2017 Trends in the Workplace

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Introduction

Workplace design is a constantly changing discipline. To stay abreast of the newest developments, CallisonRTKL re-examines workplace trends each year. This study allows us to understand how businesses adapt to new ways and different ways of working and how we can integrate scientific studies to improve key performance indicators like employee experience, health, innovation and productivity.

This report avoids trends focusing on the actual look and feel of the space (colors, materials, etc.), which can be specific to the individual user. It also bypasses fads to instead focus on spatial allocation themes, technology and policies that impact how space is designed and used.

When considering workplace trends, it is important to understand the history that drives them. The 1950s and 1960s were the Mad Men-era: executives and managers seated at large window offices with rows of desks housing secretarial staff in the center. While the cubicle first debuted in the late 1960s in Herman Miller's "Action Office," it only became a key element of the workplace landscape in the 1980s. The open plan office evolved from there with the addition activity-based work settings that allowed employees a choice of where to work. The workplace of tomorrow is more uncertain, but the trends indicate that it is more about the work and the worker than the physical workplace.

Five Key Trends For 2017

2017's five key trends are an evolution of what has already occurred in the workplace over the last decade. Designers are implementing these trends across the vast world of real estate, from tiny startups to mid-size companies and multinational corporations.

1. Amenities Race Reaches New Speeds

Driven in part by the co-working phenomenon, companies of all shapes and sizes are jumping at the opportunity to provide the coolest, most convenient amenities to attract talent.

2. Wellness, Wellbeing and Human Performance Take Precedence

Seeing the impact of physical and mental health on job performance, companies are taking a deeper look at designing for health and wellbeing.

3. Pendulum Swings Back to Privacy

The office environment is taking a step away from openness in favor of promoting visual and/or acoustic privacy.

4. Experience Economy Spills into the Workplace

Long the forte of retailers, the desire to create an experiential environment is spilling over into the office market.

5. Inclusive Design Expands

As much as users seek an "exclusive" feel, the trend is now to design spaces that support all people, regardless of physical, emotional or social needs.

Amenities Race Reaches New Speeds

Refer to 2016 Workplace Trends, Trend #4 – Work/Life Integration

Today's landlords seek to attract tenants by providing extensive amenities in their buildings, and tenants are trying to attract employees by creating a destination-style work environment.

Amenities in the workplace go well beyond fads such as slides, swings, ball pits, treadmill desks and nap pods. The most effective and desirable amenities are those designed to provide ultimate convenience, increase worker productivity, create a feeling of exclusivity and potentially draw additional revenue.

The amenities race is accelerating due to numerous drivers, including the co-working phenomenon. While co-working emerged as a key trend in 2015 and 2016, it is now mainstream. Providers like WeWork are equipped with amenities that were once considered "out of this world." Now landlords must seek to attract co-working "graduates" by providing the same—or even better—amenities. The amenities race is really about providing convenience and even luxury.

Dongpo Kitchen, Los Angeles, CA (Some offices feature cocktail lounges and restaurants to enliven the ground floor and make the office a 24-7 destination.)

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For example, basement fitness centers are getting face lifts to become upscale, attractive spaces. Features include:

- A desirable location within the facility. This often means the upper floors with access to an outdoor roof deck or the ground level, which offers improved access to daylight and views.
- Top-of-the-line fitness equipment like endless lap pools
- On-trend classes and materials like TRX, plyometrics, barre, and spin
- Spa-quality changing areas
- Luxury fitness tenants, high-end gyms or boutique exercise chains like SoulCycle or CorePower

But the amenities race is also focusing on food service by moving from convenience-oriented cafés to elegant, multi-functional spaces that support all-day use. In certain markets, building ownership is beginning to target a different type of ground-floor tenant—a specialty food vendor rather than a national chain quick-bite restaurant, for instance. Again, this trend focuses on creating a sense of place and a destination that extends beyond the 9-to-5 work day.

The front desk is moving away from a security-only function toward acting as a concierge-style service provider. Trained similarly to hospitality concierges, the office concierge provides employees and visitors with access to whatever information and services they require whether that be dry cleaning or booking a table at the hottest restaurant in town.

To attract the best and brightest talent, employers are seeking to incrementally or wholesale improve the amenities they provide, to ensure work is pleasurable and productive.

The Monarch, Austin, TX (Fitness centers become high-end sports clubs offering the latest equiptment and group exercise classes.)

1401 Eye Street Spec Suites, Washington DC (This developer-built speculative suite provides amenities such as a large pantry and open meeting areas that can be shared by multiple tenants on the same floor.)

King of Prussia Mall, King of Prussia, PA (Cafes evolved from basic service points to airy open zones with recognizable vendors.)

Trend 2: Wellness, Wellbeing and Human Performance Take Precedence

Refer to 2016 Workplace Trends, Trend #2 – Staying Well at Work

Wellness in the workplace has been a part of the workplace discussion for many years; the concept of wellbeing, on the other hand, has made a more recent entrance, shifting the conversation from simply creating happier, healthier employees to improving overall human performance. Still, fewer than half of American workers say their company supports employee wellbeing and helps them maintain a healthy lifestyle.[1]

"Healthier buildings benefit employee wellness, a top economic concern of CFOs, and 90% of business leaders say that promoting wellness improves employee productivity." [2]

Companies are constantly seeking ways to enhance productivity, and they typically turn to the physical workspace for solutions. For years, scientists have proven that work stress contributes to unhealthy lifestyles and that, in turn, unhealthy lifestyles[3] lead to lower productivity. So, it's not the space itself that drives productivity, but rather the happiness and health of employees.[4]

Space plays a role in health, wellbeing and overall happiness. By providing space that supports the whole human, employers can help drive performance and enable their employees to better manage their own energy and productivity.

Representative of German Industry + Trade, Washington, DC (Designers include green walls and biophilic elements in many interior designs.)

Barbara Fredrickson at UNC-Chapel Hill argues that space should drive positive emotions—joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love.[5] These emotions enable broader awareness in the present and strengthen people in the future.

Design can easily support this by creating areas of privacy, providing for flexibility, aiding in comfort and providing a sense of safety.

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1   Schwabel, Dan. "Ten Workplace Trends You'll See in 2017." *Forbes Magazine.* 1 November 2016.
2   "Introducing Fitwel." *OfficeInsight*. May 19, 2016.
3   Heikkilä et al. "Job Strain and Health-Related Lifestyle: Findings From an Individual-Participant Meta-Analysis of 118 000 Working Adults." *American Journal of Public Health*. November 2013.
4   Williams, Jodi. *The Knowledge Gap*. 2016.
5   For more information on Barbara Fredrickson and her work, visit the UNC Pep Lab or the pursuit of happiness website.

Ergonomic furniture selection plays a key role in supporting wellbeing. The goal of ergonomics is to provide comfort while enabling work.[6]

In workplace design, this translates into providing spaces, technology tools and furnishings that emphasize ease, flexibility and versatility. For furniture and technology tools, this means selecting items that are intuitive to use and easily adjustable for maximum individual comfort.

But employers must supplement these selections with training and engagement programs as end users often are not aware of the importance of postures, how to modify equipment for greatest comfort or how long to stay in postures. Regular reinforcement is critical to ensure best use.

The cost of lost productivity on U.S. economy is $227B, making the importance of wellbeing even clearer.[7] And, as identified in the 2016 trends, designers and employers are developing ways to measure both wellness and wellbeing.
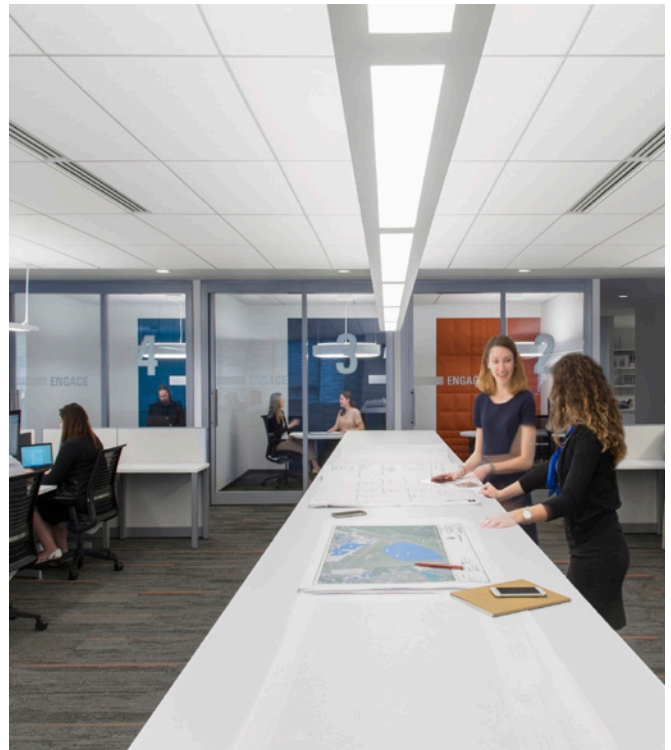
The WELL® Building standard was established in 2013 and early adopter sites have now been certified and operational for a few years. Fitwel, established by the Center for Active Design in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is a simple, web-based scorecard program with approximately 60 different criteria, organized by sections of the building. Fitwel launched to a small group of organizations in 2016 and is launching in 2017.

Both global programs measure the design and operations of the building itself and also explore policies that promote wellness like food service, parental leave and more.

Adoption of both has been spotty thus far. WELL® certification requires extensive performance verification, which can be challenging. Fitwel has been in pilot and beta testing, limiting its availability.

But WELL and Fitwel are not the only ways to measure health and wellbeing. Many human-resources-oriented organizations offer wellness and wellbeing metrics, policies and programs. The C. Everett Koop National Health Awards recognize health promotion and improvement programs. The Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) provides corporate well workplace awards, in which wellness programs are measured against benchmarks, and the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) offers a Corporate Health Achievement Award to recognize organizations with exemplary health, safety and environment programs.

Arcadis, Hanover, MD (Multiple seating options encourage changes in venue and posture as tasks change throughout the day.)

AIA Washington, DC (Stools in the cafe encourage short-term use. Without a back rest, fatigue sets in quickly.)

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[6] Definition of comfort: a state or situation in which you are relaxed and do not have any physically unpleasant feelings caused by pain, heat, cold, etc. : a state or feeling of being less worried, upset, frightened, etc., during a time of trouble or emotional pain.

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Public health programs are also in on the game. Harvard University developed a Health and Human Performance Index that correlates workplace design features with health and wellbeing items. They also created a partnership program, Sustainability and Health Initiative for NetPositive Enterprise (SHINE).

Together, design teams and corporate enterprises can influence the health and wellbeing of the population by designing thoughtfully and changing policies and culture to support better experiences.
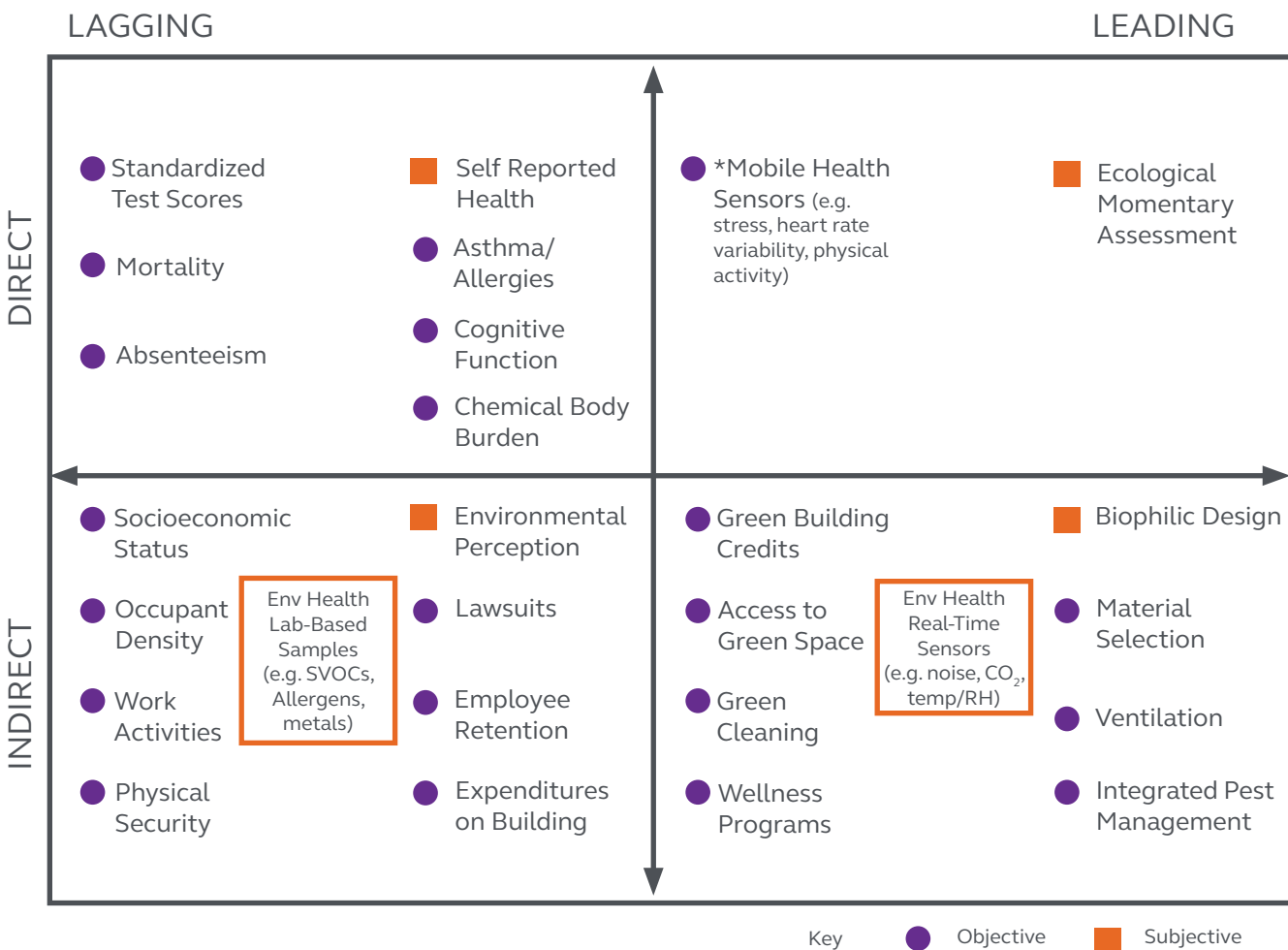
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HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S HEALTH + HUMAN PERFORMANCE INDEX

LAGGING   LEADING

DIRECT

- Standardized Test Scores
- Mortality
- Absenteeism
- Self Reported Health
- Asthma/Allergies
- Cognitive Function
- Chemical Body Burden
- *Mobile Health Sensors (e.g. stress, heart rate variability, physical activity)
- Ecological Momentary Assessment

INDIRECT

- Socioeconomic Status
- Occupant Density
- Work Activities
- Physical Security
- Env Health Lab-Based Samples (e.g. SVOCs, Allergens, metals)
- Environmental Perception
- Lawsuits
- Employee Retention
- Expenditures on Building
- Green Building Credits
- Access to Green Space
- Green Cleaning
- Wellness Programs
- Env Health Real-Time Sensors (e.g. noise, CO_2, temp/RH)
- Biophilic Design
- Material Selection
- Ventilation
- Integrated Pest Management

Key   ● Objective   ◼ Subjective

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Trend 3: Pendulum Swings Back to Privacy

Refer to [2014 Workplace Trends](#), Trend #2 –Enduring Whiplash from the Open Office Debate

Over the past decade, designers and employers highly prioritized collaboration in office design. This manifests itself in not only formal collaboration spaces like meeting rooms and informal areas like cafés, break areas and team tables but also in the layout of individual workspaces.

To promote collaboration and respond to the desire to reduce square footage and costs, floorplans dominated by open plan workstations have become the norm. Open plan design can promote collaboration by improving lines of sight and reducing barriers.

Designers have long preached "balance" and the idea that "one size does not fit all." However, the overall trend in office space has been more open and less private than what is required for many types of work.

Susan Cain's 2013 book [Quiet](#) brought the "plight of the introvert" to the masses. Her message resonated across almost all sectors; teamwork and collaboration are good, but not always. Some people are unable to focus in an open environment, and sometimes, rather than inspiring innovation, these open spaces can promote phenomena like "groupthink," in which thinking as a group can discourage creativity and individual responsibility.

Cresa Partners, Miami, FL (Phone booths, whether literal or figurative, are a commonplace item in office design, providing an office-like space on an as-needed basis.)

Arcadis, Washington, DC (Furniture solutions provide a sense of visual and acoustic privacy.)

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An abundance of research and open, creative brainstorming have enabled designers to have more nuanced conversations with end users. The results is a workplace that is tailored to the organization.

Organizationally-tailored design focuses on providing a variety of space types including some level of visual or acoustic privacy. The intent is to provide employees with a low-distraction zone that promote decompression, recharging, concentration or private meetings/phone calls.

A study by the University of California found that it can take over 20 minutes to recover from each interruption.[8] Think about how many times you are interrupted by a colleague, the phone, your email, something shiny out the window…

So how can designers minimize distractions? Enclosed spaces can be designed in such a way that they break large swaths of open floor plans into smaller neighborhoods, providing privacy.

Even conference and meeting spaces are moving toward greater privacy. Designers are adapting the "fishbowl" room of the 2000s to provide more visual privacy while still enabling a level of transparency and access to daylight and views.

CallisonRTKL, Dubai, UAE (Conference and meeting spaces are moving toward greater visual privacy, while still enabling a level of transparency and access to daylight and views.)

CallisonRTKL, Baltimore, MD (Offices are designed in such a way that small enclosed areas break up swaths of open plan office.)

8 Pattison, Kermit. "Worker, Interrupted: The Cost of Task Switching." *Fast Company.* July 28, 2008.

Trend 4: Experience Economy Spills Into The Workplace

Refer to 2016 Workplace Trends, Trend #5 – Culture of Sharing

Experiences drive satisfaction. Rather than purchasing the latest designer wares, we are now advised to spend our money on things that will create memories: travel, activities, education, time with others, etc.

The experience economy began to emerge in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when, as Harvard Business Review discussed,[9] companies began to intentionally "use services as the stage and goods as props to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event." This is considered the "fourth economy" after agrarian, industrial and service. The experience economy is about making personal, memorable experiences that provide desirable sensations. Retail, restaurants, hospitality and even healthcare dove into the experience economy well before workplace.

And, while the workplace push into the experience economy initially targeted millennials, the concept has more recently expanded to accommodate all generations.

The office iteration of the experience economy is tailored to making employees and guests feel that they

Hospitality

Retail

Office

Healthcare

Capital One, NYC; American Greetings HQ, Cleveland; Eau Palm Beach Resort, FL; Qinhungdao Rehabilitation Center, China (Regardless of sector, spaces are designed to enhance the human experience.)

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9   Pine and Gilmore. "Welcome to the Experience Economy." *Harvard Business Review.* July-August 1998.

are experiencing something special, something tailored to their needs. It's about providing the right mix of amenities and support spaces to suit the population. The goal is to make each end user feel that someone has thought through every detail of the space before your arrival so that when you walk in, it works seamlessly from a design and operational perspective.

Choice is incredibly important in the experience economy. Consumers want what they want, when they want it, and they want it to be personalized. This means providing a variety of work space types, technologies and sensory environments.

Services enable employees to be most productive at the office. In a hotel convenience is the ultimate luxury. In the office, this translates to providing access to common services—food, fitness, ATM, postal, dry cleaning, florist, etc.—either through on-site services or concierge services. It also means concierge-level services—on-the-spot adjustments, office supply delivery, improved IT support—inside the office environment.

The experience economy also correlates with the trends of wellness and privacy. Providing the right type of space at the right time can enable the best experience, even with constraints of time, budget, and space.

Appian, Herndon, VA (Corporate culture is expressed by enabling employees to create their own experience.)

American Greetings Headquarters, Cleveland, OH (Outdoor space becomes multifunctional and 24/7.)
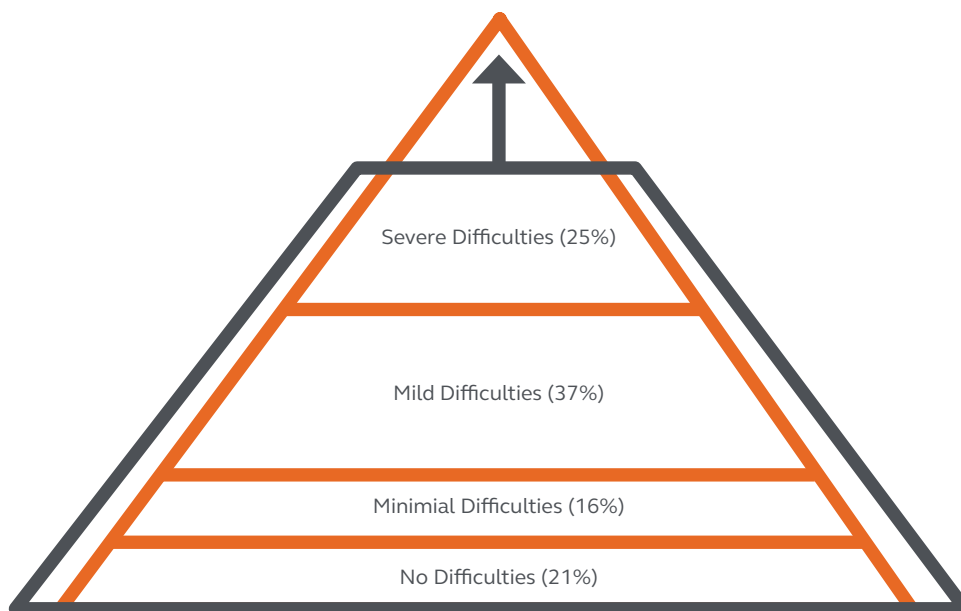
Trend 5: Inclusive Design Expands

Inclusion is a popular buzzword, but what does it really mean in the design world? Certainly, it means providing accessible buildings for those with disabilities; however, true inclusive design is about creating spaces that are accessible to and usable by as many people as possible without the need for special adaptation or specialized design.

Why is this critically important? In short, employers need it to attract and retain the best talent. Inclusive workspaces are desirable and make people of all abilities feel like they belong. They also drive productivity by reducing or eliminating challenges.

Designers are notorious for designing to their own abilities and biases—physical ability, gender, age, etc. The design community must begin to acknowledge and recognize biases, work to reduce barriers and eliminate points of exclusion. This means engaging more deeply with excluded communities, designing for all abilities from the get-go and not simply creating work-arounds.

The pyramid on this page was developed by Microsoft to demonstrate the range of abilities in the overall population. This eliminates the idea of able-bodied versus disabled—a binary combination—and allows designers to look to a solution that addresses the broad spectrum of human capability.

Severe Difficulties (25%)

Mild Difficulties (37%)

Minimial Difficulties (16%)

No Difficulties (21%)

Our Commitment to Accessibility (https://www.microsoft.com/enable/research/phase1.aspx)

Employees span a wide spectrum of abilities. Not only are there individuals with limited physical mobility, sight-impairments or hearing-impairments, but there are also a range of other points of exclusion:

- Older people whose physical abilities are diminishing: sight, hearing, mobility, fine motor skills, and strength
- People with sensory processing issues—visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, taste, temperature, proprioception. There are both those who are overstimulated and those who are under-responsive.
- Exceptionally tall or small people
- Bariatric users
- People with extreme allergies, including food allergies or olfactory sensitivity
- People with limited physical strength
- Those with socioeconomic constraints

Designing for inclusion also means designing for remote workers. Maintain connections between team members, both for collaboration and culture, is critical for the success of the ever-more-mobile and distributed workplace.

When examining a specific point of exclusion, there are often solutions that have a myriad of benefits. For example, designing spaces with ramps and elevators not only accommodates people in wheelchairs but also assists parents pushing strollers or people with suitcases.

There are a number of simple ways workplace design can become more inclusive, many of which are common-sense and not necessarily noticeable, but that make a huge difference in accessibility and inclusivity:

- Circulation
- Height
- Lighting
- Acoustics
- Graphics and wayfinding
- Furniture
- Low Sensory Areas
- Analog Solutions
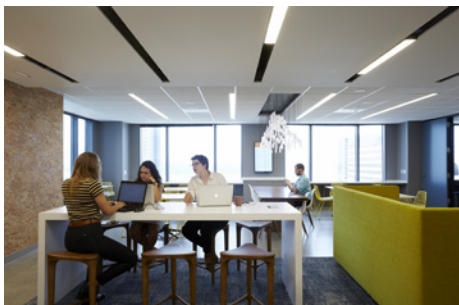
CallisonRTKL Seattle WA (This office is designed with a blend of furniture types and groups, and is oriented so as to avoid glare.)

Montvale, NJ (The Liberty Travel headquarters boasts wide circulation paths, mixed lighting types, a blend of furnbiture types, seating which promotes eye contact, and soft surfaces to limit acoustic reverberation.)

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National Democratic Institute, Washington, DC (Space at the National Democratic Institute embraces ideas such as providing a mix of space types, some digital, some analog.)

Key Takeaways For 2017

The trends this year all point in the same direction; spaces are becoming more specialized with defined purpose. They're providing easy access, easy use and specific experiences. Balance is required between private and public, solved on a company-by-company basis by taking into consideration culture and wellbeing.

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AICP, LEED AP ID+C, PROSCI

Jodi Williams brings nearly 20 years of experience in workplace strategy, facility planning and change management to CallisonRTKL. She leads strategic planning efforts for public and private sector clients, and has been a featured speaker at industry events such as IFMA World Workplace, Greenbuild and NeoConEast.

"I strive to help our clients develop solutions that enhance functionality, sustainability and efficiency by creating synergies between systems and spaces. Successful system design begins with a coordinated approach— a balance between tomorrow's technology and the time-tested, robust solutions of today."

Education

University of Virginia
Bachelor, Sociology

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University of Virginia
Graduate Studies, Sociology

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Prosci Certified Change Management Practitioner

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SENIOR INTERIORS DESIGNER

Assoc. AIA, NCIDQ

In each of her projects, Mariju incorporates open communication, goal-setting and teamwork to achieve high-performing results. An expert in change management, Mariju helps clients realize and achieve workplace updates that aid in the advancement of their practices. She believes that attention to details is essential to produce a great project on any budget.

"My passion for design to support human needs intersects perfectly with my interest in thoughtful and efficient delivery."

EDUCATION

Kent State University, Master, Architecture

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