosystem, we will need to feel safe in whichever location we choose to use.

The importance that technology was playing in the workplace prior to the pandemic will further increase to support the hybrid and distributed working models, but also to manage demand. We are likely to move to a pre-booking approach to workspace use, to drive balanced occupation of the assets across the working week and avoid Monday and Friday vacuums. This will increase the requirements for concierge based support services, which will in turn require technology to underpin the service planning and reaction.

Technology will be needed to help control occupancy to safe levels, with proof of presence and footfall monitoring being utilised to ensure that cleaning and hospitality service partners are able to focus their resources on high footfall and high demand areas, ensuring the best employee experience. Additionally, footfall monitoring will be used to understand how and when colleagues are using their new workspace environments and the changes that may need to be made to the support services to maintain the customer experience as use matures.

Finally, we will need to present empirical data that provides assurance to the employees, visitors, guests and support partners that their workspaces are safe, clean and fully functional throughout the occupation cycle.

## **Future Workplace ecosystem**





#### **Collaborative space will be vital**

To encourage employees to utilise the office as their destination of choice, its new purpose will be to provide a venue for community, culture and collaboration. Employees will spend less time on individual/ focused tasks while on site and more time collaborating, networking, socialising and participating in training and mentoring. The composition of the office will adjust to reflect this change, with greater numbers of meeting rooms, break-out zones and refreshment spaces.

With employees utilising many different working spaces throughout the day, they will all require regular, thorough cleaning, to reduce the risk of virus transmission.

Technology that connects on-site employees to remote employees will become standard in conference rooms.

Tools such as virtual whiteboards, smartboards, and large format telepresence devices will lessen the disadvantages of virtually joining an in-person meeting. These areas are likely to be in high demand, so booking systems and room resets will be an important part of the cleaning provider's remit.



#### We want the best workday experience

People travelling to the office will expect a welcoming environment, supporting health and wellbeing, enhancing their productivity and providing on-site conveniences. Seamless housekeeping, hygiene and building support services will ensure exemplary cleaning standards, regularly refreshed washrooms and consumables, concierge services, efficient business services and freely available refreshments. Support services are now an inextricable component of the customer experience.

# Healthy buildings support their occupiers

Covid-19 has highlighted the important role buildings have in enhancing employee health and wellbeing. As landlords and employers compete for tenants and employees respectively, differentiated workspace environments will innovate in the field of wellbeing and address a broad spectrum of mental and physical health. Healthy building design and operations will be vital, with frameworks such as that of the WELL Building Institute being utilised to create measurable changes that make an impact. Concepts including indoor air quality, light and materials use are focused on improving our comfort and enhancing our health and wellbeing. Facilities services partners experienced in these concepts, who have already contributed to WELL accreditations, will ensure opportunities are maximised.



### **Property Economics**

Property economics has been undergoing a sea change over recent years, affecting the terms and conditions of occupation, with increased flexibility in the use and cost of space being demanded by occupiers. The appearance of WeWork was testimony to the demand, with many, more sustainable, flexible occupiers quickly emerging.

This sea change process, which was laid bare in the ongoing transformation of retail assets brought about by long-term structural changes in buying patterns, further accelerated by the pandemic, was no clearer demonstrated than by the purchase of some of the assets of the traditional bricks and mortar retailer Arcadia by Asos.

Overlay the macro-economic pressures of the growth of automation adoption, the increasing geographic concentration of employment, the demographic and shrinkage of labour supply, and the shifting mix of sectors and occupations, and significant change is afoot.

The much-observed transformation of retail, which had presented many challenges to investors, landlords, tenants and visitors alike, was inevitably going to affect the economics of commercial office occupation at some stage. However, this transfer has been catapulted forward by the pandemic and all occupiers are now challenging their physical workspace needs and the inherent cost.

The pandemic delivered existential risks for a host of occupiers impacting rental income, with most landlords recording a significant reduction in rental collection across retail and notably commercial office assets. As the dynamic of these economic shifts play out, it is clear that as strategic changes are undergone, support service requirements will have to undergo a similar transformation, with new roles, skills, processes and procedures being required to deliver Pandemic Secure cleaning, within alternative, more cost-effective structures.





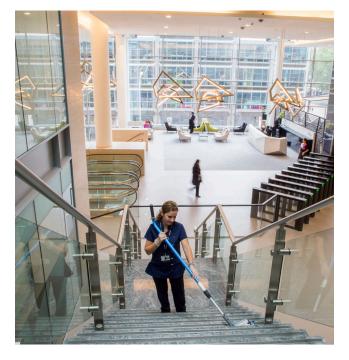
#### Sustainability hasn't gone away

The three sustainability pillars, economic, environmental and social, are more important than ever. Organisations are increasingly utilising external assessments, such as those carried out by EcoVadis, to help guide their sustainability progress and bring focus to the key priorities and continuous improvement process.

As we spend time in new workspaces, in or near our local communities, there will be positive impacts due to reduced travel. There will also be a heightened focus on the social dividend we provide to our communities.

The office contains a vast range of resources from the building fabric, to the fittings and fixtures, and the consumable items used on a daily basis, such as paper, food, drinks and cleaning materials. Our decision making should challenge 'why' each item is needed, to design out waste and pollutants entirely and retain the maximum value from resources for as long as possible. As we integrate more in our communities, we need to create more efficient, resilient spaces which contribute to the long-term sustainability of the business, support the wellbeing of occupants and the communities in which we work.

At NJC, we believe that the Future Workplace will require a new type of agile facilities services provider, with new roles, processes and procedures, within evolutionary resourcing models. The focus will be on providing an excellent employee experience through exemplary standards of service, driven by continuous improvement.



If you would like to find out more please get in touch with our Marketing Manager, Julie Birch, jbirch@njcdna.com

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