# Well-Being

For many, the COVID-19 pandemic initiated a simultaneous need to work in disparate locations, manage increased stress levels, navigate changing family dynamics, and reckon with societal disparities. Despite the hardship and physical separation, and perhaps because of it, many have been united in our understanding of the importance of employee health, humanity, life satisfaction, and in making positive contributions. We recognize more acutely than ever that well-being is not only a consideration of physical health, but also accounts for and fosters mental wellness, and is inclusive of lifestyles and locations.

This refocus on humans, health, and humanity has prompted shifts in workplace strategy. As we look ahead to the future of the workplace, user experience and comfort is now being prioritized, where it may have once been considered only a side-effect of decisions made to boost efficiency or space utilization.

The benefits of well-being considerations can be significant to employees as well as employers. When integrated holistically and thoughtfully, well-being can be a key driver to reduce turn-over, ease burnout, and increase engagement. Additionally, robust well-being strategies can inform real estate decisions, inform hybrid work policies, and provide insight when we consider equitable workplaces and meeting options.

# Contributors to Well-Being

Historically, wellness programs were considered and fulfilled exclusively by the individual employee. Programs for smoking cessation and sugar-intake reduction, for example, may have been presented as opportunities for individuals to improve their health through their own actions, but would not usually include changes to the built environment or work policy.

What we have learned is that well-being initiatives are more successful and meaningful when the built environment and the work culture support and foster the health and comfort of all employees.

## Built Environment as a Contributor to Well-Being

We spend more than 90% of our time indoors and these environments can impact our physical health and mental well-being.

Examples of well-being considerations related to the built environment include opportunities for movement throughout the space and at workstations, access to natural light (and the ability to control it through shading), air quality controls, biophilic elements, and the inclusion of sufficient eating spaces to prepare, clean, and practice mindful eating.

**Culture as a Contributor to Well-Being**

Without expressed and perceived support, employees may feel conflicted about participation in well-being initiatives. For instance, if an employee who chooses to take a walk over the lunch hour is perceived as 'not busy enough,' it is highly unlikely that any employee will participate in this healthy activity.

Examples of well-being considerations related to the work culture include permission (documented policy and unwritten rules/ norms) to take breaks, promoting volunteering opportunities, offering and actively supporting participation in employee resource groups, and two-way communication.

## Contributors to Well-Being

Well-Being

Individual

Work Culture

Built Environment/ Design

# Where we are beginning the conversation

There is not a single correct way to incorporate well-being into spaces, culture, and policy. As the work environment changes, we are committed to continually learning, researching, and practicing well-being. To start this conversation, we are introducing the concepts of human centered design, ergonomics, and acoustics, though this is far from an exhaustive list of important considerations.

## Human Centered Design

Human-centered design is designing with the intent to solve problems, meet needs, and align with preferences—and doing so in a way that is meaningful, intuitive, and comfortable for the people who use the products and spaces.
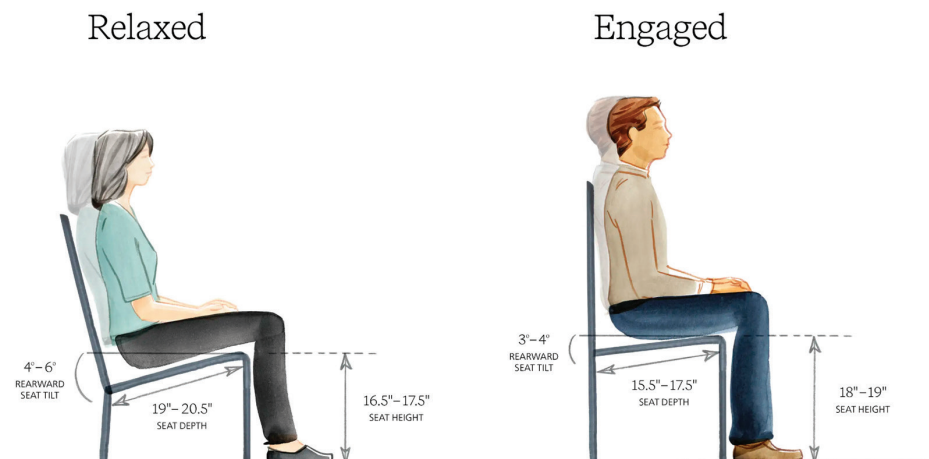
We are also expanding our purview to consider the broad variety of employees and what we can do to foster and support them. We need to be very cognizant of these considerations while designing spaces. This will take planning in advance, sensitivity, understanding, and vulnerability to improve and reassess workspaces and policies.

Research, development, and application of holistic considerations begin with product development, and extends to space-planning, considerations of workplace culture, and beyond. Our goal is to create comfortable, healthy, and productive work environments.

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## Ergonomics

Ergonomics is the study of the interaction between humans and their work environment, and ultimately using this information to reduce risk of injury, increase comfort, and foster productivity.

We understand that the products need to support the application at hand and be comfortable for the individuals using them. The design of products should also intuitively reduce anxiety about whether the seat is too low or too deep to use easily and effectively. We also understand that coordinating products is paramount— allowing appropriate and comfortable clearances between products and coordinating them with the type of work being done—whether that's a casual conversation or a more traditional meeting.

Relaxed                                    Engaged

4°–6°
REARWARD
SEAT TILT
19"–20.5"
SEAT DEPTH
16.5"–17.5"
SEAT HEIGHT

3°–4°
REARWARD
SEAT TILT
15.5"–17.5"
SEAT DEPTH
18"–19"
SEAT HEIGHT

**Acoustical Performance**

Poor acoustics are a source of frustration, distraction, and dissatisfaction in the work environment.  Additionally, research has linked the impact of sound to well-being—when not accounted for, noise can have a negative impact on stress, memory, and workplace satisfaction.

We are striving to understand acoustical considerations through the lens of well-being, provide clarity around acoustical testing metrics, and be thoughtful about acoustical design through the lens of application, space type, and the human experience.

Through thoughtful design and application of our research, we can help to create spaces that meet workspace acoustic needs while also improving workplace satisfaction, space utilization, and well-being.

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# In conclusion

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Work environments that are inclusive, psychologically safe, and where employees feel healthy and engaged are generally places where people want to be. In these environments, we become better at problem solving, more innovative, and more creative.

With holistic consideration of well-being, we can create environments where people are contributing as their best selves.

## Why Does Work Geometry Matter?

Inappropriate furniture selection can have immense ramifications on comfort, space utilization, and satisfaction. Work geometry applications are fundamental to creating environments that amplify human well-being.

## Sustainability + Well-Being

Evidence-based metrics can determine how the design, construction, maintenance, and operations of a building support occupant health and well-being. But these days, sustainability equivalates to more than the environment – it's also about creating connections, respecting people's differences, and collectively making choices for a better tomorrow.



## Noise Affects People

Simply meeting the building code is no longer sufficient when designing human-centric spaces. When acoustic implications aren't considered, the work environment is likely to be more distracting, less productive, underutilized, and unhealthy for workers.