



BACK TO THE FUTURE OF WORK

Reinventing the working environment in a post-pandemic world

by Jonathan Croft

The COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis has substantially accelerated changes in **WHERE** and **HOW** people and organisations work. What was previously envisioned as the future of work has quickly become the new reality. In the near-term as lockdown restrictions ease, organisations will need to radically reconfigure their physical working environment and practical ways of working to operate safely within social-distancing guidelines. Over the longer-term as organisations recover from the disruption of COVID-19 and emerge into their post-pandemic reality, they will need to reimagine **HOW** people work rather than solely focusing on **WHERE** people work.



EMERGING TRENDS OF THE FUTURE WORKPLACE

The major trends and themes that organisations and their leaders will need to consider

As society emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis, people and organisations are considering what it will mean for the existing workplace – both in the immediate aftermath of COVID-19 and over the longer-term. Amongst the public commentary and debate, a series of **trends and themes are emerging** that will undoubtedly inform and influence the workplace of the future.

People remain a key value-driver within any organisation, and the future workplace should put people at its heart. A people-centred working environment can be viewed through a series of interconnected dimensions. Organisations need to design and create a **PHYSICAL** working environment that suits the **INDIVIDUAL**; provides a **MEANINGFUL** experience and facilitates **SOCIAL** connections; and enables people to be effective and **PRODUCTIVE** in their work.



CREATING A PEOPLE-CENTRED WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Considering the future workplace through a series of interconnected dimensions



IDEATING AND DESIGNING A NEW REALITY

How organisations can start creating their new post-pandemic reality

Alongside reconfiguring their existing workplace to ensure it's safe and COVID-secure, organisations should start thinking about **ideating and designing their new post-pandemic reality**. Approaching the problem through the lens of design-thinking and people-centred design provides a useful framework for organisations to create a working environment and employee experience that enables people to perform at their best.



EMERGING TRENDS OF THE FUTURE WORKPLACE

The major trends and themes that organisations and their leaders will need to consider

Whilst we cannot assert to have predicted the future of work in the post-pandemic environment, our research has considered current workforce trends; hypothesised over their likely future relevance and impact; and has identified a series of themes and principles that we expect will be consistent features of the workplace of future.



BLENDED RATHER THAN BINARY

The future practical reality of work and the workplace will be blended rather than binary. People will work amongst a hybrid of different workspaces and working environments rather than making a binary choice between being home-based or office-based.



WORKSPACE NOT WORKPLACE

Effectiveness will be measured on creating the right workspace, not workplace. Underlying attitudes and the accompanying narrative will shift from the concept of work being somewhere that we go to (a location) to a more progressive view that work is something that we do (an activity).



REVOLUTION NOT EVOLUTION

The current workplace has evolved over time across four industrial revolutions, and the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis presents the opportunity to drive seismic change and challenge the accepted norms and assumptions. The future is a people-centred design revolution, not an evolution of outdated and archaic working practices.



SUSTAINING DISRUPTIVE CHANGE

Change has been and will continue to be disruptive, yet change also needs to be sustainable. Existing transformations in the world of work have undoubtedly been accelerated further and faster as a result of COVID-19, but working practices established during lockdown are unlikely to sustain employee engagement, effectiveness and productivity over the longer-term.



RECONFIGURE AND REIMAGINE

Organisations will need to balance the short-term reconfiguration of their physical workplace to ensure that it's COVID-secure whilst simultaneously reimagining a future working environment that enables people to perform at their best. We will witness organisations reconfigure and reimagine both their 'new normal' and their future reality in rapid succession.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

In defining and describing the future workplace, people would benefit from a reframing of the narrative around 'social distancing'. It is important to keep people socially connected without physically being in the same space. The challenge for organisations and leaders is one of how they keep their people physically distanced but socially connected.

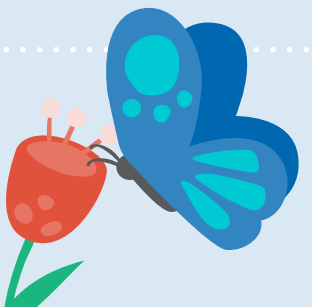


USE A COMPASS NOT A MAP

Maps are only useful to navigate routes charted before. But the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis has thrown organisations overboard into uncharted waters. There's no such thing as a route map to the workplace of the future, nor is there time to create one. Organisations need to provide a clear vision of their destination and be confident navigating their own path.

RESPOND AND ADAPT

Finally, organisations should shift their focus from trying to predict and pre-empt the future of work to developing the capability to respond and adapt. The strength and resilience of people and organisations is not in their ability to predict their future, but in how quickly and effectively they respond and adapt their ways of working in periods of change and disruption.





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PRODUCTIVE

A working environment that is a practical partnership between people and technology, operating at the appropriate cadence and enabling people to work smartly and efficiently.

PHYSICAL

A working environment that is usable and useful having been created through a people-centred design approach that focusses on different users and their diverse needs.

INDIVIDUAL

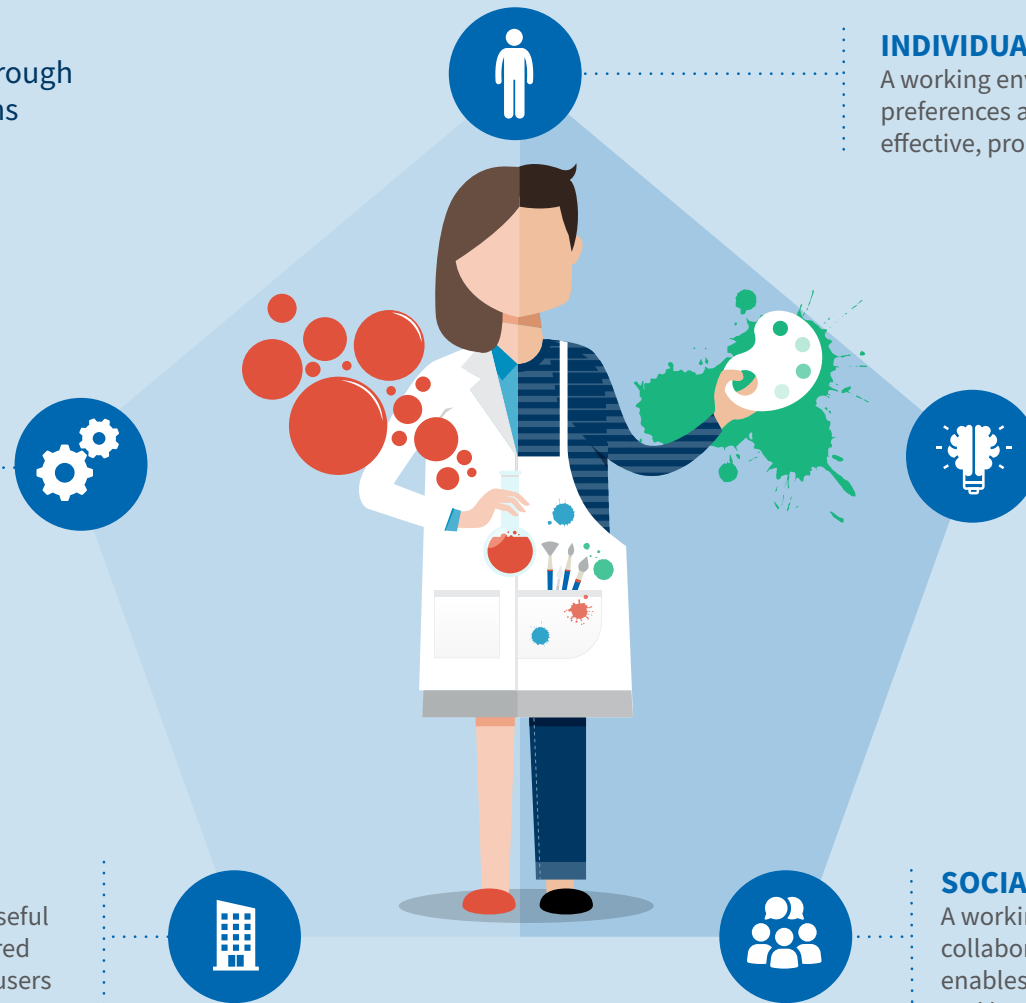
A working environment that considers individual preferences and working styles to enable people to be effective, productive and perform at their best.

MEANINGFUL

A working environment that engages and inspires people, creates a sense of purpose and belonging, and drives people to be the best they can be.

SOCIAL

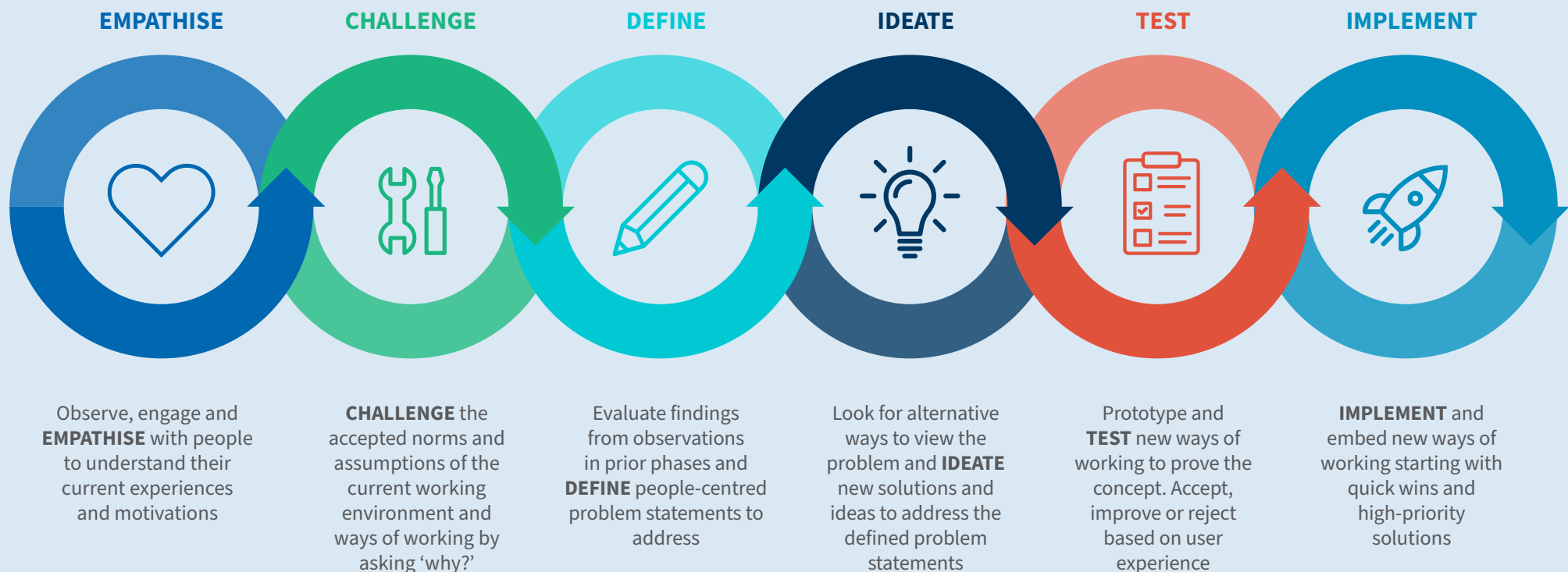
A working environment that encourages collaboration, facilitates social interaction, and enables people to build meaningful connections and lasting relationships.





IDEATING AND DESIGNING A NEW REALITY

How organisations can start creating their new reality



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