Four ways to unlock workplace productivity with future-proof design

Innovative design elements are shaping the next generation of workplaces

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Is your office prepared for the future, or is it holding you back? As businesses navigate evolving work models and battle for top talent, workplaces must go beyond aesthetics and empower your people, boost productivity and propel your business forward.

JLL research shows that 60% of employers plan to increase investment in building refurbishments in the next five years and increase investment in sustainability performance of real estate. With this, business leaders are laser-focused on three growth areas: people, efficiency and innovation. Each should benefit from top-class office environments. Yet now, many offices fall short, with issues like poor acoustics, temperature controls and a lack of private spaces creating friction in otherwise productive settings.

Many companies say they're increasing investment in office design to avoid the pitfalls and embrace the opportunities. So, it's time for workplace leaders to deliver spaces that energize employees and drive **business success**.

The key? Recognizing what truly powers productivity in the modern office and design with purpose. Let's explore four strategies to unlock your workplace's full potential and position your organization for the future.

Four design musts for a future-ready workplace

Workplaces all serve as functional settings for doing a job. But a productive workplace activates space to inspire people to do their best work, whether as part of a team or for headsdown tasks. From flexible layouts to sustainable features, **here are four key principles shaping tomorrow's most productive workplaces:**

1 Adaptive design:

Adaptive design is a strategic approach to creating workspaces that remain efficient and relevant over time. This method focuses on developing environments that can easily evolve with changing business needs, technologies and regulations.

Key features of an adaptive office include:

- Smart building systems with IoT integration for real-time space utilization monitoring
- Modular wall and floor systems with plug-and-play utility connections
- Adaptive HVAC systems that adjust to varying occupancy levels and space configurations

Adaptive design offers numerous advantages, from lower long-term renovation costs to increased asset value, while collectively contributing to create a resilient and efficient office that supports your business goals, no matter what changes come your way.

The experience club

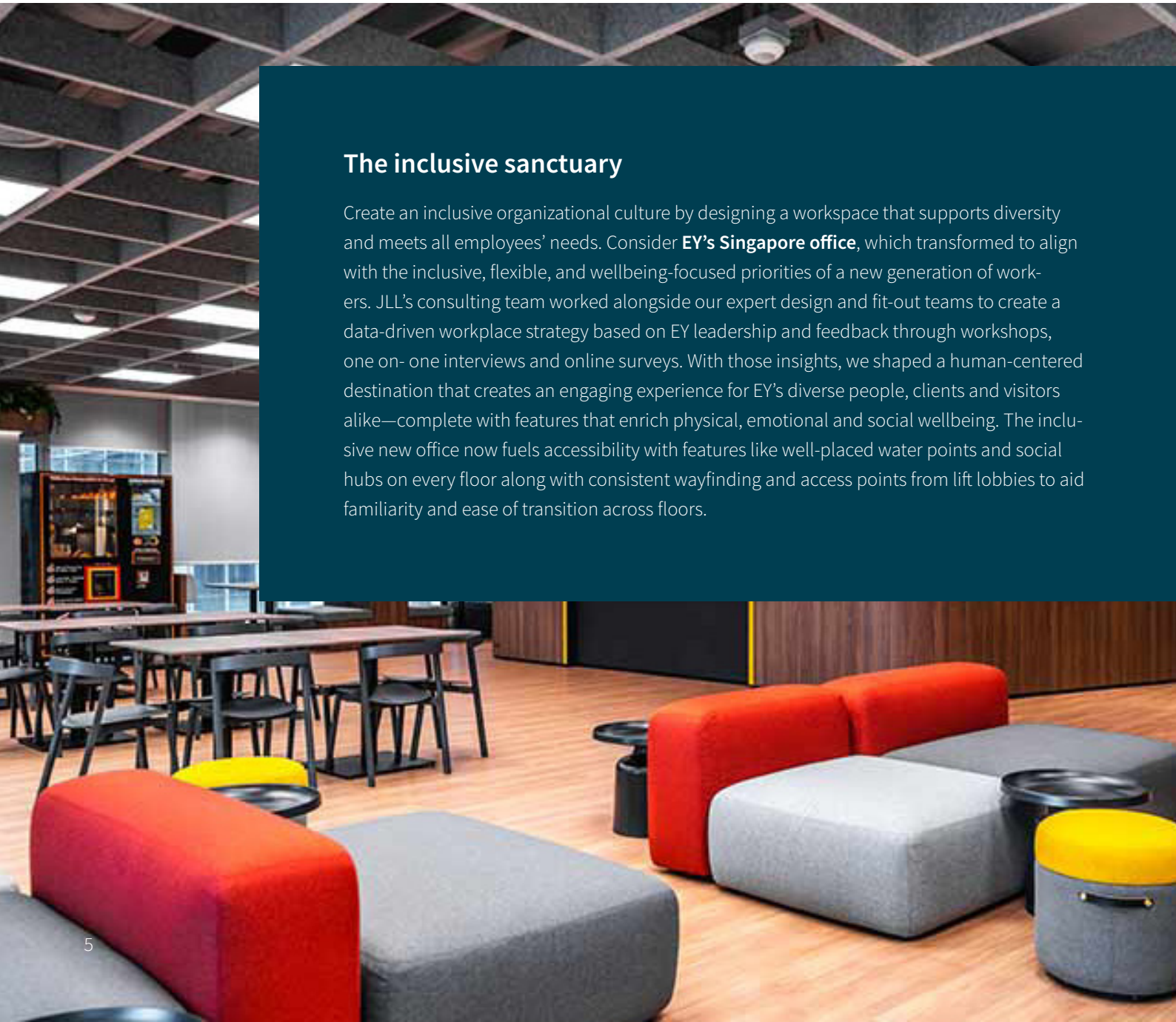
The modern workplace is evolving into an aspirational "Experience Club," offering sophisticated environments and curated experiences that boost engagement and productivity, potentially off setting costs through increased employee retention and performance. In fact, the number of organizations with dedicated **workplace experience managers** has increased from 23% to 35% in the last year, indicating a significant shift in workplace management. While initial costs may be higher, adaptable designs like movable partitions and multipurpose areas can yield significant long-term savings that reduce renovation costs and increase space efficiency. By reimagining the office as a club with luxury furnishings and memorable experiences, organizations can attract employees and benefit from cost-effective adaptable spaces.

2 Strategic brand alignment:

Your office is more than just a workspace—it's a powerful expression of your company's identity. By incorporating brand elements throughout your workspace, you create an environment that reinforces your culture and engages both employees and visitors and supports talent attraction and retention. Key design elements to consider:

- Colors that reflect your brand palette
- Fabrics and materials that reinforce company values
- Furniture that supports diverse working styles
- Visuals that showcase achievements and goals

A thoughtfully designed office environment strengthens competitive edge and creates a place that attracts and retains talent. Award-winning design adds prestige, but remember, it's what happens in that space that makes the work experience unique. Beyond the focus on the physical space, emphasize the activation of that space: training, knowledge sharing, socializing, and connecting with the community around the workspace.



The inclusive sanctuary

Create an inclusive organizational culture by designing a workspace that supports diversity and meets all employees' needs. Consider **EY's Singapore office**, which transformed to align with the inclusive, flexible, and wellbeing-focused priorities of a new generation of workers. JLL's consulting team worked alongside our expert design and fit-out teams to create a data-driven workplace strategy based on EY leadership and feedback through workshops, one on- one interviews and online surveys. With those insights, we shaped a human-centered destination that creates an engaging experience for EY's diverse people, clients and visitors alike—complete with features that enrich physical, emotional and social wellbeing. The inclusive new office now fuels accessibility with features like well-placed water points and social hubs on every floor along with consistent wayfinding and access points from lift lobbies to aid familiarity and ease of transition across floors.

3 Flexible design:

The shift to hybrid work has fundamentally changed office dynamics. More than half of companies are adopting hybrid work strategies, prompting a reimagining of office spaces to **cater to diverse needs**. A well-designed office should:

- Provide flexible areas for collaboration and focused work
- Seamlessly integrate technology
- Include quiet zones and easily bookable meeting spots
- Adapt to different work styles

JLL Research indicates that the top reasons for coming into the office for both employers and employees are around social connection and office culture. Since **at least half of office tasks require individual concentration**, balancing these needs highlights the importance of a thoughtful blend of design elements to enhance productivity, show care for employee wellbeing and encourage creativity by offering comfortable environments.

The learning lab

Humans are innately curious. So, give them the stimulation they need with workplaces designed to nurture growth, exploration and skill development. Smart office design using AI and data is making workplaces better for employees and businesses. By tracking how spaces are used, companies can turn unused areas into spots that spark teamwork and creativity. For example, JLL's Tokyo office redesign, guided by employee input, boosted happiness and cut stress. And AVI-SPL **created flexible spaces** where people love to share ideas. These changes show how clever design can transform offices into exciting places where people grow in an innovative environment.

4 Sustainability and wellbeing:

Environmentally conscious and health-focused design decisions can triple cost savings for your organization. The three priorities are:

- **People:**
  - Cleaner air, nature views, and green spaces boost employee wellbeing
  - Happier, healthier workforce leads to higher company performance
- **Planet:**
  - Sustainable design reduces environmental impact
  - Aligns with growing eco-consciousness, especially among younger generations
- **Profit:**
  - Enhanced productivity from improved workplace conditions
  - Attraction and retention of talent as 72% of Gen Z and Millennials prioritize eco-friendly options

The green paradise

Sustainable office design is important, with 74% of tenants willing to pay more for green spaces. Modern offices focus on both the environment and employee wellbeing by using natural light, living walls and smart technologies. Although budgets can be tight, affordable options like repurposing furniture and buying energy-efficient appliances are available. Companies that prioritize sustainable design can see significant benefits, as shown by **Interface's Europe office**, where well-being increased 43%, and productivity 38%, after adopting these principles. This not only helps them lead in corporate responsibility but also promotes a greener future for everyone.

Planning the future's best workplace, today

In 2025 and beyond, office design best practices will prize adaptability, brand alignment, flexibility, talent recruitment and retention, and sustainability. By rethinking the role of the workplace—with the critical support of an experienced design partner who understands your organization's unique needs—you'll set the stage for happier, more engaged employees and smarter real estate strategy now and into the future.

Ready to explore how these workplace ideals can become a reality?

Learn more →

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