

“Work place making”

a practical blueprint
for reimagining the
workplace of the future

The Transformation Architects

Table of Contents

- BEYOND THE HYBRID DEBATE 05
- WHY THE CURRENT WORKPLACE ISN'T WORKING 06
- THE "JOBS-TO-BE-DONE" FRAMEWORK: A FRESH LENS FOR WORKPLACEMAKING 10
- A CULTURE OF CO-CREATION AND CUSTOMISATION 14
- THE RISE OF THE FLAGSHIP OFFICE 18



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In 2020, Australian-American software giant Atlassian joined the rest of the world in pivoting to remote working. But five years later, as businesses everywhere enforce unpopular "return to office" (RTO) mandates and panic about maximising real estate investments, Atlassian is betting on a new workplace model it calls "distributed working". Under the "Team Anywhere" project, all Atlassians can choose where they would like to work on any given day: from home, at a co-working hub, or at one of its soon-to-be 12 global offices.

100% of Atlassians are "distributed", and 40% are fully remote – but its physical workplaces are still a key part of Team Anywhere's strategy. In 2024, Atlassian began a 12-month trial of a "connection hub" for its 480 remote employees in Melbourne, with completely voluntary attendance. Early feedback showed that 38% of staff felt more connected, 24% felt more creative, and 20% felt more productive. And in 2025, the company will open its new Sydney headquarters: the tallest commercial hybrid timber tower in the world, designed to reflect Atlassian's core values around sustainability and workplace culture and set to house a youth hostel, historic train shed, and space for thousands of workers.

The results speak for themselves. 92% of employees say they do their best work because of Team Anywhere, and 91% say it's why they stay at Atlassian. The company jumped 40 places to number 7 in Fortune's Best Places to Work list in one year, and now gets twice the number of candidates for roles and a 20% higher offer acceptance rate.

And although 80% of employees still go to the office each quarter, "We don't have to grow our office footprint at the same rate as we would have before – so these investments can be utilised in other ways, such as to fund remote-focused benefits, intentional team gatherings, and co-working hubs," says Annie Dean, VP of Team Anywhere.



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Beyond the hybrid debate

The future of work has arrived, yet many organisations remain stuck in outdated debates: declaring RTOs, forcing hybrid arrangements, or treating flexibility as a temporary concession. As a result, employees are losing faith in their leaders. According to [Gallup's State of the Global Workplace 2024 report](#), 62% of employees are "not engaged" and 15% are "actively disengaged", costing \$8.9 trillion in lost productivity worldwide.

But as work experience expert [Julia Hobsbawm says](#), the call to RTO is a red herring. "People have always worked flexibly where they can, and are now asking to be paid better if they can't. This won't change – nor should it. Flexible working is here to stay." The stats on

the benefits of a hybrid model are clear – [a 2024 experiment by Trip.com](#) on its workforce found it increased productivity by 1% and caused 35% less attrition, saving the company millions of dollars.

We're in the middle of the greatest working revolution of our lifetime. At The Transformation Architects, we predict this moment will demand not just adaptation, but reinvention. Work will no longer be a "place", but instead a dynamic, purpose-driven experience tailored to human flourishing, not machine functioning. As Joe Pine says, "[The Transformation Economy is about the fulfilment of economic value: you guide people in transforming so they can flourish.](#)" The workplace of the future is no exception.

This white paper, the result of a roundtable in which our team looked at opportunities when it comes to the concept of "workplacemaking", outlines a transformative, actionable framework to design workplaces that align with employee needs and organisational goals in order to unlock creativity, connection, and productivity.

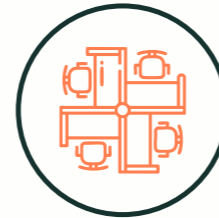


Why the current workplace isn't working



We're clinging to outdated structures and beliefs

The traditional 8-hour workday is a relic of the Industrial Revolution that no longer reflects the realities of modern, knowledge-based work. Offices designed for surveillance and efficiency fail to inspire creativity or collaboration.



Business owners see empty offices as costly liabilities

Many organisations are locked into long-term leases, which drives resistance to hybrid models. But this stifles innovation and limits agility. Breaking this cycle requires viewing office space as a strategic investment rather than a fixed cost, enabling more innovative approaches that deliver long-term value.



Employees don't want to come back to the office full time

According to Gallup, 35% of hybrid workers and 33% of remote workers feel engaged, compared to 25% of those who work on site. As Sheena Patel says, "There's a tension between employers fearing a productivity drop and the opportunity cost for employees to be in the office. During the pandemic, we knee-jerked at scale into what we currently understand to be a hybrid working model, but by redesigning this model entirely, there is an opportunity to counter the loneliness epidemic, reduce the opportunity cost, and enhance productivity."



Hybrid work doesn't work for everyone

Research shows that distance negatively impacts organisational culture, virtual meetings can be ineffective and boring, and working hours can rise. Not everyone can work from home, even if the content of their job allows it – people might have limited workspace or poor internet. They might be juggling childcare, or lacking the solitude they need to get their work done. More extroverted types may crave the social contact work provides. Mandatory office days can often feel arbitrary, particularly if there's no-one there when you arrive, and parties and events can feel inauthentic and uninviting.

Wasted time means wasted productivity – and money.



Redundant meetings, processes, procedures and technology all waste your employees' time and reduce productivity. Pine says: "The most precious resource on the entire planet is the time of individual human beings. So we have to stop wasting it; then we need to provide ways to save it; and then we can get to how to provide employees with time well spent, so that they actually value the time they spend in our employ."

Workspaces are designed with product and service tools, not experience tools.

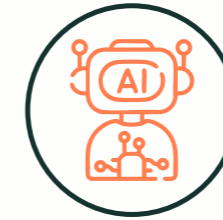


[Gensler](#) research found that employees say they need to be in the office around 70% of the time to be fully productive, but the current workplace experience isn't optimised for how they want to use it. As Alain Thys says, "When it comes to office design, most people focus on the space. But this means they ignore stories, behaviours and time as design components, which are an equally valid part of the work experience." To move from "I have to go to work" to "I want to go to work", we need to ask: what is an office, and what jobs does it have to deliver against?

Table 1: Why traditional workplace design fails—and what to do instead

Traditional workplace (product/service focus)	Transformed workplace (experience focus)
Optimises for square footage efficiency	Optimises for human engagement
Treats office as a cost centre	Treats office as a strategic asset
Fixed desks, rigid layouts	Fluid, adaptive spaces
Focus on amenities (gyms, cafeterias)	Focus on moments (collaboration, inspiration)
Compliance-driven work modes	Culture-driven work experiences
Space designed for control	Space designed for connection & belonging

AI is causing an existential crisis for businesses.



The speed of artificial computation continues to double every three months and the market for cobots (collaborative robots that work alongside humans) is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 44.5% from 2019 to 2025. As humdrum jobs are predicted to go, what are businesses going to need their staff for? For those that are left, more of their work will be communicating with AI tools. How do we design the workplace to accommodate both?

Generational shifts are impacting the workplace.



Gen Z are predicted to make up 35% of the global workforce by 2035, which could spell trouble for employers who aren't willing to adapt to meet their expectations. According to the [Gen Z Observatory](#), younger generations are motivated by learning outcomes and personal growth, value matching, and self-space and work-life balance. They are also far more entrepreneurial and more likely to work for themselves or as freelancers, meaning that organisational collaboration in the future won't only be internal, but between companies.



When it comes to office design, most people focus on the space. But this means they ignore stories, behaviours and time as design components, which are an equally valid part of the work experience.

The “jobs-to-be-done” framework: a fresh lens for workplace- making

The “jobs-to-be-done” framework originates from innovation theory, and focuses on understanding the fundamental tasks people hire products, services, or experiences to accomplish. Applied to the workplace, work experience architect Dart Lindsley believes this begins with asking: “what job do you hire your job to do for you?”

Work is no longer somewhere we go to do a job: it’s a place we go to do a job for us. That place can be a physical office building, our phone or laptop, an airport lounge, or the local Starbucks. It’s anywhere and everywhere: what Hobsbawn calls the “Nowhere Office”, the “now and here.”

Jobs-to-be-done for employees

The following are examples of “jobs to be done” that workplaces must address for employees. Importantly, the “place” where these jobs happen may not always be the office.

- » **A place to be creative:** employees seek spaces that inspire innovation, equipped with tools for brainstorming, prototyping, and collaborative ideation.
- » **A place to be productive:** some employees are more productive in the office, and others (like many single working mothers) at home.
- » **A place to get away from home:** for some the office provides a necessary separation between work and personal life, offering a refuge for focused effort.
- » **A place to further personal growth:** employees want opportunities for learning and development, including mentorship, workshops, and access to new challenges.
- » **A place to build and demonstrate competence:** people thrive in environments where their skills are recognised and opportunities for mastery are abundant.
- » **A place to enhance culture:** physical spaces should reinforce shared values, encourage social connections, and build a sense of belonging.
- » **A place to structure your day:** the workplace can serve as a framework for organising time, balancing focus, collaboration, and rest.
- » **A place for belonging:** offices can be spaces for connection, collaboration, and community.
- » **A place to feel independent:** some employees value the autonomy that comes with a defined workspace separate from their personal lives, and others see autonomy as the freedom to work where and how they want.



Table 2: What employers and employees need from the workplace

Jobs-to-be-done for employees	Jobs-to-be-done for employers
A place to be creative	A strategic investment, not a fixed cost
A place to be productive	A tool for talent attraction & retention
A place to get away from home	A way to enhance culture & belonging
A place to grow & learn	A hub for collaboration and innovation
A place to build competence	A means to drive long-term ROI
A place to structure time & focus	An environment that aligns with brand values
A place to belong	A flexible, adaptable system for future needs

To give people a reason to work for you, Pine says you must “stage remarkable employee experiences” that enhance their lives and their own flourishing. This means acknowledging that human flourishing extends beyond work tasks, and that since working from home has been normalised, people have become used to progressing life-enriching activities alongside their work deliverables during the traditional working day.

Recent research from the [Judge Business School](#) and the [Amsterdam-based Top Employers Institute](#)

suggests that **enhancing individual employee flourishing is more effective than engaging employees in a wider organisational purpose**, despite the trend towards “purpose-led brands” in recent years. “Career development and empowerment – giving people resources and freedom to make decisions about how to carry out their roles – are more effective in boosting loyalty and reducing staff turnover than grander top-down messages. It is a more personal sense of purpose that counts,” the research tells us.

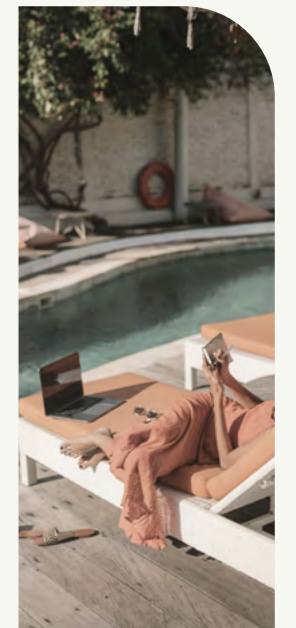
Research by [Jacob Morgan](#) also shows that organisations that prioritise employee experience had more than 4x the average profit and double the average revenue. By reimagining the workplace, organisations can channel these savings into growth-driving initiatives like innovation and talent development. A thoughtfully designed workplace pays dividends, both in human capital and financial performance.

Jobs-to-be-done for employers

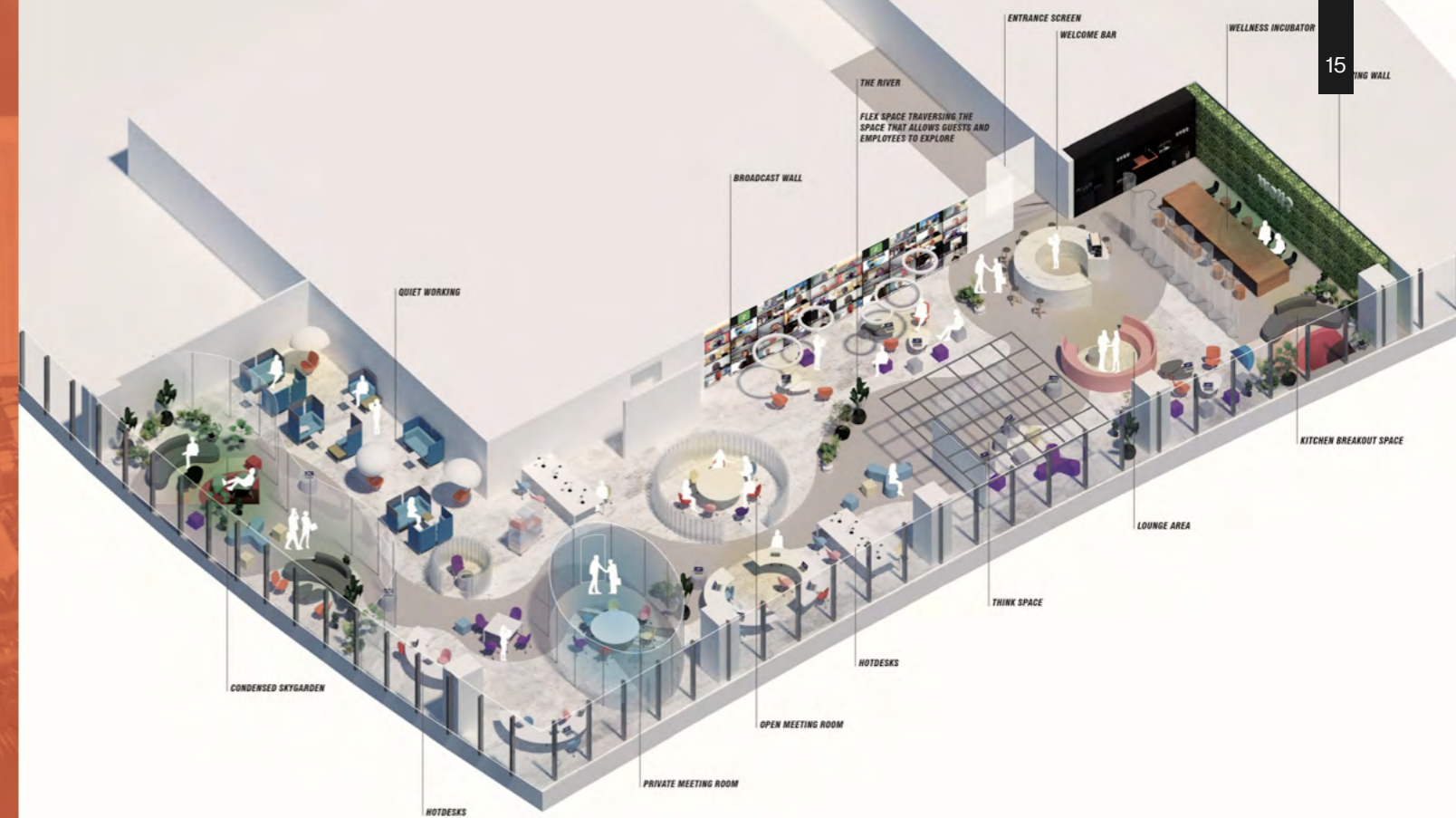
Employers are also users of the workplace with a critical job to be done: maximising their investment in real estate. By reimagining offices as flexible, purpose-driven environments, organisations can transform liabilities into strategic assets. For instance, underutilised spaces can be redesigned as multi-functional hubs, hosting collaborative sessions, client events, or even community gatherings, driving greater ROI per square foot.

Finding this intersection between employee and employer jobs to be done is essential. The organisational strategy then becomes, as Michael Lai says, “the selection of what we should or shouldn’t do in terms of resources.

Which jobs should be done in the workplace, versus those that should not be done?” By focusing on this task, leaders can design spaces and experiences that genuinely support both employee satisfaction and company goals. Focusing on core human needs creates a ripple effect of benefits, from engagement and retention to innovation and profitability.



A culture of co-creation and customisation



Executives need to let go of the illusion that one office or way of hybrid working fits all. As Thys says, “An effective office experience is many things to many people. It caters to different working styles and neurotypes. It supports individual work, informal meetings, formal meetings, workshops and conferences. It welcomes clients, suppliers, press and job candidates. It even integrates into a broader community. These individual uses need facilities and scripts of their own. But they must also play within the same space. Failing to proactively map and manage this multi-functionality either leads to chaos or to individuals/

functions being ignored.”

This tension is often seen as a complication – but flipped, it can be an opportunity to customise the experience of work for each individual, department and function. Some work is easier to do at home, but creative work that requires connecting with other humans might be best served in a shared office. **The office could therefore be reimagined as what Pigalle Tavakkoli calls “an innovation hub, where teams come together to collaborate and create”.**

Different teams can attract wildly different types of people. The innovation

department may prioritise fluid, collaborative environments, while the accounting team may prefer more structured, predictable settings. People also have to wear different hats within their role: a CEO might need to be in the office to steer the company culture, but benefit from being at home to do deep work like business development or writing a book.

Breaking out these modes in collaboration with your employees to determine the type of work versus the type of place people want to do it – co-creating rather than commandeering the working culture –



provides the autonomy and flexibility that people crave. As Tavakkoli says, “if you co-create the working conditions with your employees, you foster an internal culture they are invested in and motivated to progress with. Organisations are starting to realise rather than a top-down approach, it’s more beneficial for retention to develop a collaborative, cross department ecosystem.” Or in the words of Lai, “A company is an organism, just like a person, and it evolves in the same way. It’s up to the collective group to design that direction so there’s collective value for the organisation, customers and individual.”

A compelling example is LEGO’s Innovation House in Denmark. LEGO actively involved employees in designing their workspace, conducting workshops to gather input on their needs and preferences. This process resulted in a flexible environment featuring collaboration zones, quiet areas, and playful elements that reflect LEGO’s brand ethos. Employees reported higher satisfaction and productivity, illustrating how co-created spaces can foster

creativity, engagement, and alignment with organisational values.

A blend of virtual and physical environments also means employees can perform their jobs effectively, regardless of where they are. Microsoft’s new hybrid workplace strategy includes a state-of-the-art campus designed to integrate both in-person and remote work seamlessly. Employees use Microsoft Teams’ immersive features to connect virtually, while physical collaboration hubs are equipped with smart technology to enable real-time data sharing and brainstorming. This hybrid model ensures that all employees, whether on-site or remote, feel equally involved and empowered to contribute.

This customisation could create a pain point for executives, who might find it easier to manage based on a set rule rather than a reactive workflow. However, we now have the data and technology to offload and optimise the management of a more co-created calendar – something that’s increasingly necessary in a world where a more freelance, intuitive way of resourcing people is coming to dominate.

The rise of the flagship office

When it comes to the workplace, start by co-creating the behaviours, values and purpose of each space before calling in the architects of the physical building. If the traditional office is to be reimagined as the core innovation and creative space in which employee-customers can collaborate and live out the brand values, following the model of flagship retail locations to create a memorable work experience could offer a pathway forwards to bring people back to their desks.

Brand flagship experiences like the Guinness Storehouse, Heineken Experience, World of Coca-Cola and LEGO all offer such memorable experiences, to the point where some are even able to charge for admission. According to Pine, they “offer immersive and meaningful experiences that are worlds apart from traditional retail locations. They simultaneously welcome consumers into distinctive built environments, generate demand by enticing them to experience their core offerings, and engender authenticity as consumers get to experience who they are. **Any company that wants to bring its employees back**



into the office should apply these same principles to design, create, and operate flagship offices.

Brand is not just an external identity but an emotionally resonant promise delivered consistently across all touchpoints, serving as a container for strategic decisions. For example, Airbnb’s brand centres on the concept of “belonging anywhere,” a promise that applies not only to their customers, but also to their employees: feeling

a sense of belonging is a critical job to be done for both groups. Airbnb’s workplace design therefore emphasises collaborative spaces and flexible work arrangements so employees feel connected and valued, whether they’re working from home or in the office. This alignment between brand promise and workplace experience strengthens both employee engagement and customer trust.

The best flagship offices combine architecture, art and interior design to reflect the company's values, rather than replicating a beige, WeWork-influenced aesthetic. Take Marriott International's 2022 headquarters, which took inspiration from its own hotels, or Oakley's supervillain-style Californian headquarters, designed to mirror the style of its "mad scientist" founder. This extends beyond aesthetics – companies like Apple have done a great job of curating a culture of cool innovators, which makes people want to show up at the office to be part of a tribe of like-minded individuals.

If the purpose of the flagship office is to be the fullest expression of the brand ethos and a place for collaboration, there might also be a spectrum of "satellite offices" that match the spectrum of different "jobs to be done". Lai's work in the banking sector, for example, identified the need for different banks in different locations to fit user populations, such as a neighbourhood bank or a business bank.

Silicon Valley is an example of placemaking on a wider scale: third spaces and architecture are used to encourage people to have encounters with different departments. This even applies to the classic pain

point of the daily commute: by putting WiFi on shuttle buses, people could code with their colleagues on the way into work. Jen Rice says, "We can use sense of place as a way to break down silos, as well as revive small towns. How can we use physical places to bring people together to create more impact and innovation – and then take those same models and apply them to new situations?"



Any company that wants to bring its employees back into the office should apply these same principles to design, create, and operate flagship offices.



Optimising the workplace for brand

A successful workplace redesign extends beyond physical space; it must be deeply rooted in a company's brand. Brand is not just an external identity but an emotionally resonant promise delivered consistently across all touchpoints, serving as a container for strategic decisions. As Rice says, "Brand is a promise delivered: a promise made by marketing and HR and delivered by experience." This applies to both customers and employees: there is no separation.

For example, Airbnb's brand centres on the concept of "belonging anywhere," a promise that applies not only to their customers, but also to their employees: feeling a sense of belonging is a critical job to be done for both groups. Airbnb's workplace design therefore emphasises collaborative spaces and flexible work arrangements so employees feel connected and valued, whether they're working from home or in the office. This alignment between brand promise and workplace experience strengthens both employee engagement and customer trust. Considering that 23% of remote workers struggle

with loneliness (Buffer, 2023), designing an office experience for belonging can help get people back into the office.

As Rice says, "If you have a strong brand or experience, you'll create a strong container and attract employees that will love being in that space." What emotion should your brand optimise for, and how can you design a workplace experience that delivers it? By integrating brand into workplace strategy, organisations create environments where every decision reinforces their core values and mission.

AI as enabler

There may be less human interaction in future, but this doesn't mean it won't be valuable. Creative tasks like idea generation may be done at home, with AI being used to shorten the brainstorming process, before coming together with other humans to build on these ideas. Tavakkoli points out that "although AI speeds up brainstorming, it results in a finished perfect response. What we make up in time, we lose out on the creative process. It's precisely due to human imperfections and the messiness of the process that unexpected connections and accidental mistakes can happen, which lead to new ideas, inventions and innovations"

According to Henry Coutinho-Mason, "Automation dominates the AI narrative, which isn't helpful for leaders. First, full automation is an extremely challenging goal. Far more importantly, it misses the far bigger story – which is how you can use AI to make your people not just more efficient but also more creative and ultimately happier. Yet this requires you to ask deeper cultural and organisational questions, and so it often gets avoided."

When asking what jobs humans and AI will play in your organisation, the robots will increasingly take care of bureaucracy and administration, freeing up humans for tasks like collaboration, creativity, and accountability. Organisations will leverage AI and collaborative tools to streamline workflows, reduce cognitive load, and foster creativity. **AI can play a key role in dynamic space allocation, using real-time data to ensure optimal use of office environments.** For example, sensors and AI systems could track workspace usage, automatically reallocating meeting rooms, quiet areas, or collaborative zones based on team needs.



Additionally, AI-driven productivity tools can analyse where and how individual employees are most effective, whether in-office, at home, or during commutes. These insights empower employees to choose the environments that best support their work, while teams can co-create their own setups to maximise output. A notable example is Salesforce's use of Einstein AI, which personalises workflows and predicts team performance so employees have the resources they need to excel. This kind of technology enables a highly customised workplace experience, helping organisations manage the complexity of diverse needs while driving ROI through increased efficiency and engagement.

4 steps to redesign the workplace of the future

Illustration 1: The 4-stage process for redesigning the workplace



Ready to transform your workplace?

The future workplace will not be a monolithic solution but a dynamic, evolving ecosystem. By embracing the “jobs to be done” approach and focusing on human-centered design, organisations will turn their workplaces into catalysts for innovation and growth. Now is the time to act: to experiment, refine, and lead the transformation of work.

Let’s build this future of work together. [Contact The Transformation Architects](#) to start your journey today.

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About the Transformation Architects

We are the world’s first transformative experience studio.

We don’t tweak at the edges. We work hands-on, strategic, and immersive to rethink experiences, organisations, and entire industries—starting from what humans truly need.

Our approach blends science, art, design, trends, and commerce with the realities of corporate life. Merging vision with commercial pragmatism.

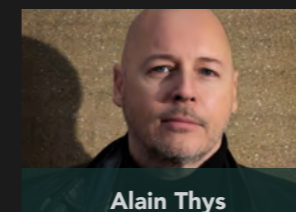
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We challenge orthodoxies wherever they’ve stopped making sense.

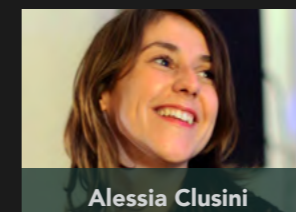
We’ve redefined death care. Now we’re reshaping the workplace.

If yours no longer works, let’s talk.

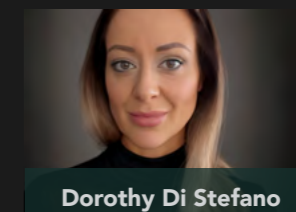
Meet the pioneers of the Experience & Transformation Economy



Alain Thys



Alessia Clusini



Dorothy Di Stefano



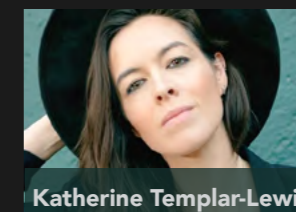
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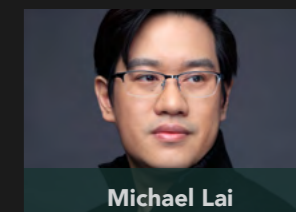
Jen Rice



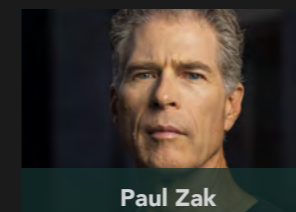
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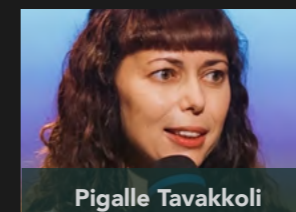
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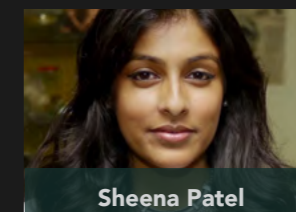
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