



Creating Places to Belong[®]

2024 Workplace Report

 Kimball International

Connecting to a Greater Purpose

New Kimball International research unlocks design features that amplify employee connection and belonging.

Kimball International partnered with Ipsos, a global leader in market research, and Arigami, a distinguished interdisciplinary research team, to study how sensory design and furniture can make people feel like they belong. Experts from Harvard, Stanford, Oxford, Cambridge, and other top schools led the research, which was carried out by a team with diverse skills in behavioral science, neuroaesthetics, and creative design innovation.



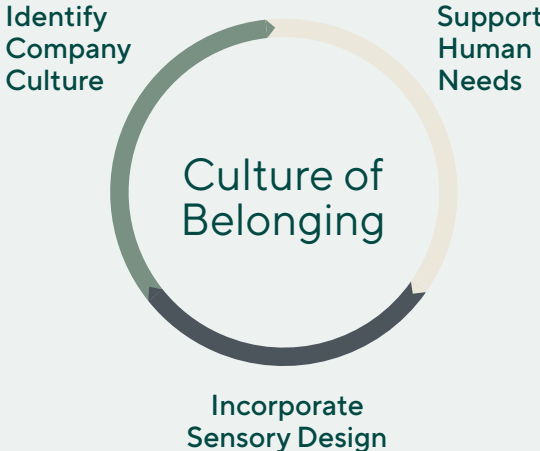
Contributors To Belonging

This report aims to offer actionable, research-based insights to enhance belonging in the spaces we create. We're committed to design solutions rooted in rigorous research, tailored for today's evolving workplaces.

Key Finding #1: Company culture is intricately linked to the sense of belonging, with five distinct culture types influencing how it is nurtured.

Key Finding #2: There are four fundamental needs—connection, community, comfort, and choice—that must be addressed in workplace design to create spaces for belonging.

Key Finding #3: Sensory experiences in the workplace affect belonging, engagement, and productivity. Thoughtful sensory design fosters meaningful connections and a sense of belonging among workers.



“Belonging is more than a new workplace buzz word—it’s the foundation of organizational success.”



Kourtney Smith
COO, Kimball International



Report Overview

- 04 The Need to Belong
- 06 Linking Organizational Success & Belonging
- 16 Unfolding the Science of Belonging
- 20 Connecting Culture & Belonging
- 26 A Belonging-Focused Workplace Landscape
- 32 The Role of Sensory Design
- 52 Research Summary & Support Tools
- 58 Appendices

01

The Need to Belong

Belonging in the workplace refers to the feeling and perception that employees have of being accepted, valued, included, and an integral part of their workplace community.

It is the emotional connection and sense of identity that employees develop within their organization. A sense of belonging in the workplace is rooted in inclusion, and it goes beyond merely fitting in. It is about individuals feeling that their unique perspectives, backgrounds, and contributions are appreciated and celebrated within the organization.



The Value of Workplace Belonging

Belonging in the workplace is essential for promoting employee well-being, engagement, creativity, and productivity. When employees feel like they belong, they are more likely to contribute their best efforts and be committed to the organization's success.

For organizations, this yields¹:



HIGHER
Employee
Retention



REDUCED
Employee
Turnover



FEWER
Sick
Days



HIGHER
Customer
Satisfaction



GREATER
Long-term
Growth

1. Harvard Business Review, The Value of Belonging at Work, 2019

02

Linking Organizational
Success & Belonging

Belonging is human

Belonging is a fundamental human need, hardwired into our DNA. When employees feel like they belong, they experience a sense of security and support, which can enhance their well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction.



94%

of respondents reported that it's important that their workplace be somewhere they feel they belong.¹

59%

of employees report a lack of belonging at work.²

41%

of respondent workers say that their workplace is where they feel the greatest sense of belonging, second to home, **yet 75% report having felt excluded at work.**³

1. American Psychological Association, Work in America Survey, July 2023
2. Deloitte, Human Capital Trends Report, 2020
3. Ernst & Young LLP, Belonging Barometer 3.0, 2023

The Case for Belonging

In a typical business, employees can account for **up to 70%** of operating costs.¹ Yet, on average, the furniture investment in a typical office renovation is only 20-30% of the total budget.

NEARLY **25%** of fully in-person workers reported feelings of loneliness and isolation at work.²

ONLY **49%** of hybrid workers report giving extra effort at work.³

WHILE **18%** of fully remote workers are experiencing a drop in productivity.⁴



1. Paycor, The Biggest Cost of Doing Business, December 2022
2. American Psychological Association, Work in America Survey, July 2023
3. Great Place To Work, Market Survey, February 2023

4. National Bureau of Economic Research, Working from Home, Worker Sorting and Development Study, July 2023

A culture of belonging is essential for inspiring a productive and engaged workforce.

Belonging correlates positively with¹:

- 1 Productivity
- 2 Engagement
- 3 Physical and Mental Well-Being
- 4 Resilience



OUTCOME OF BELONGING¹

Employees w/a strong sense of belonging

Employees w/a low sense of belonging

48%

I am enthusiastic about my job

4%

46%

I feel a sense of purpose in my role

6%

45%

I am my most productive self at work

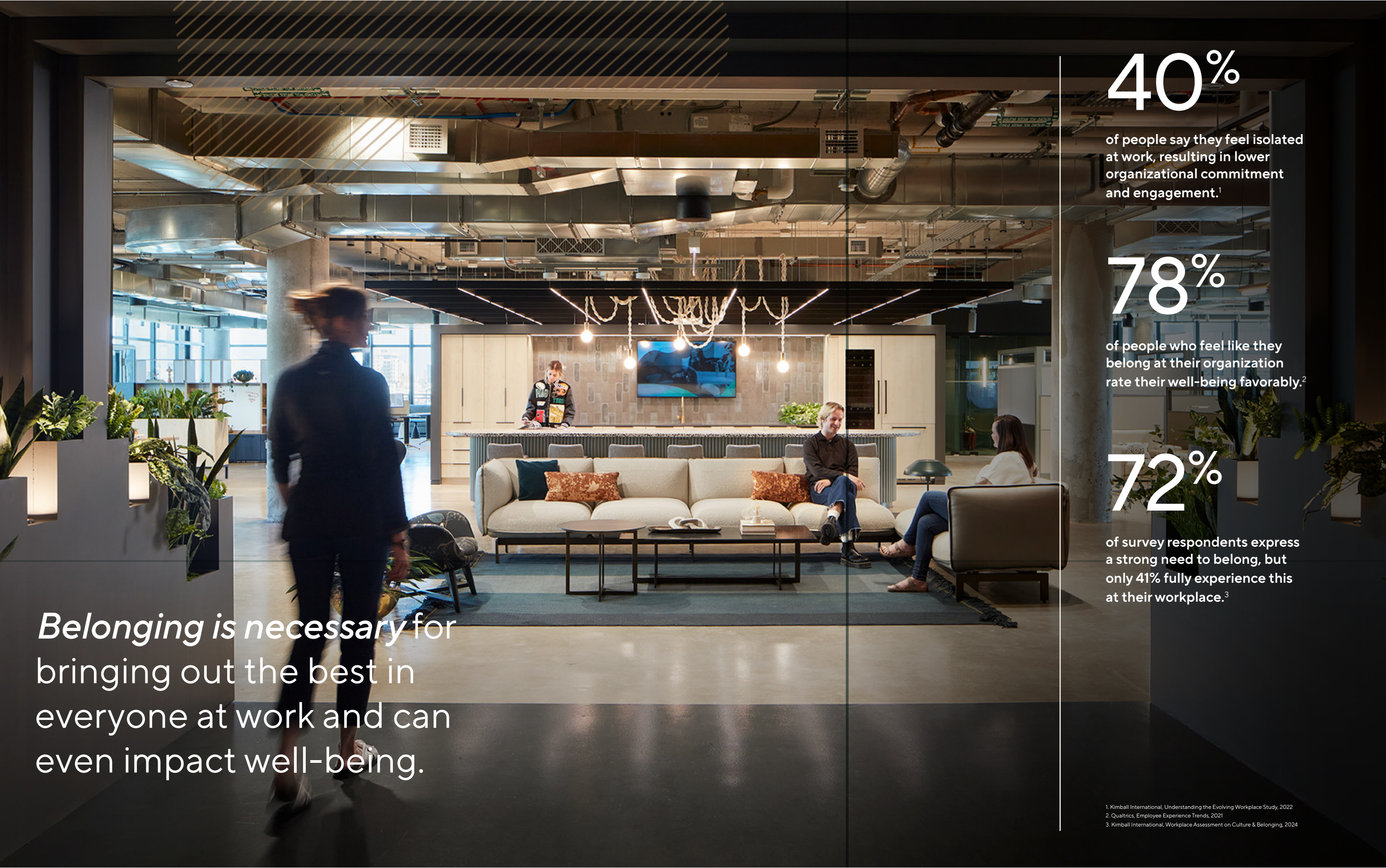
6%

44%

I am a good fit with the culture and the way we do things at my company

6%

1. Achievers Workforce Institute, Belonging at Work Culture Report, 2021



Belonging is necessary for bringing out the best in everyone at work and can even impact well-being.

40%

of people say they feel isolated at work, resulting in lower organizational commitment and engagement.¹

78%

of people who feel like they belong at their organization rate their well-being favorably.²

72%

of survey respondents express a strong need to belong, but only 41% fully experience this at their workplace.³

1. Kimball International, Understanding the Evolving Workplace Study, 2022
2. Qualtrics, Employee Experience Trends, 2021
3. Kimball International, Workplace Assessment on Culture & Belonging, 2024

The Significance of Belonging to Organizations

Cultivating a strong sense of belonging unlocks the full potential of every individual in the workforce. Research shows that a strong sense of belonging in the workplace influences the well-being of its employees and is linked to positive outcomes and bottom-line benefits for organizations.

↑ 56% improvement in job performance

↓ 50% reduction in turnover risk

↓ 75% reduction in sick days

High belonging was linked to a 56% increase in job performance, a 50% drop in turnover risk, and a 75% reduction in sick days.¹



79% of organizations believe that fostering a sense of belonging is important to their success.⁴

93% of organizations believe that a sense of belonging drives organizational performance.⁵

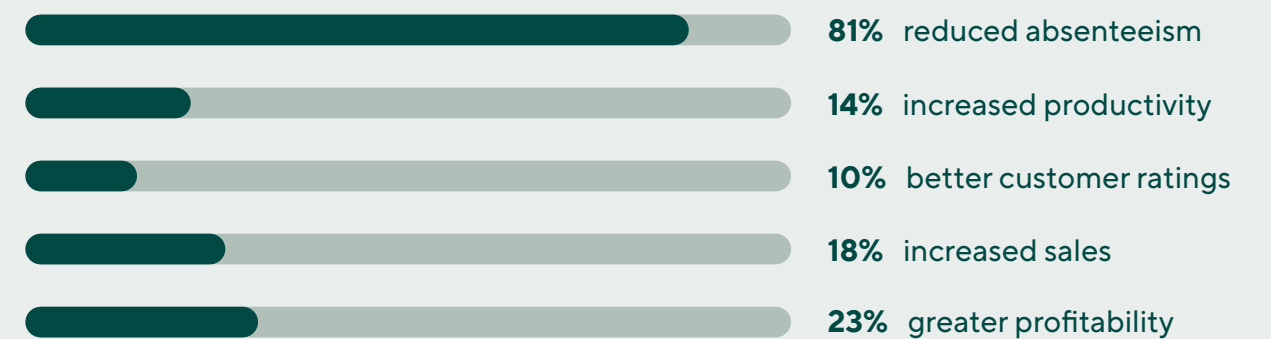


Belonging is highly correlated to engagement.

91%

of employees who feel they belong are engaged versus 20% who feel they do not.²

According to Gallup, **engaged employees are more productive, focused, and attentive to customer needs.**³ Businesses with highly engaged employees experience:



1. Harvard Business Review, The Value of Belonging at Work, 2019
 2. Qualtrics, Employee Experience Trends, 2021
 3. Gallup, State of the Global Workforce Report, 2022
 4. Deloitte, Human Capital Trends Report, 2020
 5. Deloitte, Human Capital Trends Report, 2021

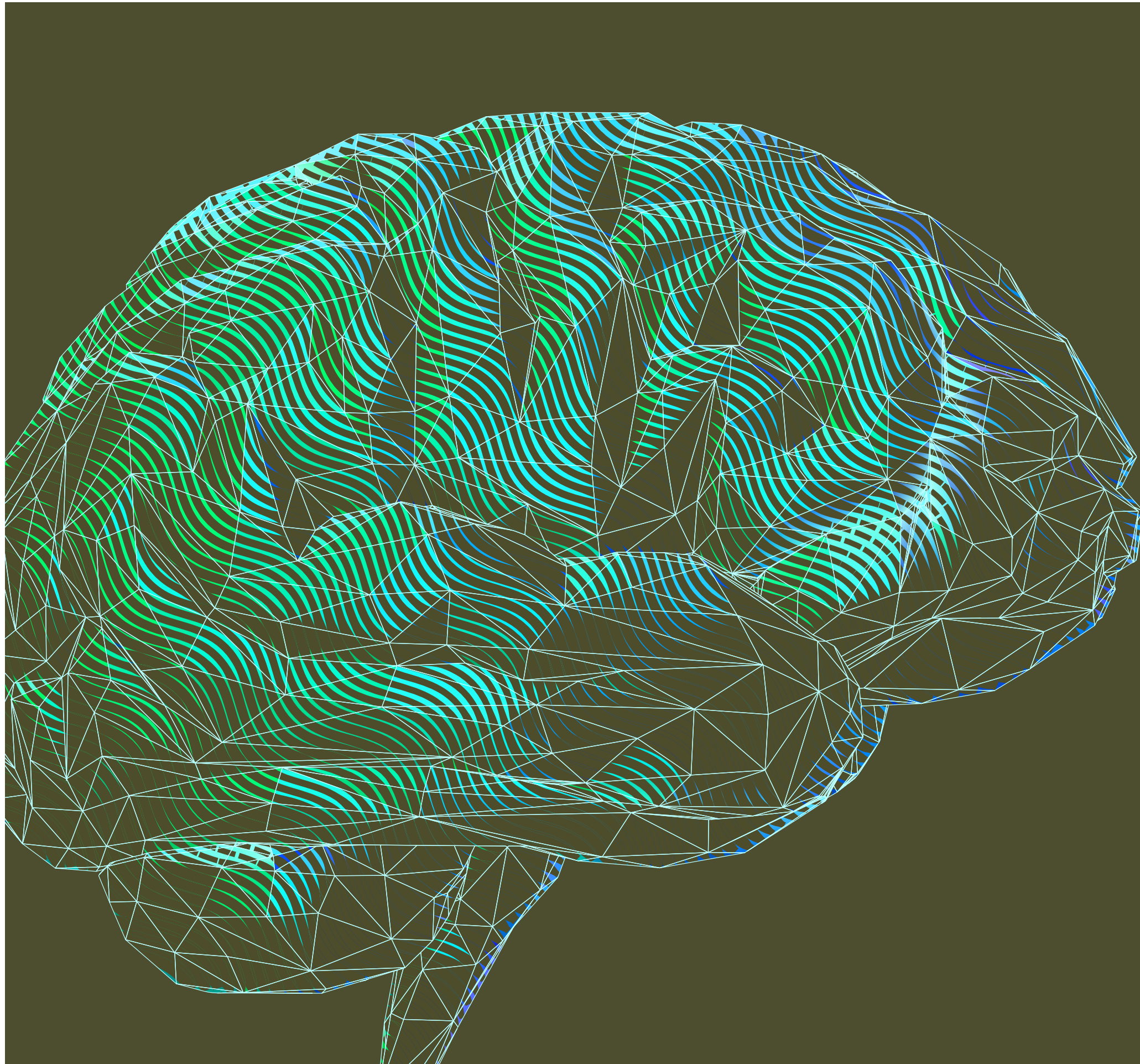
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Unfolding the
Science of Belonging

The need to belong: A Fundamental Human Drive

The need to belong is a biological necessity deeply rooted in our evolutionary past. The concept of belonging draws from the foundational research of psychologist Abraham Maslow and his renowned hierarchy of human needs. Within Maslow's model, the need for belonging and love is positioned at the center of the hierarchy, sandwiched between fundamental physiological requirements and the ultimate aspiration of "self-actualization".





The Brain's Role in Belonging

Neuroscience shows that our brains are wired to seek belonging. Inez Vermeulen's work delves into the intricate relationship between neuroscience and corporate culture, emphasizing that our evolving brains process both people and brands using the same neural pathways. By understanding the neuroscience behind culture, organizations can create a culture of belonging that fosters a sense of connection, community, comfort, and choice among employees.

"By unlocking the secrets of neuroscience and integrating those findings into our designed environments, we have the power to shape not just spaces, but the very essence of human experience."

Ari Peralta, Neuroscientist and Multisensory Integration Expert

Sense of Belonging | PERCEPTUAL

A person feels that they belong, *in the moment.*

Need to Belong | PHYSIOLOGICAL

Our need to belong is *innate.*

04

Connecting Culture & Belonging

Culture:

The Lifeblood of Society

Culture isn't just an abstract concept; it's the lifeblood of a vibrant society. It's how we tell our stories, celebrate our achievements, remember our past, and envision our future. It's the ever-present and ever-evolving framework within which we understand ourselves and others.

An Evolutionary Need

Our need for culture is rooted in our need to belong and be part of a tribe. Research shows that our brains are still evolving and can't easily distinguish between people and companies. This is why culture in the workplace is so impactful. Our brains think of brands as people and use the same circuitry to process both.



Company culture includes a set of shared¹:

- 1 Values
- 2 Norms
- 3 Practices

The interaction among values, norms, and practices significantly influences the employee experience. These elements are interconnected and work together to reinforce company culture¹. **Company culture is the foundation on which a sense of belonging is built.**

1. Kayode, S. & Luz, A., How Organizational Culture Influences Employee Experience, Including Aspects Such As Values, Norms, and Practices, 2024

Culture Types

Our research has shown that there are 5 distinct culture types. Each type has its own definitive goals, attributes, and requirements for establishing belonging.¹

CLASSIC

The Classic culture is defined by a clearly structured hierarchy, a commitment to productivity, and a reliance on established systems. This culture prioritizes numbers-driven decision-making, takes a risk-averse approach, emphasizes functional departments, and typically features a large workforce. This culture most often promotes working onsite only.

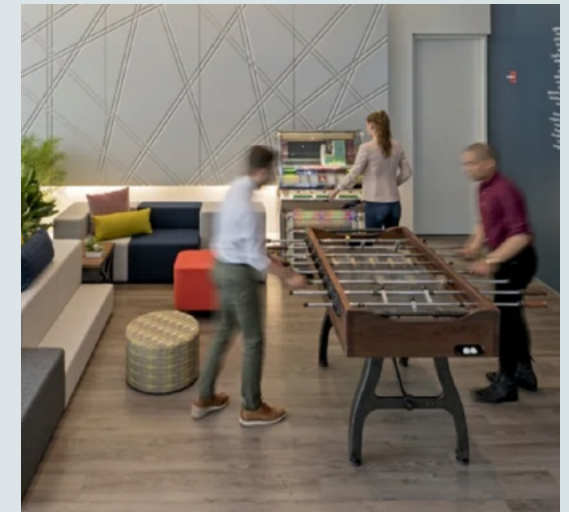


COLLECTIVE

The Collective culture places a strong emphasis on customer satisfaction and embraces a collaborative, flexible work style with roles that are adaptable. This culture embodies a “we’re all in this together” mindset, which is often found in younger start-up companies and small businesses. It is more flexible in its operations and assigns less significance to titles as long as customers are content. This culture promotes hybrid working models.

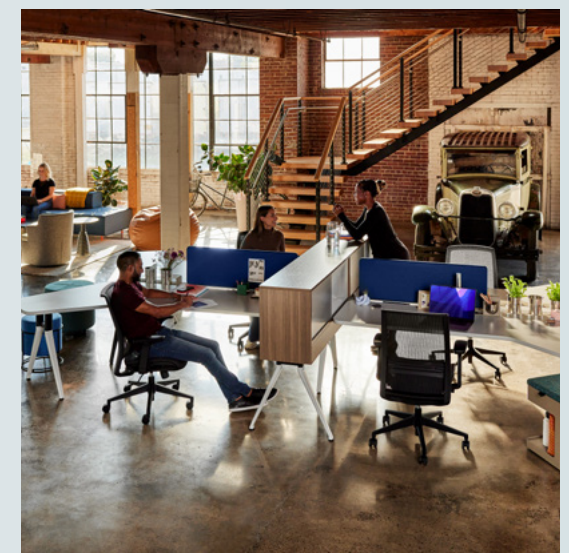
HARMONIZER

The Harmonizer culture thrives by operating in a team-based, responsive manner with a core focus on employee satisfaction. This culture prioritizes employee happiness, often through team-building and frequent team outings, opportunities for meaningful feedback, and the flexibility to accommodate work-life balance. This culture promotes hybrid working and remote work options.



TRAILBLAZER

The Trailblazer culture is characterized by its tech-savviness and relentless pursuit of innovation. It is driven by a need for connectivity and thrives on pushing the envelope, requiring employees not just to keep up but to lead the way. This culture values risk-taking in an effort to remain at the cutting edge. Making work the top priority and often demanding long hours, organizations that embrace this culture are known for being leaders in their respective fields and consistently pushing the boundaries. This culture promotes hybrid working and remote work options.



ADAPTOR

The Adaptor culture excels in demonstrating perseverance and adaptability, effectively navigating changes in the market. This culture is known for its resilience and resourcefulness, often facing challenges like mergers and acquisitions. It may have variable sources of funding, such as advertisers, grants, or donations, making it adaptable in its financial strategies. This culture is most likely to have an all-remote team, with most working from home.

1. Kimball International, Workplace Assessment on Culture & Belonging, 2024

The fundamental needs of Belonging within a Company Culture

To stay relevant, the workplace must evolve into vibrant, welcoming hubs, offering experiences that are desired and valued by all. Effectively cultivating a sense of belonging in the workplace involves addressing the four fundamental human needs of connection, community, comfort, and choice.



CONNECTION

Connection in the workplace refers to the establishment of meaningful and positive relationships among employees. It encompasses interactions, communication, and a sense of camaraderie among colleagues.

Building strong interpersonal connections at work fosters a sense of belonging by making employees feel valued, respected, and supported. When individuals have meaningful connections with their co-workers, they are more likely to feel like an integral part of the team and the broader workplace community.



COMMUNITY

Workplace community transcends individual social associations and focuses instead on a shared identity and purpose among employees. It encompasses a feeling of togetherness, involving a collective alignment between individuals with the organization's values and goals.

When employees perceive that they are part of a larger community with shared purpose and objectives, they are more likely to identify with the organization and experience a deep sense of belonging.



COMFORT

Comfort in the workplace relates to creating an environment that promotes physical and psychological well-being for employees. It involves aspects like ergonomic workspaces and initiatives that support mental health.

A comfortable workplace positively impacts belonging by ensuring that employees feel safe, cared for, and valued. When an organization invests in the well-being and comfort of its employees, it sends a message that they are important and respected, reinforcing their sense of belonging.



CHOICE

Choice in the workplace pertains to allowing employees to make decisions about various aspects of their work environment and tasks, such as the flexibility to choose how and where they work.

Empowering employees with choice and autonomy can contribute to a sense of belonging by making them feel that their individual needs and preferences matter. When employees have a say in their work and environment, they are more likely to feel more connected to their work and the organizational culture.

The specific approach or tactic employed for addressing each element may vary based on the particular company culture, reflecting the unique nuances and priorities of each culture and organization's ethos.

For example, the way in which connection is addressed in a Classic culture versus an Adaptor culture may be significantly different given an all on-site work approach versus a mostly remote work model. Here is where the physical makeup of a work environment comes into play and impacts cultivating a sense of belonging.

05

A Belonging-Focused Workplace Landscape



Applying Belonging to Space

Belonging in the workplace is a powerful driver of higher employee engagement, job performance, and overall well-being and can be effectively nurtured and reinforced through thoughtful workplace design. Research shows that employees in workplaces that leverage effective spaces and great workplace experiences are more engaged, more committed to their organization, have better team relationships, and experience a stronger sense of belonging.¹

1. Gensler, Global Workplace Survey Comparison, 2023

“ By integrating advanced research into our design approach, we’re creating workspaces that are as functional as they are aesthetically pleasing. This is the future of fostering a sense of belonging in the workplace, and we’re excited to set that standard with our clients.”



Jessica Gubbins
VP, Brand, Digital, & Insights Marketing,
Workplace & Health, Kimball International



81%

of those who have a great workplace experience **also have choice in a mix of workspaces** consisting of creative group work, individual work, spaces to reflect and restore, and to connect and recharge.¹

The Right Spaces Can Foster Belonging

The design of space must be flexible and support the individual user needs throughout different points in their day to uphold a sense of belonging. Through our research, we uncovered six major space types that are critically important to creating a successful workplace that can enhance employee experience, engagement, retention, and satisfaction.

Our research also found a significant link between these six space types and people's sense of belonging at work. The greater the variety of space types present in an individual's workplace, the stronger their sense of belonging.¹ By including these six space types in a facility, organizations can offer choice and nurture feelings of connection, community, and comfort, empowering everyone to be their best.

The 6 Space Types



The Hub

Often described as the heartbeat of the office, the Hub supports socialization and connectivity. These spaces are often designed with comfortable, casual, and eclectic pieces.

Culture Café

These spaces play an important part in defining an organization's brand and culture, as well as creating a positive customer experience. They offer a variety of seating options for meeting, catching up, and grabbing a bite to eat.



Work Your Way

These workspaces support users throughout their work day. From spaces with visual and acoustical privacy to informal meeting areas, these destinations accommodate planned and impromptu interactions.



Room on the Move

Versatile and movable furniture solutions allow these spaces to easily transition. Promote learning, training, mentoring, and hands-on activities by offering these flexible spaces.

The Meet-Up

Tech-savvy spaces that support coming together, in-person or virtually. These conference rooms and huddle spaces are highly functional and encourage collaboration and problem solving.



Well + Good

Promote employee well-being and safety with spaces and programs dedicated to overall health. These areas can include yoga and meditation spaces or more personal needs like a mother's room.



1. Kimball International, Understanding the Evolving Workplace Study, 2022

Supporting the fundamentals of Belonging Through Space Design

CONNECTION

Common areas and social spaces foster spontaneous connections that enhance relationship-building and allow creativity to flourish.



The Hub

66%

of employees feel that socialization and collaboration with co-workers are key aspects that are missing from office life.¹



Culture Café

33%

of employees feel that the hybrid workplace landscape and reduced social interactions have impacted their relationships with co-workers.¹

COMMUNITY

Collaborative spaces, informal breakout areas, and tech-enabled meeting rooms promote teamwork and strengthen the sense of community between workers.

The Meet-Up

60%

 of employees feel that collaborative group work should be face-to-face.¹

COMFORT

The key to fostering employee well-being lies in providing ergonomic solutions and offering spaces that allow for reflection, restoration, and relaxation.

Well + Good

80%

 of employees say they face obstacles to their well-being at work.²

CHOICE

Multipurpose settings that offer mobile furniture and a variety of visual and acoustical privacy cater to individual preferences. By including solutions that accommodate an array of working postures, these spaces can support productivity and promote a sense of autonomy.

Work Your Way

88%

 of office workers in the highest performing workplaces have choice.³

It's important to note that organizations and company cultures may prioritize these elements differently, and the ideal combination of workspaces will vary accordingly.

Room on the Move

50%

 of employers surveyed anticipate their offices will be reconfigured or changed over the next year.⁴

1. Kimball International, Understanding the Evolving Workplace Study, 2022
2. Deloitte, Well-Being at Work Survey, 2022
3. Gensler, Workplace Survey Comparison, 2023
4. PwC, US Remote Work Survey, 2021

The Role of Sensory Design

Tapping into the Senses

The workplace is a complex environment impacting employee well-being, productivity, and engagement. One aspect of the workplace that is often overlooked is the role of sensory design. Our senses play a crucial role in supporting how we receive and process information about the world around us and how we experience social connections.



Every individual possesses unique sensory preferences, influenced by their personality traits, sensory processing tendencies, and their resonance with biophilic elements. **Our research reveals that sensory design elements like lighting, acoustics, and even texture can profoundly influence our sense of belonging, transforming workspaces into environments where employees feel authentically connected.**

A Human-Centered Approach

People's sensory responses influence their work feelings and performance. Recognizing the diversity in how employees process sensory information is essential to tailoring workspaces that enhance both productivity and well-being and cater to unique needs. By applying a human-centered perspective, factors such as acoustics, textures, and visual elements can be carefully selected to influence the way people experience a space.

Our research utilized a sensory profile scale **assessing how research participants tend to respond to stimuli** such as sound, vision, and touch in their environment.¹

LOW REGISTRATION

tends to miss or take longer to respond to stimuli that others notice

SENSORY SENSITIVITY

easily responds to sensory stimuli and is highly aware of their surroundings

SENSATION SEEKING

creates additional stimuli or looks for environments that provide sensory stimuli

SENSATION AVOIDING

actively blocks sensations and can be overwhelmed by sensory-rich environments

1. Kimball International, Workplace Assessment on Culture & Belonging, 2024



50%

of workers **want total privacy** while they are working on their computer.¹

46%

of workers **use headphones** while working.¹

Embracing Neurodiversity

Acknowledging that there is neurodiversity in how individuals respond to sensory input makes it imperative to offer a range of workspaces that accommodate differing sensitivities and distraction preferences. A well-thought-out workplace design provides a spectrum of sensory environments that address various distraction levels to support individual focus and comfort and promote cognitive well-being. Providing a diverse spectrum allows employees to transition between environments that align with their sensory needs and evolving preferences throughout the day, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive work environment that fosters belonging.



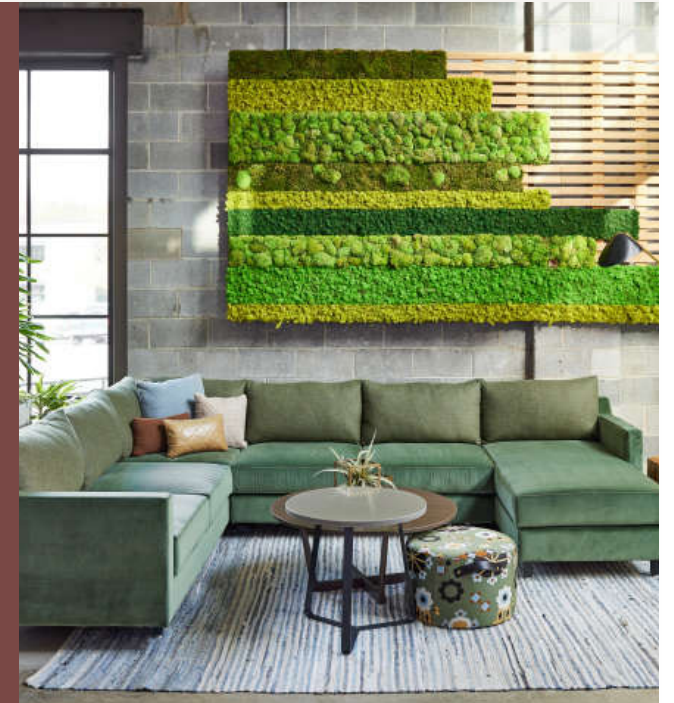
1. Kimball International, Workplace Assessment on Culture & Belonging, 2024

Sensory Design Considerations

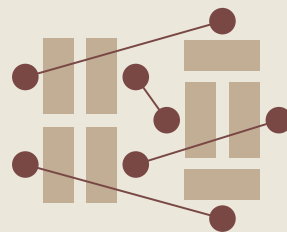
Sensory design components, like atmospheric sound, privacy, lighting, biophilic elements, and ergonomic furnishings, enhance workers' belonging when tailored to personal preferences. Choices in color and intensity can make a space feel more welcoming or creatively stimulating, impacting mood and productivity.

High-sensory environments are characterized by openness and increased opportunities for social interaction and collaboration.

They offer a multitude of sensory stimuli, often incorporating elements like ambient noise, glass walls, a variety of plants, and intricate visual designs, including bright colors and patterns.¹



Sensory Design Considerations That Increase The Sense Of Belonging¹



LAYOUT



VISUAL LANDSCAPES



ADJUSTABLE LIGHTING



ACOUSTICS



BIOPHILIC ELEMENTS



TEXTURES, SHAPES, & HUES



In contrast, low-sensory environments intentionally minimize stimuli and typically feature subdued lighting, minimal noise levels, and soft and comfortable furnishings. Visual distraction is addressed with enhanced privacy and uncluttered aesthetics, creating a serene and secluded ambiance.¹

Offering a range of spaces along this sensory spectrum empowers employees to have greater influence over their immediate environment.¹



By enhancing outdoor views and access to daylight, incorporating natural materials, textures, and plants, and addressing acoustics and visual privacy through choice in a variety of settings, workplaces can accommodate the senses of hearing, sight, and touch while fostering a more inclusive and supportive work environment.¹

1. Kimball International, Assessment on Culture and Belonging, 2024

Sensory Design and Furnishings

Sensory design that fosters a sense of belonging in the workplace must also incorporate thoughtful consideration of furnishings, including layout, textures, shapes, ergonomics, and storage needs.



LAYOUT

Office layout affects comfort and contentment at work. Open layouts benefit outgoing individuals by facilitating communication but may pose challenges for reserved or noise-sensitive people.^{1,2}



TEXTURES, SHAPES, AND HUES

Textures influence brain function. Hard textures stimulate analytical thinking while soft ones spark creativity. Diverse tactile experiences evoke emotions and enhance space appeal. Color-emotion link varies individually, so offering diverse color choices in design is vital for positive emotions. Curved shapes foster a welcoming and calming environment.^{3,4,5}



VISUAL LANDSCAPES

Clutter negatively affects emotion perception and communication. It overwhelms our cognitive capacity, hindering clear thinking and task focus. Personal storage options reduce clutter and enhance feelings of safety in shared spaces.^{6,7}



ADJUSTABLE LIGHTING

Lighting affects mood and behavior. Softer, dimmer lighting creates a relaxed atmosphere, while warmer tones promote relaxation. Adjustable lighting in collaborative spaces fosters a calm and welcoming environment.^{8,9}



ACOUSTICS

70% of employees reported being regularly disturbed by conversations or ambient noise in the workplace. Studies have proven some ambient noise, roughly 70db, is valuable when it comes to focus work, however, as workplaces shift to offer more collaborative spaces, it's crucial to ensure there are options that offer sound privacy.^{10,11}



BIOPHILIC ELEMENTS

Research has consistently demonstrated the advantages of including biophilic elements in constructed surroundings. Whether by improving indoor air quality or enhancing employee well-being through stress reduction, plants and natural materials have a significant impact on fostering a sense of belonging and connection to something larger than ourselves.^{12,13}

1. James, O., Delfabbro, P., & King, D., A Comparison of Psychological and Work Outcomes in Open-Plan and Cellular Office Designs: A Systematic Review, 2021
2. Forooraghi, M., Miedema, E., Ryd, N., & Wallnaum, H., How Does Office Design Support Employees' Health? A Case Study on the Relationships Among Employees' Perceptions of the Office Environment, Their Sense of Coherence and Office Design, 2021
3. Jong, K., Physical Activity Benefits Creativity: Squeezing a Ball for Enhancing Creativity, 2015

4. Zhu, W., Furniture Design Under the Emotional Guidance of Material, 2020
5. Küller, R., Mikellides, B., & Janssens, J., Color, Arousal, and Performance - A Comparison of Three Experiments, 2009
6. Cutting, J.E., & Armstrong, K.L., Facial Expression, Size, and Clutter: Inferences from Movie Structure to Emotion Judgements and Back, 2016
7. Vischer, J.C., & Wulf, M., The Effect of Workplace Design on Quality of Life at Work, 2017

8. Custers, P., de Kort, Y., Ijsselstein, W., & de Kruijf, M., Lighting in Retail Environments: Atmosphere Perception in the Real World, 2010
9. Kombeiz, O., Steidle, A., & Dietl, E., View it in a Different Light: Mediated and Moderated Effects of Dim Warm Light on Collaborative Conflict Resolution, 2017
10. Gensler, Global Workplace Survey, 2023

11. Mehta, R., Zhu, R., & Cheema, A., Is Noise Always Bad? Exploring the Effects of Ambient Noise on Creative Cognition, 2012
12. Fayyad, N., Lam, B., & Choi, Y., Investigating Impacts of Interior Design Variables on Employee's Wellbeing in the UK Workplace, 2022
13. Lee, Min-sun, et al., Interaction with Indoor Plants May Reduce Psychological and Physiological Stress by Suppressing Autonomic Nervous System Activity in Young Adults: A Randomized Crossover Study, 2015



The Connection to **Culture Types**

Sensory design plays a pivotal role in supporting workplace culture by influencing the physical and emotional experiences of employees, while spatial planning can shape the physical environment to align with the cultural values and needs of the organization. When used in tandem, strategic sensory design coupled with thoughtful spatial considerations becomes a powerful catalyst for fostering a sense of belonging within a workplace. Our research has shown that specific culture types have different sensory and spatial design requirements.

Classic

Enhance your Classic culture with thoughtfully curated workspaces that reflect a commitment to efficiency, productive solo work, and dynamic team interactions. Dedicated spaces for impromptu connections and formal meetings inspire collaborative problem solving, while areas with enhanced privacy allow for more seamless workdays.

Sensory Considerations

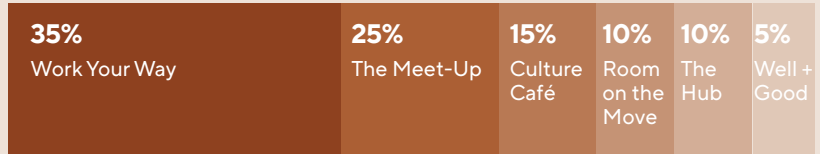
- Need options with total visual and acoustical privacy
- Prefer social engagement in dedicated spaces to reduce stimuli
- Benefit from adjustable lighting

Design Considerations

- Settings that support individual focus
- Settings that offer variety to support meetings, social interactions, and eating
- Tech-savvy spaces that support coming together, in-person or virtually

Prioritized Space Types

Creating a workspace tailored to the Classic culture involves a thoughtful ratio of these space types.



Work Your Way



The Meet-Up



Room on the Move



Culture Café



Well + Good



The Hub

Collective

Energize a Collective culture with dynamic workspaces featuring vibrant cafés that promote community and connection and work areas offering adaptable furniture that embodies flexibility. Promote employee well-being with people-centric spaces for relaxation and rejuvenation.

Sensory Considerations

- Benefit from visual elements that spur creativity
- Need options with partial visual and acoustical privacy
- Appreciate access to natural light and biophilia

Design Considerations

- Settings that include flexible furniture for easy transition
- Settings that offer variety to support meetings, social interactions, and eating
- Spaces with ergonomic furniture that promote employee well-being

Prioritized Space Types

Creating a workspace tailored to the Collective culture involves a thoughtful ratio of these space types.

25% Room on the Move	20% Well + Good	20% Culture Café	15% The Meet-Up	10% The Hub	10% Work Your Way
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Culture Café



The Meet-Up



Work Your Way



The Hub



Room on the Move



Well + Good

Harmonizer

Prioritize your people and enhance their team synergy in the Harmonizer culture with engaging social areas designed for comfort and connectivity. Incorporate tech-savvy meeting spaces that facilitate collaborative problem solving and inviting work zones that offer flexible options to support productivity.

Sensory Considerations

- Appreciate access to natural light and biophilia
- Need options with partial and total visual and acoustical privacy
- Benefit from high sensory stimulation created by openness

Design Considerations

- Settings that balance hybrid schedules and support individual focus
- Settings that foster planned and impromptu connections with co-workers
- Tech-savvy spaces that support coming together, in-person or virtually

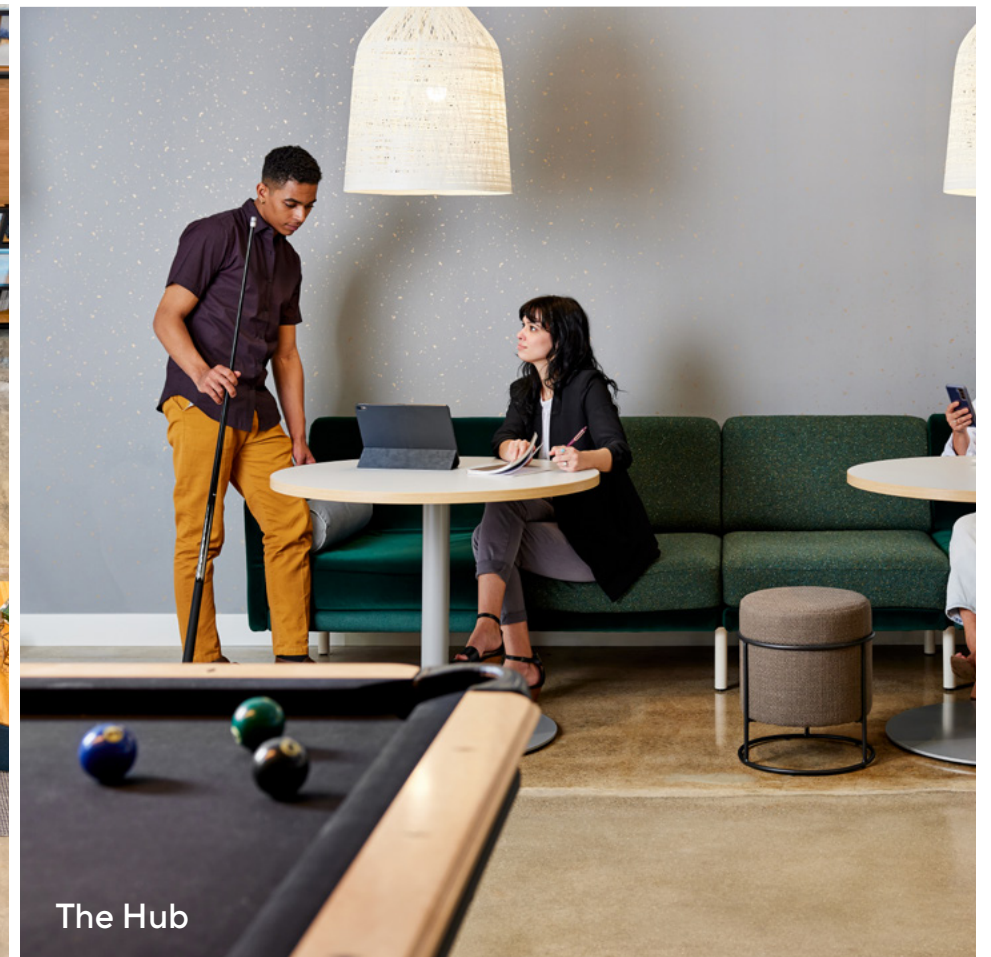
Prioritized Space Types

Creating a workspace tailored to the Harmonizer culture involves a thoughtful ratio of these space types.

30%	20%	20%	15%	10%	5%
Work Your Way	The Hub	The Meet-Up	Well + Good	Culture Café	Room on the Move



Work Your Way



The Hub



The Meet-Up



Well + Good



Culture Café



Room on the Move

Trailblazer

Ignite innovation in a Trailblazer culture with adaptable spaces that encourage continuous learning and evolving workflows. Integrate energetic social spaces throughout the work environment to foster creativity and connectivity and offer flexible settings that balance hybrid schedules and support individual focus.

Sensory Considerations

- Need options with partial and total visual and acoustical privacy
- Appreciate natural elements and textures
- Benefit from adjustable lighting

Design Considerations

- Settings that balance hybrid schedules and support individual focus
- Settings that foster planned and impromptu connections with co-workers
- Settings that include flexible furniture for easy transition

Prioritized Space Types

Creating a workspace tailored to the Trailblazer culture involves a thoughtful ratio of these space types.

30%	20%	20%	15%	10%	5%
Work Your Way	Room on the Move	The Hub	The Meet-Up	Culture Café	Well + Good



The Hub



The Meet-Up



Well + Good



Culture Café



Work Your Way



Room on the Move

Adaptor

Effortlessly navigate change in the Adaptor culture with tech-enabled zones. Designed for adaptive collaboration and problem solving, these dynamic social spaces unite workers with a shared sense of purpose. Provide dedicated spaces that support mental health and well-being, offering employees the respite and reflection needed to cultivate resilience and improved performance.

Sensory Considerations

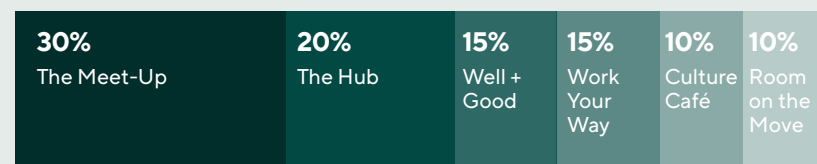
- Need options for total visual and acoustical privacy
- Appreciate low stimuli areas with reduced clutter for individual work
- Benefit from stimulating areas for one-on-one socializing

Design Considerations

- Spaces with ergonomic furniture and storage
- Tech-savvy spaces that support coming together, in-person or virtually
- Settings that foster planned and impromptu connections

Prioritized Space Types

Creating a workspace tailored to the Adaptor culture involves a thoughtful ratio of these space types.



The Meet-Up



The Hub



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Connecting The Dots

The need for belonging in the workplace stands as the foundation for organizational success, driving employee well-being, engagement, creativity, and productivity. Shaping a sense of belonging at work through impactful space design involves recognizing the role of company culture, addressing the fundamental human needs of community, connection, comfort, and choice, and factoring in purposeful sensory design strategies. Together, these three pillars form a cohesive framework that influences not just how employees feel but also how they perform. By harmonizing these elements, we can foster a workplace where everyone can thrive.

Contributors To Belonging

Identify
Company
Culture

Support
Human
Needs

Culture of
Belonging

Incorporate
Sensory Design

Summary of Key Takeaways

Insight #1: Company culture is the invisible thread that weaves through every interaction, decision, and space within an organization. Company culture is intricately linked to the sense of belonging, with five distinct culture types influencing how it is nurtured. The ability to translate culture through tangible space design can significantly enhance employees' sense of belonging.

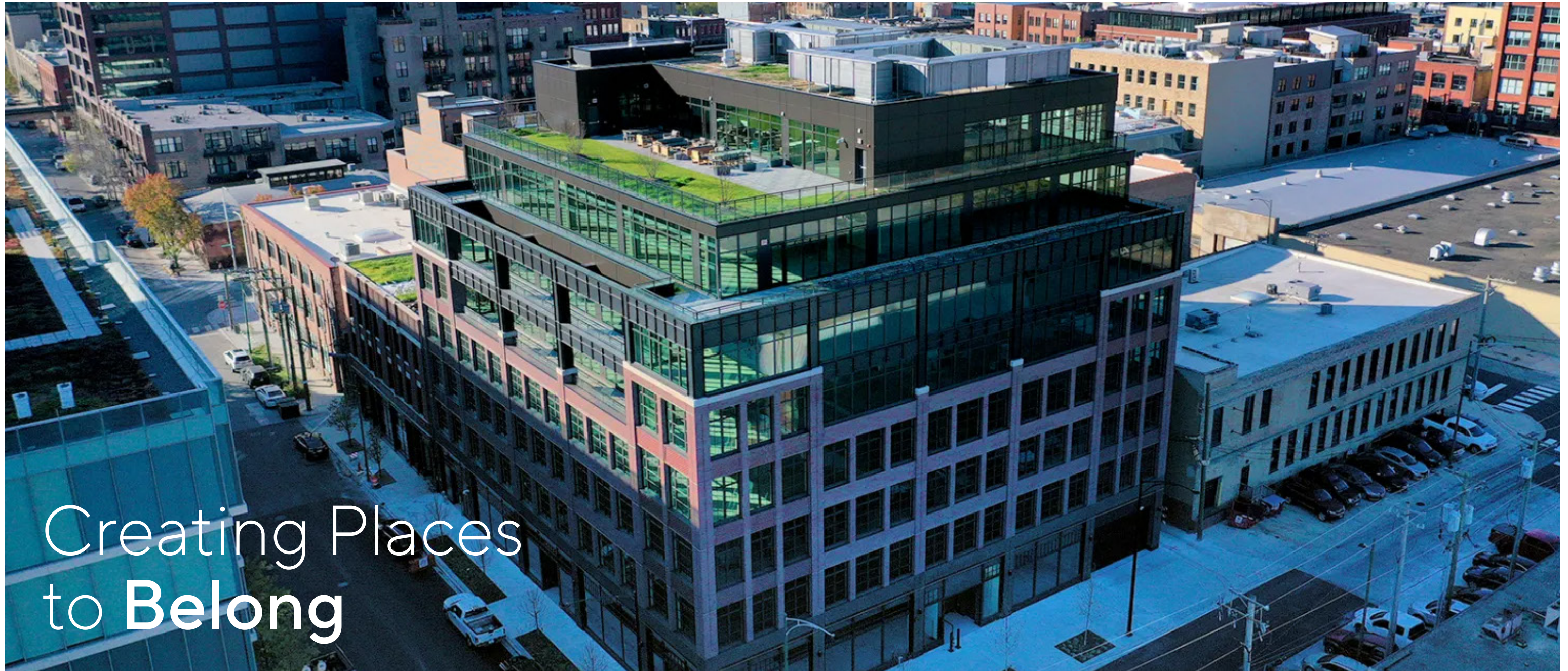
Insight #2: There are four fundamental needs—connection, community, comfort, and choice—that must be addressed in workplace design to create spaces for belonging. Creating a dynamic ecosystem involving six identified space types is pivotal to fostering belonging and creating a more inclusive workspace.

Insight #3: Sensory experiences can impact belonging and engagement in the workplace, allowing workers to forge meaningful connections with others or shut down in response to overwhelming stimuli. By embracing a human-centered approach grounded in sensory design considerations, spaces can be crafted to support neurodiversity, resulting in more effective work and improved well-being.

“The way workers’ needs are or aren’t supported in their environments matters to their sense of belonging – and an organization’s bottom line. Simple changes like adjustable furniture, quiet zones, and collaboration spaces can make a world of difference in how employees feel and perform. A sense of belonging isn’t just good for morale; it’s an investment in your company’s success.”

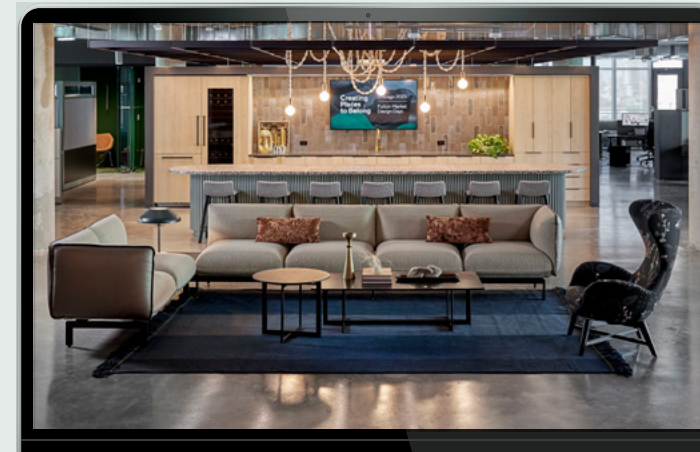


Kaelynn Reid
Design Futurist, Kimball International



Creating Places to **Belong**

As we continue to gain insights into the evolving landscape of workplace needs, we're eager to share our knowledge with you. Our Chicago showroom showcases new product introductions and illustrates how our solutions combine to create thriving environments where people can focus, gather, and be nurtured. During this interactive tour, you will experience how our products can be utilized together to create spaces that ignite creative thinking, encourage meaningful interactions, and promote overall well-being.



Explore how our showroom
inspires, encourages interaction,
and sparks a culture of belonging.



[Go to Webpage →](#)

More Resources to Continue the Journey

Cultivating a sense of belonging in today's workplace is imperative for sustained organizational success. By recognizing the impact of company culture, attending to the human needs of connection, community, comfort, and choice, and implementing purposeful sensory design strategies, organizations can not only elevate employee satisfaction and well-being but also optimize performance and engagement. By creating places to belong, we unlock the full potential of people, empowering them to bring out their best.

Schedule a Workshop

Locate your local representative to take our culture quiz and unlock the first step toward creating a culture of belonging.



 [Contact Your Representative →](#)

Explore Online Resources

Learn how supporting human-centered needs through space design can give your people and place a greater purpose.



 [Go to Webpage →](#)

Download the Overview Brochure

Discover how these insights come to life with inspiring and inclusive spaces tailored to every culture type.



 [Download Brochure →](#)

Request the CEU

Join our live or virtual CEU, The Value of Culture and Connection.



 [Register for CEU →](#)

Get Inspired for the Future

Tune in to the Alternative Design podcast, check out our blog, and listen to our conversations to be inspired to craft the world of tomorrow, today.



 [Go to Platform →](#)

08

Appendices

Research Innovation

Building on the scientific foundations of belonging, Kimball International and Arigami take an innovative approach to uncovering the unique interplay between furniture, function, and a sense of belonging in the workplace.

This positions Kimball International to offer tailored solutions that go beyond the conventional, ensuring that your workplace is designed to create a genuine sense of belonging.

Cross-disciplinary Approach

Working across disciplines means that our research team brings in insights that cross-fertilize and spark new ways of looking at processes and data. Results become more broadly useful with this approach.

Multisensory Profiling Framework

Furniture and environment play a pivotal role in shaping an employee's day-to-day experience. To fully grasp this impact, Arigami's research methodology focuses on the sensory aspects of work. Sensory type, personality, and biophilic preferences are considered and aligned with furniture needs, providing a nuanced understanding of what truly impacts, comfort, productivity, and overall job satisfaction.



Ari Peralta
Neuroscience and Sensory Design, Arigami

"We approach our research with a blend of interdisciplinary expertise and academic rigor, all aimed at unlocking hidden but groundbreaking insights. We don't follow trends. We discover them."

Neuroscience Approach



Dr. Charles Spence
Director of Neuroscience,
University of Oxford

"By merging neuroscience and design, we're able to really identify what it means to belong in a workspace from the inside out."



Dr. Nancy Etcoff
Neuroaesthetics,
Harvard University

"We believe the answer to a better human experience in the workplace starts by gaining deeper insights into the neuroscience of comfort, beauty, and belonging."



Dr. David Eagleman
Neuroscience,
Stanford University

"There are sensory layers to our work realities, and we're aiming to decode them by better understanding the brain's algorithms for comfort and productivity."

3D Visualization Technology Integration

Along these same lines, we did not limit research to just survey data. Using the Matterport platform, research participants had an opportunity to look at Kimball International furniture in real settings to choose their preferred workplaces for specific tasks.



Research Team & Platform Partners

- Ari Peralta, Harvard, Research Director
- Nedra Kline Weinreich, Harvard, Research Lead
- Eugene Antipov, Quantitative Data Analysis
- Gary Borislow, Qualitative Interviews
- Ajdina Halilovic, Cambridge University – Literature Reviews
- Zach George – Data Visualization
- Dr. David Eagleman, Neuroscience, Stanford University
- Dr. Nancy Etcoff, Director of Neuroaesthetics, Harvard University
- Dr. Charles Spence, Director of Neuroscience, University of Oxford

Research Platform Partners

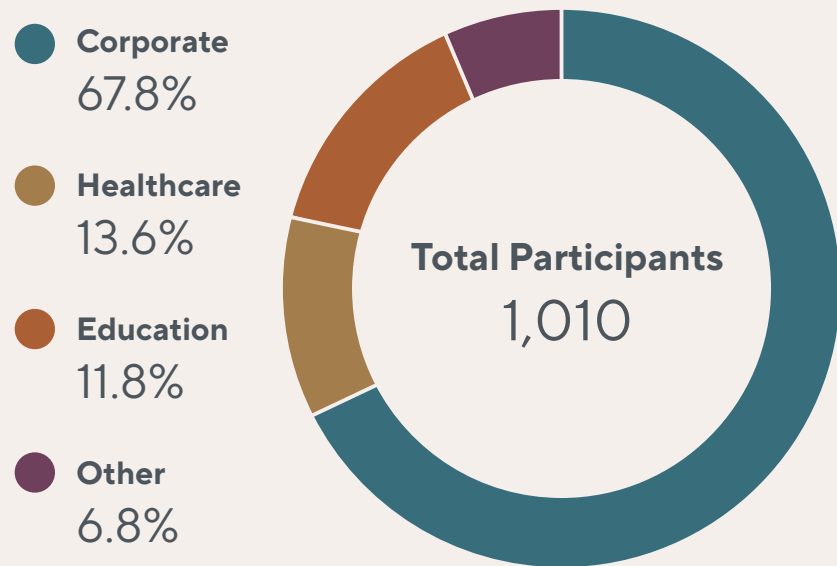
- Matterport
- Gorilla
- Prolific

Kimball International Research and Insights Team

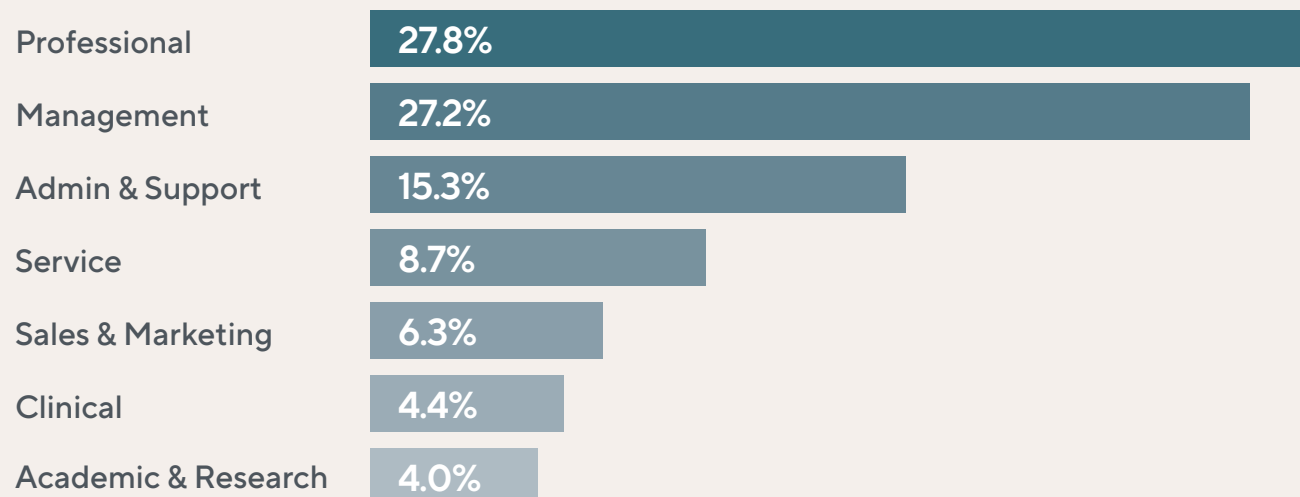
- Jessica Gubbins
- Kaelynn Reid
- Brandy Small

Research Participant Demographics

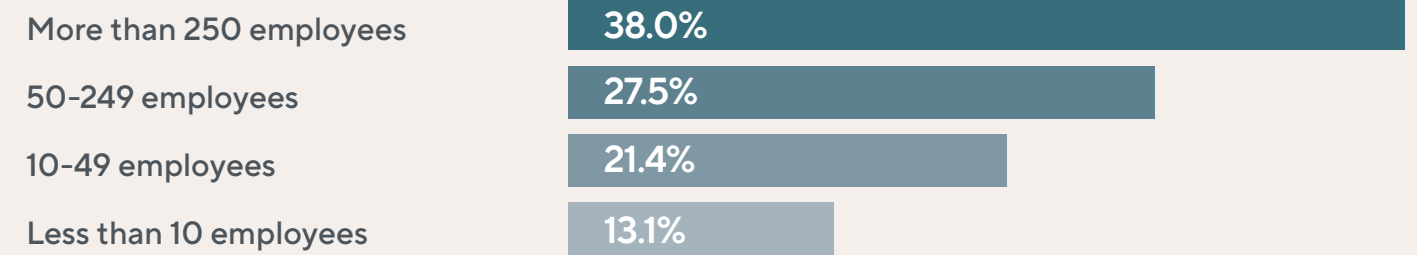
Vertical Markets



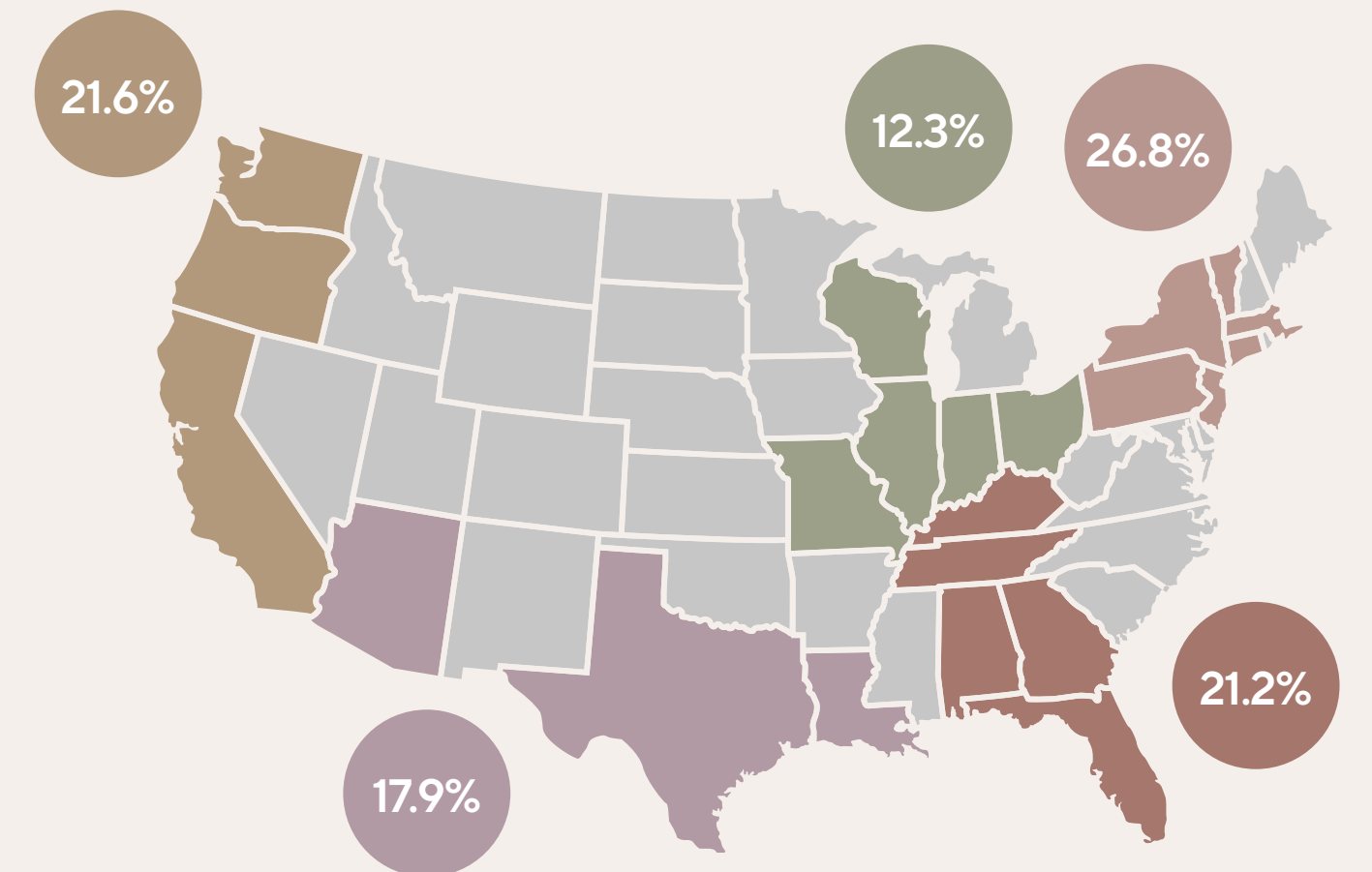
Participant Roles



Organization Size



Geographic Locations



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