



# Creating Places to Belong<sup>®</sup>

The Value of Culture & Connection

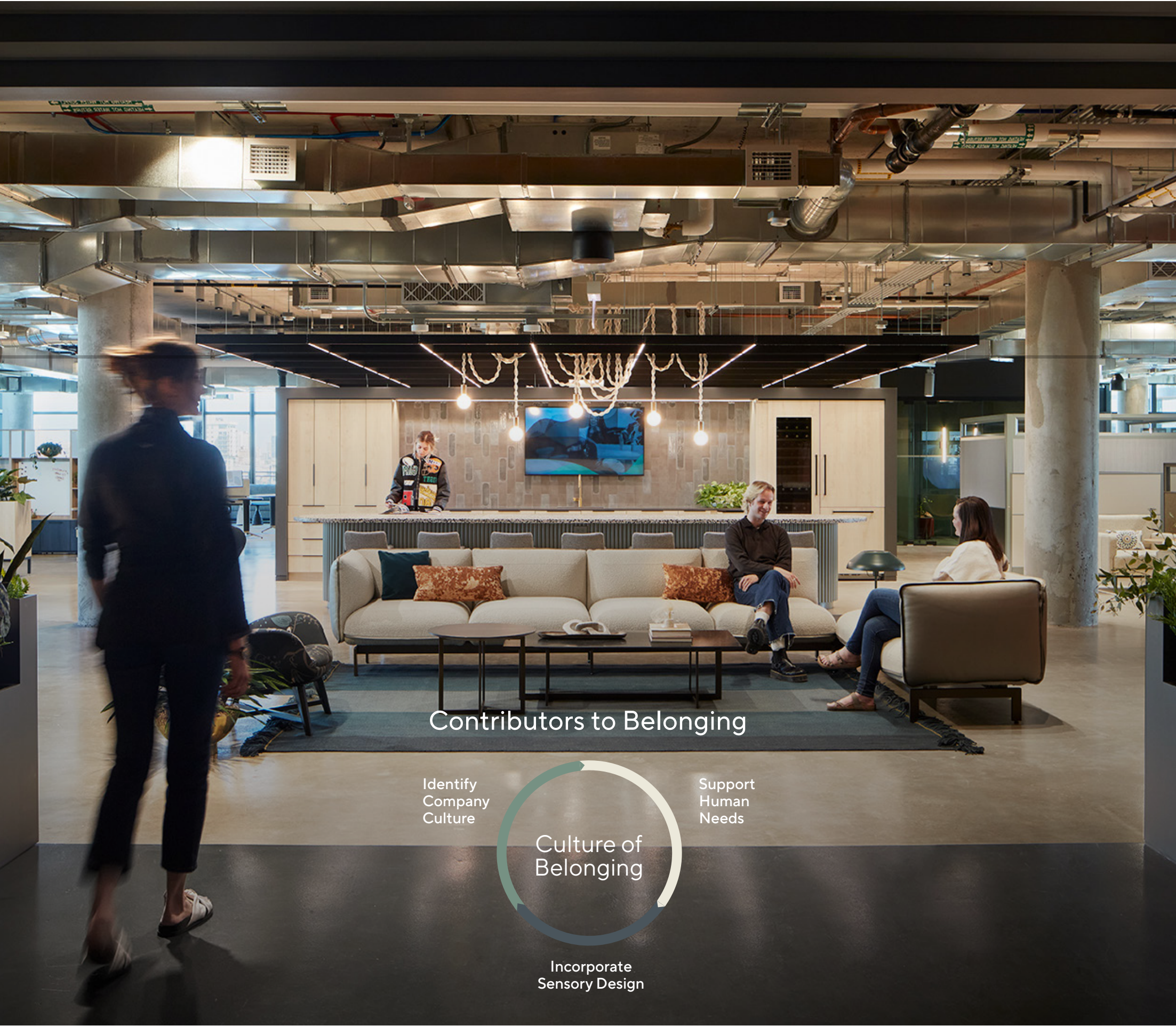


# Designing for a Culture of Belonging

The workplace is undergoing a transformative shift. At Kimball International, we're committed to helping businesses embrace this evolution by recognizing the power that place has for nurturing a stronger sense of belonging—a proven catalyst for organizational success. Through a combination of research, evidence-based analysis, and design thinking, we've uncovered the profound influence of company culture. We've also discovered how addressing human needs and sensory criteria through purposeful design can impact worker satisfaction, productivity, and well-being. Through a combination of research, evidence-based analysis, and design thinking, we've uncovered the profound influence of company culture. We've also discovered how addressing human needs and sensory criteria through purposeful design can impact worker satisfaction, productivity, and well-being. By creating places to belong, we can foster spaces where everyone can thrive.

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### Contributors to Belonging

Identify Company Culture

Support Human Needs

Culture of Belonging

Incorporate Sensory Design



# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BELONGING

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. Research shows that cultivating a strong sense of belonging in the workplace influences the well-being of employees and is linked to positive outcomes and bottom-line benefits for organizations.

## THE CASE FOR BELONGING

In a typical business, employees can account for **over 70%** of operating costs. Yet, research shows that all worker types are experiencing the effects of a lack of belonging, leading to a decline in productivity and engagement.<sup>1</sup>

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

ONLY  
**49%** of hybrid workers report giving extra effort at work.<sup>3</sup>

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



## THE VALUE OF BELONGING

A culture of belonging is essential for inspiring a productive and engaged workforce. A strong sense of belonging influences employee well-being and is linked to positive outcomes for organizations.

### High Belonging was Linked to the Following:<sup>5</sup>

**↑ 56%**  
improvement in job performance

**↓ 50%**  
reduction in turnover risk

**↓ 75%**  
reduction in sick days

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  
5. BetterUp, *The Value of Belonging at Work: Investing in Workplace Inclusion*, 2019



# The Importance of Culture

An effective workplace is a reflection of a company's culture, conveying its values to employees, clients, and partners. Every day, as people go to work, their organizations' specific cultures directly influence their experience and whether they become engaged or inspired. Our research has shown that there are five distinct culture types. Each type has its own definitive goals, attributes, and requirements for establishing belonging.

TRAILBLAZER

CLASSIC

COLLECTIVE

ADAPTOR

HARMONIZER





# 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.



# 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.

## PRIORITIZED SPACE TYPES

<b>35%</b> Work Your Way	<b>25%</b> The Meet-Up	<b>15%</b> Culture Café	<b>10%</b> Room on the Move	<b>10%</b> The Hub	<b>5%</b> Well + Good
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Work Your Way



The Meet-Up



Room on the Move



Culture Café

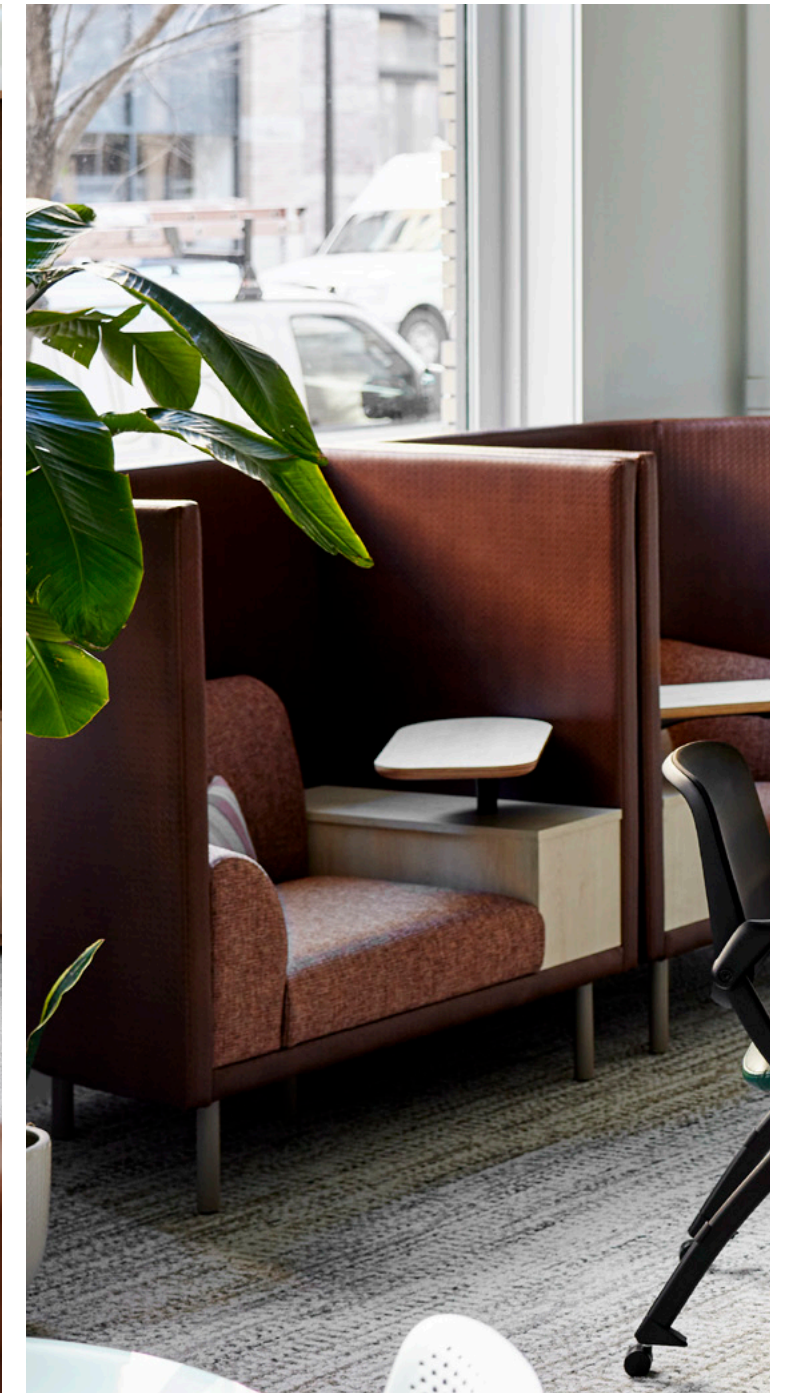


Well + Good



The Hub





# 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.



# 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.

## Prioritized Space Types

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



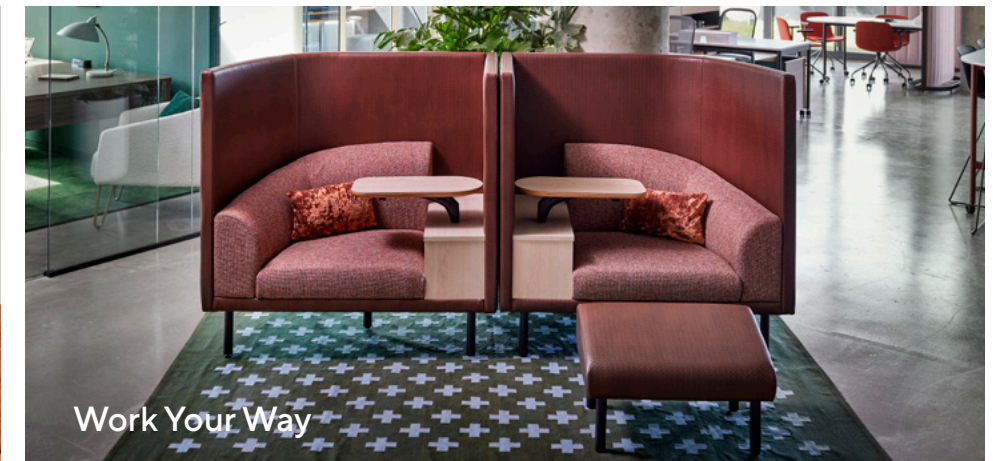
The Meet-Up



Room on the Move



Well + Good



Work Your Way



The Hub





# 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.



# 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.

## PRIORITIZED SPACE TYPES

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



The Hub



The Meet-Up



Well + Good

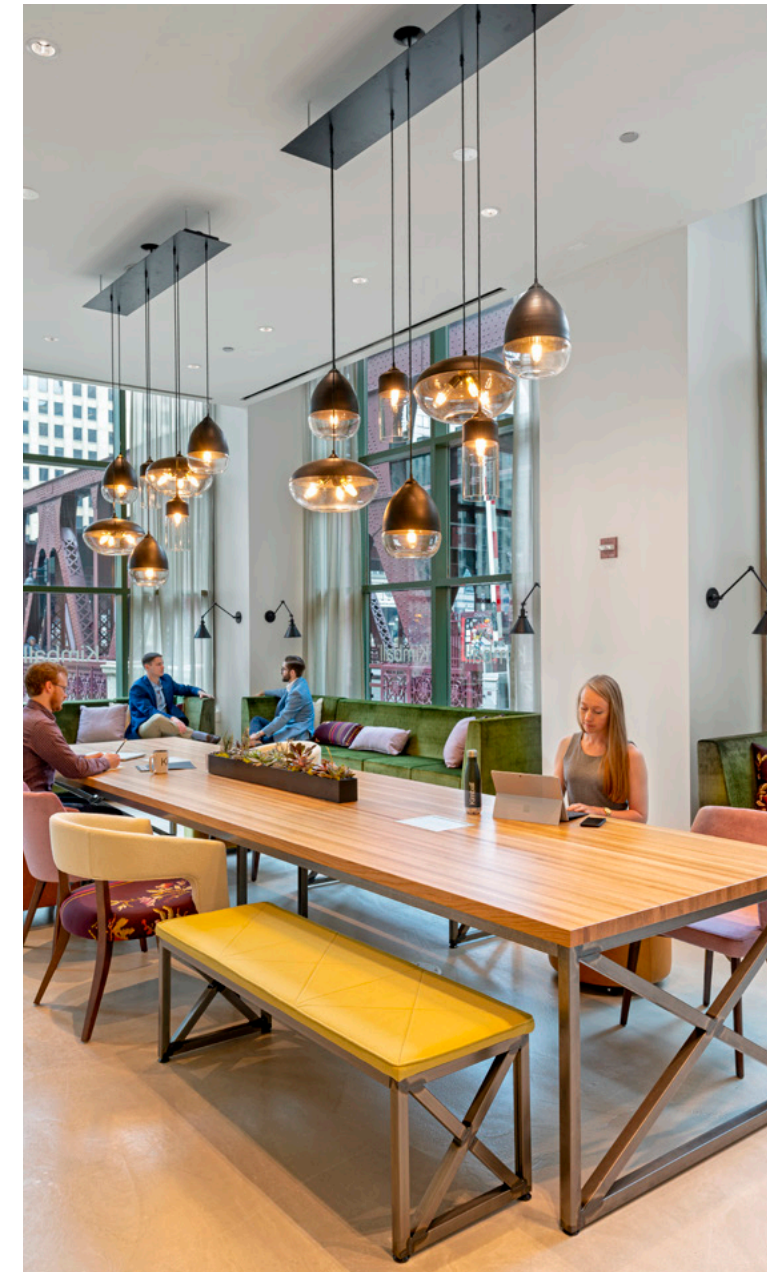


Culture Café



Room on the Move





# TRAILBLAZER

The Trailblazer culture is characterized by its relentless pursuit of innovation and tech-savvy solutions. 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 on 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.



# TRAILBLAZER

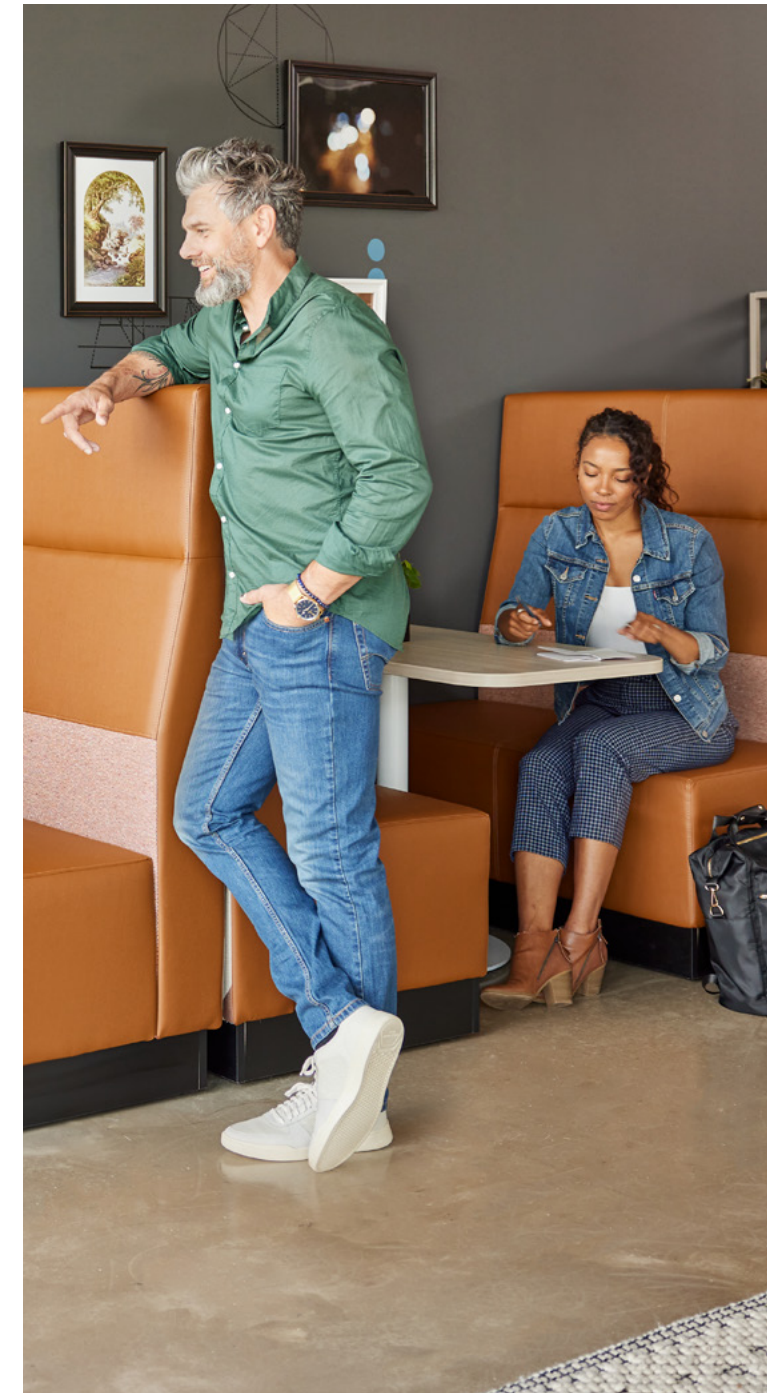
Ignite innovation in a Trailblazer culture with adaptable spaces that encourage continuous learning and evolving workflows. Integrate energetic social spaces throughout the work environment to foster creativity and connectivity and offer flexible settings that balance hybrid schedules and support individual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

## PRIORITIZED SPACE TYPES

<b>30%</b> Work Your Way	<b>20%</b> Room on the Move	<b>20%</b> The Hub	<b>15%</b> The Meet-Up	<b>10%</b> Culture Café	<b>5%</b> Well + Good
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## 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.



# ADAPTOR

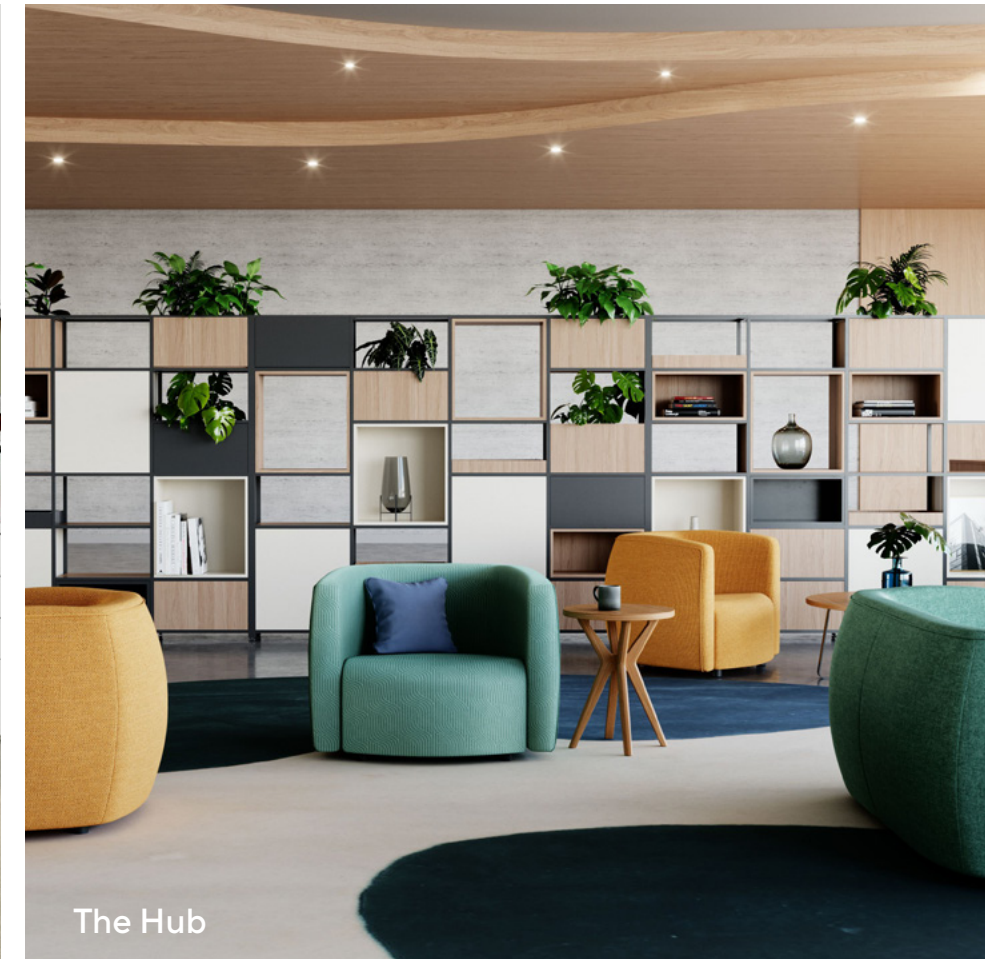
Effortlessly navigate change in the Adaptor culture with tech-enabled zones. Designed for adaptive collaboration and problem solving, these dynamic social spaces unite workers with a shared sense of purpose. Provide dedicated spaces that support mental health and well-being, offering employees the respite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

## PRIORITIZED SPACE TYPES

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



The Hub



Work Your Way



Well + Good



Culture Café

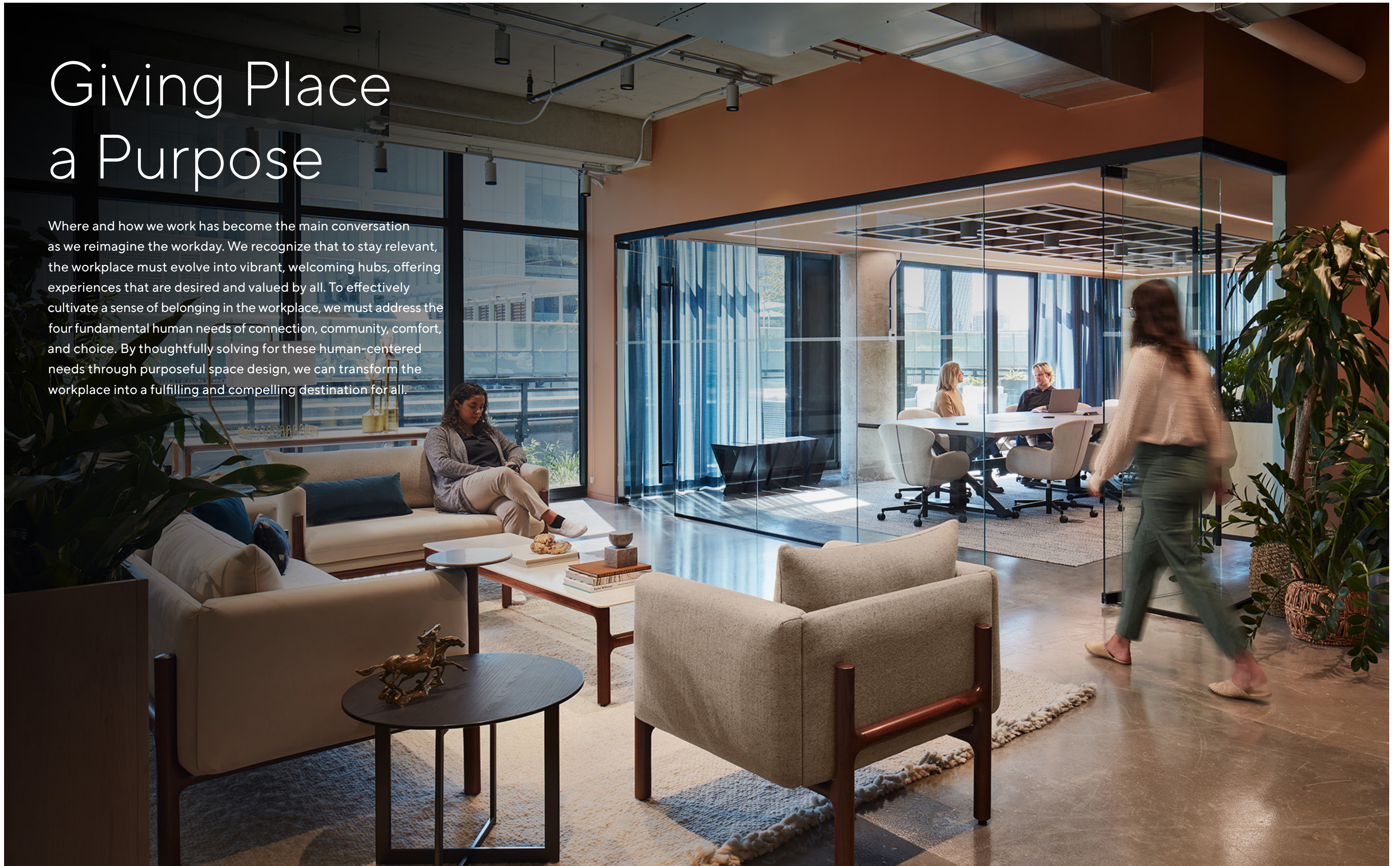


Room on the Move



# Giving Place a Purpose

Where and how we work has become the main conversation as we reimagine the workday. We recognize that to stay relevant, the workplace must evolve into vibrant, welcoming hubs, offering experiences that are desired and valued by all. To effectively cultivate a sense of belonging in the workplace, we must address the four fundamental human needs of connection, community, comfort, and choice. By thoughtfully solving for these human-centered needs through purposeful space design, we can transform the workplace into a fulfilling and compelling destination for all.







*“We were looking for a furniture solution that accomplished our goals. The entire space needed to encourage collaboration, make a statement about our innovative, yet stable market position, and simply be a place where people wanted to work!”*

Chris Robart, President of Ambyint

Read  
Success Story



# CONNECTION

## BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Humans are inherently social, finding happiness in casual interactions with colleagues in the workplace. The presence of welcoming, inspiring social spaces not only encourages such interactions but also fosters an energized and collaborative mindset.

# 33%

of employees feel that hybrid schedules and reduced interactions have impacted relationships with co-workers.



Source: Kimball International, Understanding the Evolving Workplace Study, 2022





# COMMUNITY

## BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

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

60%

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



*“My goal is that this project reinforces the importance of purposeful, intentional, and impactful design to our community.”*

Jacki McGuire, University Interior Designer, ASU

Source: Kimball International, Understanding the Evolving Workplace Study, 2022

Read  
Success Story





# COMFORT

## NURTURING HEALTHY WORKSTYLES

Comfort in the workplace relates to creating an environment that promotes physical and psychological well-being for employees. It involves aspects of the built environment, such as access to daylight, break areas, and ergonomic furnishings, as well as work culture initiatives that support mental health.

# 84%

of employees say that improving their well-being is a top priority, yet 80% face obstacles at work.



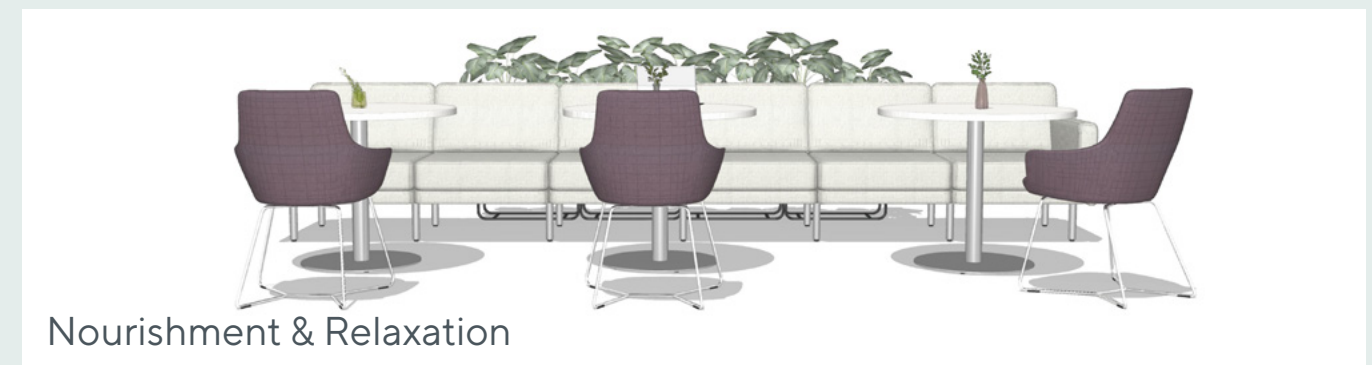
Visual & Acoustical Privacy



Social Engagement



Respite & Rejuvenation

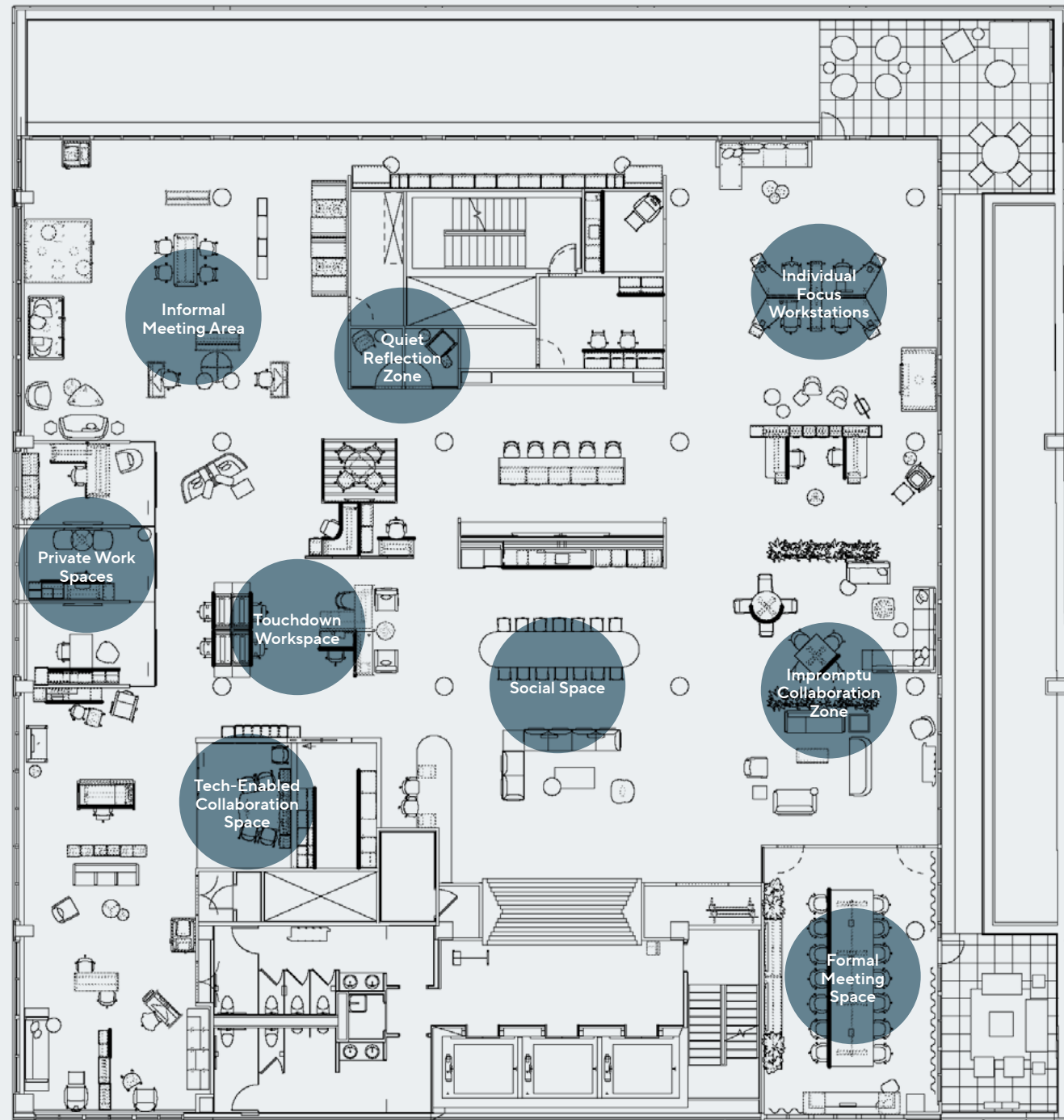


Nourishment & Relaxation

Source: Deloitte, Well-Being at Work Survey, 2022



## Choice Considerations



# CHOICE

## WORKING YOUR WAY

By infusing a variety of space types within a facility, organizations can offer choice and nurture feelings of connection, community, and comfort, empowering everyone to be their best.

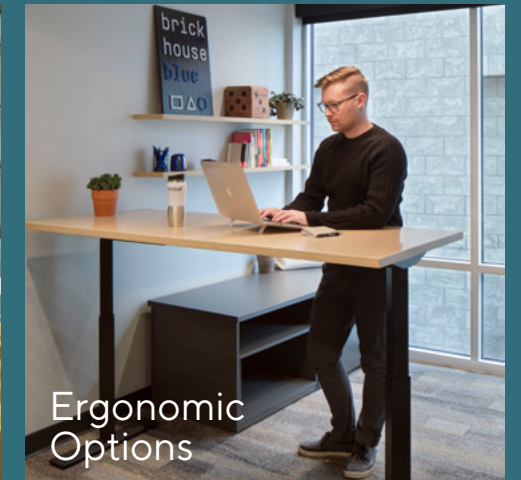
# 81%

of those who have a great workplace experience also have a choice in where work gets done.

## Furniture Considerations



Posture Choices



Ergonomic Options



Social Opportunities



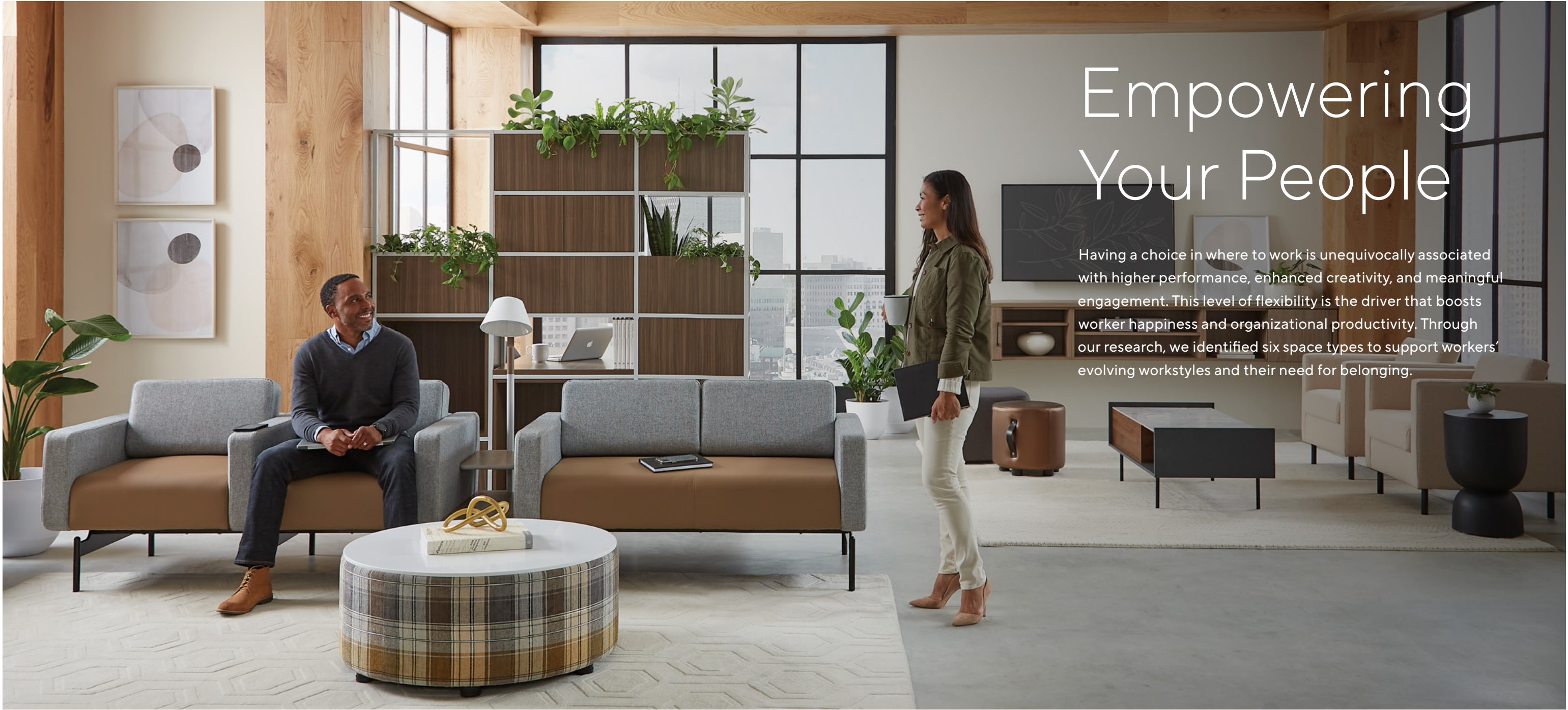
Privacy Considerations

Source: Gensler, Global Workplace Survey Comparison, 2023



# Empowering Your People

Having a choice in where to work is unequivocally associated with higher performance, enhanced creativity, and meaningful engagement. This level of flexibility is the driver that boosts worker happiness and organizational productivity. Through our research, we identified six space types to support workers' evolving workstyles and their need for belonging.



## THE 6 SPACE TYPES



The Hub



Culture Café



Work Your Way



The Meet-Up



Room on the Move



Well + Good





# 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 that draw people together.

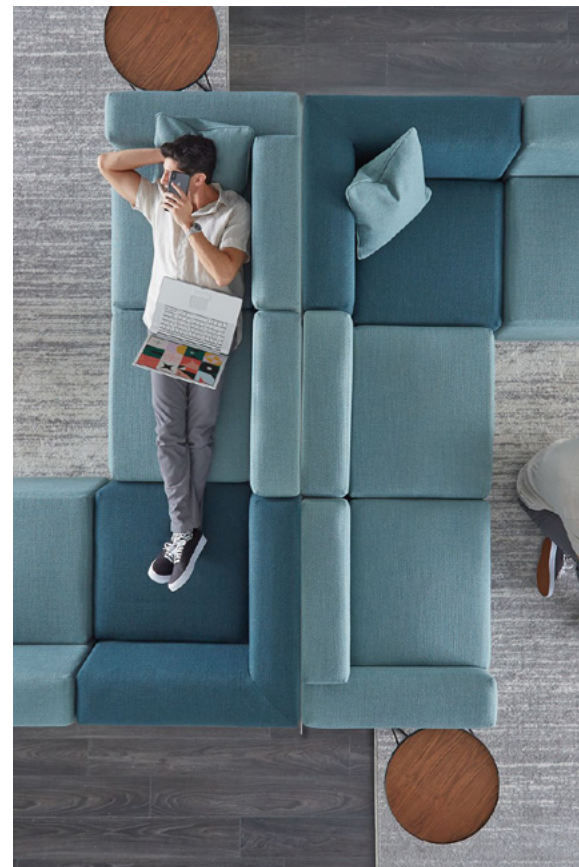
66%

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

Source: Kimball International, *Understanding the Evolving Workplace Study, 2022*







THE HUB  
IDEA STARTERS





# 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.

# 88%

of high-performing companies have greater choice of amenities in the workplace.

Source: Gensler, Global Workplace Survey Comparison, 2023







CULTURE CAFÉ  
IDEA STARTERS





# WORK YOUR WAY

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

## 50%

of workers want total privacy while working on their computer; 46% use headphones when working.

Source: Kimball International, Workplace Assessment on Culture & Belonging, 2024







WORK YOUR WAY  
IDEA STARTERS





# 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.

# 48%

of high-growth organizations actively promote creative collaboration processes.

Source: Deloitte, 2023 Global Marketing Trends Executive Survey







## THE MEET-UP IDEA STARTERS





# 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.

## 50%

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

Source: PwC, U.S. Remote Work Survey, 2021







ROOM ON THE MOVE  
IDEA STARTERS





# 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.

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# 78%

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

Source: Qualtrics, 2021 Employee Experience Trends







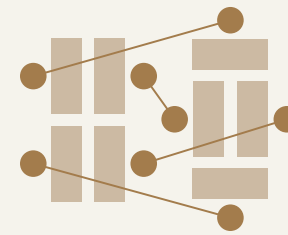
WELL + GOOD  
IDEA STARTERS



# Tapping into the Senses

We all have unique sensory preferences. Through thoughtful consideration of sensory design, organizations can cultivate workplaces that significantly contribute to employee well-being. By applying a human-centered approach to space design, factors like acoustics and textures, as well as visual elements such as lighting, biophilia, and color can be carefully selected to influence the way employees experience a space. These foundations will help them feel authentically connected to their work environment.

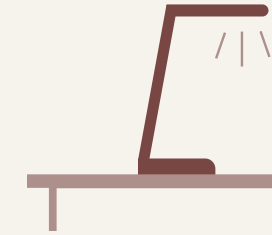
## SENSORY DESIGN & FURNITURE CONSIDERATIONS



LAYOUT



VISUAL LANDSCAPES



ADJUSTABLE LIGHTING



ACOUSTICS



BIOPHILIC ELEMENTS



TEXTURES, SHAPES, & HUES



# CONNECTING THE DOTS

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.



## READ THE FULL REPORT

Discover the information behind how supporting fundamental human needs drives organizational success.



## EXPLORE THE WEBSITE

Download our digital tools and resources.



## SCHEDULE A WORKSHOP

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



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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.



