Join the
WORKPLACE
REVOLUTION

Insights, experiences and advice on the journey towards the workplace of the future — this is how the new needs of companies and employees are met

COOR

"The attractiveness of the office must outweigh the comforts of home"

The physical office has been the topic of heated debate in recent years. In the beginning of the pandemic, many talked about "the death of the office," and questioned if we would ever return to the shared workplace. But the more time has passed, the more clearly we've realized the value of the physical office.

Many companies are currently testing their way forward to find a working model that balances their employees' needs with those of the business. Is yours one of them? Then perhaps this report can help. We've collected a range of insights into how employees and decision-makers throughout the Nordics think about the future of work and the workplace.

Our survey shows that today's employees want to be able to choose where they do their work. Young people in particular are prepared to change jobs if they feel too tightly controlled and lack flexibility. But that doesn't mean they always want to stay home. Face-to-face meetings and social belonging are important, and we see that many want to come to the office, solve problems and be creative together.

We also see that employees now expect to see changes in the office, and many are prepared to resign if those changes aren't made. In other words, quite a lot is at stake for employers in the future. Many are already finding it difficult to attract staff back to the office—and those who don't succeed

AnnaCarin Grandin,
President and CEO of Coor

might soon find themselves in even greater difficulties in the fierce competition for talent.

I am personally convinced that professional life can be even better than before the pandemic; everything indicates that the flexibility we've grown accustomed to is valuable. Now we need to take the learnings from this period into a new workplace context. You as an employer need to find the model that suits your company best and create an attractive destination with well-suited facilities and good services, where your employees want to be.

The attractiveness of the physical office quite simply has to outweigh the comforts of home if we are going to attract employees back to the office. Coor's vision is to create the happiest, healthiest and most prosperous workplace environments in the Nordic region.

The revolution has just begun—join us on the journey towards the future of workplaces! ◉

Contents of the report

About our survey

In Coor's survey "Join the Workplace Revolution," employees and decision-makers at Nordic companies give their input on the workplaces of today and tomorrow.

What perspectives and expectations do we have of the workplaces of the future? What challenges do we face? And what should our offices look like? In this report from Coor, you can read about what decision-makers and employees throughout the Nordic region think is important as a new workplace is evolving.

Coor had the analysis company United Minds conduct a survey study in Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway to investigate opinions and expectations of workplaces of today and tomorrow.

A total of 557 decision-makers and 811 employees participated in the survey, evenly distributed between the countries. The results are based on surveys that were sent out by email between April 13 and May 17, 2022 in each country.

The participants in the survey work full or part-time at workplaces with at least 250 employees. The surveyed decision-makers were in charge of issues regarding the company's workplace and the employees' work situation, for example working in human resources, property management or the management group. ●

Three quick insights

What challenges do Nordic employees and decision-makers face? What needs do we have? In Coor's survey, certain areas stand out regarding how we view our workplaces—here are a few quick insights. Read more in the report's three chapters: **The modern employee**, **An employer's dilemma** and **The offices of the future**.

36%

... of employees are prepared to change jobs if no improvements occur in the office in the next two years.

The three areas at the office where changes are most important to employees are: *Support for health and well-being and ergonomics*, *Support for individual focused work* and *Meeting technology*.

52%

... of decision-makers in the Nordic region experience challenges in getting their employees back to the office to a desired extent.

In Sweden, a whopping 66% of decision-makers experience difficulties attracting their employees back to the office.

59%

... of the companies are planning structural changes to their workplaces in 2022 and 2023.

Above all, reallocation of the spaces is being prioritized, as well as renovations in general. One quarter of the companies are planning to move their offices to a whole new location.

The modern employee

What does the modern employee value when choosing between working at the office or remotely? The short answer is: It depends on who you ask. Needs and motivations vary widely between individuals, depending on the kind of work they do, as well as working conditions in the office and remotely.

69%

... of employees are generally happy with their workplace today, and 73% feel that their employer has a good understanding of their needs in the workplace.

Modern employees have greater expectations and different demands of their employers than in the past. Fruit baskets and espresso makers have moved down the list—Today, the top considerations are flexibility and supporting hybrid ways of working based on employees' needs.

So what determines an employee's place to work, in-office or remote? Our survey shows that social interaction remains a strong motivator to work from the office. At the same time, many value working from home because of the time saved through not having to commute. What employees consider most important varies from person to person and day to day, perhaps depending on specific tasks on a given day.

The survey shows a diversity of opinions, ideas and thoughts about the current situation at workplaces throughout the Nordic region. 69% of employees are generally happy with their workplace today, and feel that their employer has a good understanding of their needs. At the same time, we see that they have many expectations and wishes for improvements in the office. Among other things, they ask for better support for health and well-being, such as changing rooms and spaces for individual focused work.

It is more important to employees than ever that the future workplace speak to their individual motivations. At the same time, the variety of expectations makes it a challenge to find collective solutions within the office, where these different needs can all be met. But with a focus on employees, a new type of workplace can evolve. ◖

Wanted: Freer reins and an improved office

The results of our survey show that many employees would consider resigning if they are not granted full individual freedom to choose their work location. This trend is clearest among younger employees in bigger cities.

The office will remain an important place—but individual motivators are essential in determining to what degree employees want to work there.

The desire for more flexible work is extra clear among younger employees. 41% of those asked state that they are prepared to leave their employer if they are not offered full flexibility, but in the 18–30-year-old age range, the figure is a whopping 51%. However, there are differences between industries, and also between big cities and smaller towns—respondents in big cities have greater demand for flexibility.

There are also other aspects that might make employees look for other work. For example, more than one of three would consider changing jobs within two years if changes aren't made in the office. So there is a big risk of losing good employees if employers do not find good solutions. But even if needs differ between individuals, it is important to try to develop a collective idea of their individual wishes.

Many employees also point to purely financial benefits of working from home. For example, reduced expenses for lunch and travel compared with working from the office. In addition, many see the advantage of fewer stress factors when they don't need to keep track of public transportation timetables.

Various kinds of hybrid solutions, with a combination of remote and office work, are generally seen as favorable. But the interviewees differed as to where they felt most productive in their individual work. 39% said they focused best when working from home, while 25% said they were most productive at the office.

A collective understanding of employees' motivations is the key to success going forward, for both employers and employees. The demands for improvements in the workplace show that the office is still important to workers. At the same time, hybrid solutions are a necessity in a world where many employees demand flexibility. ◉

52%

… of the respondents in the survey consider reduced travel time the biggest reason for working from home instead of at the office.

36%

… of the employees are prepared to change employers if no improvements occur in the office in the next two years.

51%
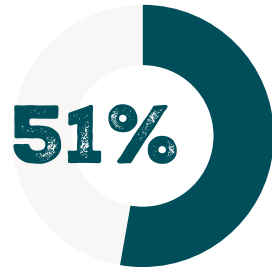
… of employees in the 18–30-year-old age range are prepared to change jobs if they are not offered full flexibility. That is almost twice as many as those in the 50–65-year age range.

There's no place like home—but the office could be better

Social interaction with colleagues and better productivity are two features that employees generally value, and are therefore important considerations when developing the office. But our survey also shows the importance of well-being and a good selection of food—and that more than a third of employees would consider resigning if no improvements are made at the office.

Two out of three employees are happy with their workplace—whether they work from the office, from home or somewhere else. Three out of four also feel that their employer has a good understanding of their needs. Our survey also shows that many now expect various types of improvements in the office. Of the 36% who would consider changing employers if no such improvements are made, these expectations are clearest among those in the 18–30-year age range, living in big cities.

During the pandemic, many companies prioritized improvements in meeting technology. Areas that employees consider important improvement areas for the future, according to our survey, are support for health and well-being, areas for social interaction, and better conditions for individual focused work.

Services are another area that many Nordic employees feel would increase their desire to work from the office. Improved lunch options alone would make 34% of the respondents choose the office more often. Other concrete measures that the respondents valued highly were access to massage, arranged fitness activities like yoga and meditation, and take-away dinner boxes at the end of the day. ◉
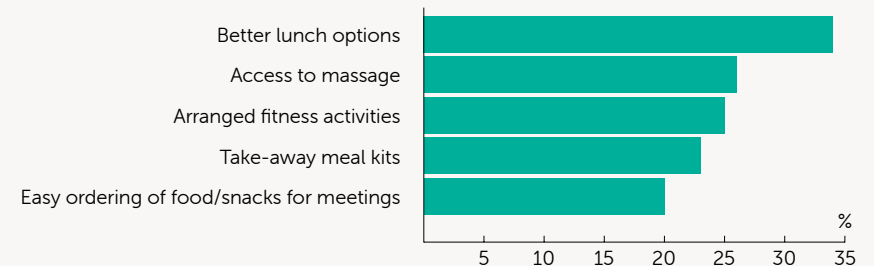
This makes employees want to work from the office
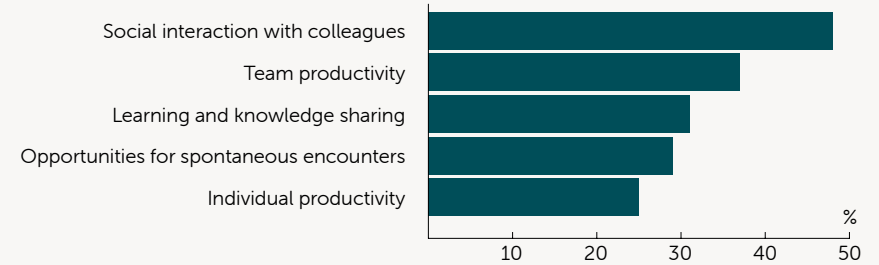
The five most important office improvements
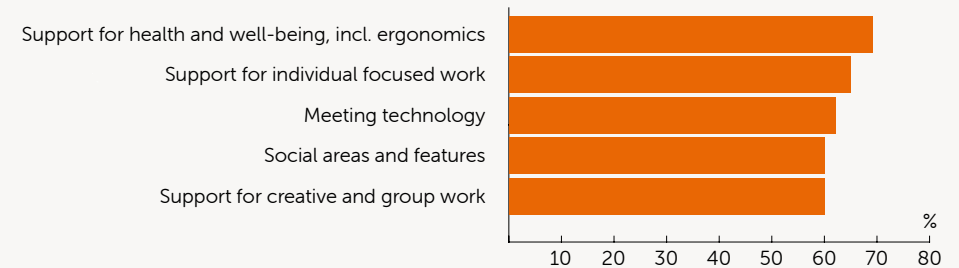
Services that make employees more willing to work from the office

"An attractive experience at the office demands holistic thinking"

How attractive an employer will be in the future depends on their insights into employees' motivations and needs.

"Employees want a more enjoyable and flexible job," says Joachim Meyer Andersen, Customer Experience Manager at Coor. "So the office needs to offer new values."

Employees' expectations of the workplace have generally changed since the pandemic. Besides the general motivators affecting how people want to do their jobs, there are also individual needs, which are different for different employee groups, says Joachim Meyer Andersen.

"In general, people go to the office to meet others, be social and work together in their teams. They work at home to save time, have a better work-life balance and improve their productivity—above all with their individual tasks."

The office fills a different purpose, and most people choose a hybrid model.

"The workplace has changed character, from a place people have to go to, to a place we go to only if there is a clear value. As a company, we must clearly define the purpose of the office and strive to create optimal conditions for social encounters there."

Joachim says that employers need to ask themselves how they can create such a workplace, and how they can address people's motivations outside the office walls. How can we help employees save time by going to the office, and be able to focus properly when they need to?

"There are many solutions for this," he says, "from a community manager creating life and movement and social activities in the office, to time-saving solutions like a good beautician at the office or food boxes you can take home from the company restaurant so you don't have to go shopping. Every solution must be based on the employees' needs."

52% of decision-makers find it difficult to entice certain employees back to work. To find solutions for that, companies must fundamentally understand the employee group and their daily lives, says Joachim.

"A large part of this group consists of people with family logistics, often small children or somewhat older children who need to be driven to various after-school activities. So the motivation of saving time is very important."

Joachim says that companies can't be expected to find solutions for everyone.

"The individual's needs are important, but they can't clash with the company as a collective. You have to find the common denominator by having personal talks with the employees and taking surveys, then trying out different solutions in practice. What do the employees think, what needs do they have, and why do they use some solutions and not others?" ●

Three insights from the survey

! The most difficult group to attract to the office
The 31–49-year age group is most difficult to attract back to the office since the pandemic. Many have children they need to take to various activities and working from home makes the work-life balance easier.

! Hassle-free days an important motivator
Hassle-free days are an important motivator. For example, meal kits can save time. Employees can be offered ready-made dinner boxes or semi-finished products from the lunch room refrigerator or from the employee restaurant.

Another example that can save time for employees and enhance social activities at the office is subsidized healthcare and exercise at the office or nearby, preferably with coworkers.

! The office means a lot for the culture
The office should be seen as an extension of the company's culture. Work on all fronts to make it attractive to be at the office, but the design must feel credible.

An employer's dilemma

Our survey shows a wide array of policies for remote working. It also shows that a majority of decision-makers still consider it a challenge to get employees back to the office to a desired extent. How do you achieve a balance between the needs of the business and those of the employees?

52%

… of decision-makers experience challenges to get their employees back to the office to a desired extent.

Policies for working from home vary widely between employers. Is there any connection between employee satisfaction and the degree of flexibility offered by the company? No, not according to our survey. But we do see somewhat lower satisfaction among employees at companies that don't have an established policy. So there is no right or wrong in the flexibility equation, but it is important to set guidelines and establish clear expectations as to how the office is to be used.

Our survey shows that 19% of companies offer full flexibility, compared with 41% of employees who say they are considering changing jobs if they aren't given full flexibility. This indicates that many companies need to work towards greater flexibility if they want to keep their talent—especially younger employees. Add to that the fact that 52% of companies today already find it challenging achieving a desired office presence and we have a difficult equation to solve.

How should you think as an employer to find a good balance for your organization? A balance that meets the needs of your employees as well as your business? On the next page, you'll find five questions that may help get you started. ◗

Navigating hybrid working

Employees' needs on one hand—and the needs of the business on the other. As an employer, how does one find a good balance in the hybrid working life? Here are five questions that can help you navigate your organization into the future.

24%
… of companies apply full-time office work (the single most common model).

29%
… of companies have a set number of days per week (at least 1–4 days) at the office.

20%
… of companies let the nearest supervisor decide where the employees work.

19%
… offer employees full individual flexibility.

Footnote: 5% of companies had not yet made a decision on policy, 1.3% worked solely remotely and 1.6% worked in some other way.

5 Questions to ask yourself when choosing your "working model"

1 How important is physical office presence in the office for the business?
What work has to be done on site? What tasks are good for the company if they're done on site, but not critical? What ones can be more flexible? This determines what leeway you have for flexibility.

2 How strong is the company's leadership ability?
Managing operations and employees remotely is difficult—but not impossible. Your company's ability to maintain its culture, provide for its employees' well-being and build the foundations for good collaboration, all remotely, "sets the bar" for your need for on-site office presence.

3 What do the employees want?
For what tasks do your employees prefer office vs. remote? When is the location unimportant? By estimating time allocation between different work tasks—and recognizing the preferred workplace for doing them—you can get a good picture of the employees' idea of office presence, which you can then balance against the needs of the business.

4 How attractive is your office to the employees?
The pandemic turned a spotlight on the costs—such as commute times—of working from an office compared with working from home. The more a company demands employees' presence at the office, and the better the working conditions the employee has at home, the more is generally required of the office experience.

5 Do we need a shared model for everyone?
"Equal for everyone" is often considered clear and fair. But each individual has very different motivations for working from the office, and a company's need to have staff physically at the office may vary between different employee groups.

The important role of the office for interpersonal relationships

"If your organization has a hybrid solution combining on-site work with remote work, be careful about what people's days at the office are filled with."

This is the advice of psychologist Brita Helleberg, who points out the important role of interpersonal relationships at work.

At the start of the pandemic, we saw many creative solutions for the problems it created.

"Suddenly, we could do things we thought were impossible," says psychologist Brita Helleberg, adding that the experience probably transformed our whole perception of how we humans can work.

One major difference is how the concept of meetings expanded—from the conference room in the office to digital meetings, outdoor meetings, telephone meetings and walk-and-talk meetings.

"For many, the greatest change was in how we communicate with each other, how we meet with other people and how we establish, maintain and develop relationships," Brita says. "There's a lot more flexibility now since the pandemic."

She points out that many employees may have found methods of communication that suit their personalities and lifestyles better, and this development, combined with increasingly complex work tasks that demand more collaboration, also requires more flexible, tailored

"Presence at the office gives many natural opportunities to create relationships."

Brita Helleberg,
psychologist

The primary importance of the office, according to decision-makers

79% Strengthen/build company culture

74% Strengthen employee health and well-being

70% Increase employee productivity and efficiency

solutions to how we will work, hold meetings, communicate and build relationships in the future.

The question is how flexible employers should be. Humans are social creatures and a sense of community is one of our most basic psychological needs.

"We need to feel that we belong to a group where we feel secure and respected. That feeling doesn't automatically come from being at an office, but physically being present creates more natural opportunities to build relationships—at the coffee machine, in the lunch room or on the way to a meeting."

Brita says these small moments give us the opportunity to interact with colleagues on a human level. In these personal encounters, most people show more emotions than we do in formal meetings. That humanity and vulnerability is the foundation of relationships, and if others respond with respect and openness, that creates a sense of security.

Many organizations want to meet that need for community through togetherness at the office. So it's important to think about what you do when you're at the office, Brita explains.

"If your organization has a hybrid solution combining on-site work with remote work, be careful about what people's days at the office are filled with. Don't waste time on meetings where people are simply broadcasting information. That could be achieved better by email. Prioritize things that are difficult to do digitally, for example tasks that require high-quality interpersonal relationships, like brainstorming."

"If people feel that they get something positive out of being at the office, they'll be motivated to go there. But if they feel forced to go there, and maybe sit in a messy environment where they're interrupted by social chitchat when they're trying to focus on something, then they'll be frustrated."

In addition to being a natural place to feel a sense of community, being at the office can often be crucial to a team's performance.

"It's important to balance the needs of the individual employees with those of the team," Brita points out. "An experienced employee can work more efficiently at a home office, but the team's performance might take a hit if that person is never at the office sharing their experience with the three new hires in the team.

"If the employer can give the teams freedom and responsibility to find their own solutions to help the team and the individuals perform at their best, then you can probably tone down the 'requirement' part that might dampen their motivation."

For younger employees, it has become increasingly important to work for a cause they believe in. But the cause must be clear at all levels of the organization.

"If the company's purpose, the tasks you carry out and the way you interact with colleagues and customers, fits with your own values, then there's a good chance you will perform at your best and thrive with what you do," Brita says. ●

"It should be fun to come to work"

Although work flexibility is increasing, office work still has many advantages over remote work, for organizations and individuals.

"The important thing in the future will be to balance the needs of the individual and the team," says Coor's HR director Helena Söderberg.

Helena Söderberg,
HR director at Coor

After two years of remote working, many have grown accustomed to greater freedom at work, and it has become something of a must-have for employers to be able to offer flexible terms. But that doesn't mean offices can be phased out.

"At Coor, we have focused on our own business and the work tasks it involves," says HR Director Helena Söderberg. "Some roles benefit from getting together physically, while others can carry out their tasks perfectly well remotely. As an organization, we need to tailor our policy to specific situations and be clear with our reasoning. This gives our employees a sense of security."

The majority of Coor's employees work at our customers' locations, but for those who work at our offices, the office remains the primary workplace after the pandemic.

"We had quite a bit of flexibility even before the pandemic," Helena says, "and this will continue, but there are many advantages to working at the office—especially the working environment, the creativity and the interaction between employees."

She says that the office is important for the company, especially because the frequent informal meetings at the coffee machine promote creativity.

"When you move around the office, you meet and talk to people that you don't have scheduled meetings with," she says. "And that may give you unexpected insights that lead you onto new paths. As I see it, creativity and innovation suffer when we only see each other at scheduled digital meetings.

"Seeing each other at the office is also important for teamwork. Networks and partnerships are born out of face-to-face encounters."

Helena also emphasizes that good health is essential for employers and employees alike. Because relationships are crucial for health, and relationships need to be maintained, personal encounters are vital.

Every remote working session is a transition for managers and employees at Coor. To ensure the employees' well-being, it was necessary for managers to find new ways of working together, with clear check-in and check-out procedures and structured follow-ups, all of which have become routine and will continue even in the physical office.

"In addition to the structure, it is important to have clear targets for the employees, whether they're working remotely or not," Helena says. "They also need a shared vision of the optimal balance between the individuals' need of flexibility and the organization's or team's need of their presence."

In many cases, age and place of residence determine how people choose to work. Young, single people and

> "Creativity and innovation suffer when we only see each other at scheduled digital meetings."

somewhat older employees like to come to the office, while those with young children prefer to work from home whenever possible. People in small towns with short commutes are also more positive to office work than those who live in big cities with long commutes.

"And we can't forget that working from home can be a challenge for many," Helena adds. "Some people have difficulty separating work and leisure time and work far too much; others have cramped living spaces and don't have much space to work in. For them, the office is much better. It offers good ergonomics, good ventilation and flexible furniture."

Looking to the future, Helena thinks hybrid working is here to stay, but that many people will see the advantages of returning to the office—particularly if employers do something about office design.

"It should be fun to come to work! Carefully planned spaces for interaction, shared breakfasts, seminars and great coffee are things that employees appreciate." ●

"The office must be designed for the user"

Great trust in independent teams is one of the most important aspects for the Nordic financial group Storebrand. After the pandemic upended many of the tried-and-true working traditions, the company's HR strategist Per Kristian Helland and his colleagues worked to develop the perfect hybrid model for their employees.

"We still believe in the hybrid model."

Per Kristian Helland,
HR strategist at
Storebrand

Storebrand doesn't bother regulating set days at the office. Instead, the finance group chose a strategy based on flexibility at the team level.

"We don't have any groupwide rules; we let the teams decide for themselves," says Per Kristian Helland. "The idea is to balance individual needs with the team's needs based on the tasks at hand."

At the same time, he points out the dilemma of the strategy: Juggling the needs of the employees and the team requires constant discussion. For example, every time new members join or other changes occur in the group, new solutions are required.

"We know everything isn't perfect," he says. "There's a lot we need to work on and figure out solutions for. For example, some people can feel they're in the wrong team, or maybe they have needs that don't fit with the team they're in."

As a manager, trust in the team is an important factor for ensuring that the team can do its job, Per says.

"When you don't see your teammates every day, trust between the manager and the team members is very important. Where there's trust it's also easier to support and manage your team."

The offices of the future will play an important part in the hybrid model at Storebrand. A focus on the employees' experience of the workplace will need to have a completely different impetus than what we were used to before the pandemic.

"Offices need to be designed for the user, something we've always tried to do," Per says. "If we look back three years, we used to go to off-site conference centers, why couldn't we create a new, unique experience at the workplace for the same purpose? Setting things up for special events creates a new experience because many employees don't come into the office as often as they used to anyway."

Sensors and apps to facilitate the employees' workday at the office can also be interesting to look at, Per says.

"Once again, future solutions have to be built with the user in focus. If we can design services that really help our employees do their work, and that are tailored to their needs, then we can take our employees' workplace experience to a whole new level."

Looking to the future, Per thinks that Storebrand's chosen hybrid model is the right path for the company. He also points out that learning along the way is an important part of dealing with potential problems.

"We still believe in the hybrid model, but we need to learn how to solve problems that arise and make sure we are creating the workplace we want." ●

Organizational engagement on the change journey

It's one thing to decide on what change you want to make—it's another to actually complete it. Here are five tips that will help you ensure organizational engagement on the change journey on your journey towards your future workplace.

1 Define the role of the office

Make sure the company has a clear vision for your workplace. Why is a certain direction of change desirable? What effects do you want to achieve? Be clear about what function the office is to have, why is it important for employees and the company to get together in the same place sometimes—and when do you encourage remote working?

2 Prioritize leadership

Is the change supported throughout the company's management? Do they feel they own the decision? Middle managers are crucial for succeeding with a change process at the employee level. They are the ones who must address individual needs and motivations and translate general guidelines into practice—for example, the work-from-home policy.

3 Create involvement in the organization

Develop a clear plan for how to involve the employees throughout the change journey, and invite them to contribute to various change areas and solutions. Designate key people who can be ambassadors for the change.

4 Measure the effect of your initiatives

Define clear goals, and methods of regularly assessing and following up the desired change. Examples of follow-up questions are: "do we experience greater collective productivity when we work at the office?" or "do we see that employees choose the office to the degree they said?"

5 Adapt continuously

The change has just begun, no company has all the answers. What's important now is to explore and try things out. The solutions we develop should be adjustable to the changing needs of our employees and the world around us, and we need to evaluate and adjust continuously.

The offices of the future

How should the offices of the future be designed to meet the needs of the business and its employees? Every company is different, but we still see three themes that are particularly important: an increased focus on social interaction and corporate culture, stronger support for different types of work, and active support for employee well-being. Here's what Coor's experts say you can do to enhance each of these areas.

Many companies are currently in a phase where they are reevaluating the purpose and future role of their office. Perhaps hybrid working—employees working partly from home and partly at the office—may reduce the number of desk spaces, but increase the need for creative, collaborative and social interaction spaces. In choosing its focus, each company needs to understand how the office, and employees' presence there, can create added value for the business and for individual employees. Perhaps the office is necessary for productive collaboration, or crucial to our company culture? Or perhaps it is a place that can actively contribute to employee well-being? No matter the focus, the company must take a holistic approach when designing the office space.

The physical environment is naturally a key element. For example, redistributing space, changing of furnishing and lighting, can often significantly improve the overall office experience and optimization.

Technology has been high on many organizations' priority list during the pandemic. Our survey found that meeting technology topped companies' investments in the past two years. Since technology is becoming an increasingly important part of our everyday workday, it will continue to be an important focus.

59%

… of the surveyed companies plan a structural change of the workplace within two years.

Office services are also becoming increasingly significant. When employees are asked to list the benefits of working from home, factors such as saving time and simplifying work-life balance are high on the list. In other words, various types of services that simplify work-life balance for employees can contribute to a more attractive office.

And also: good office design is about putting a **focus on the human element**. An efficient layout, new technology or attractive services aren't worth much without the right behaviors, way of working and supportive leadership.

On the following pages, our experts give you tips on important considerations when designing your future office. Based on our survey, we identified three overarching themes that are important for companies to consider when rethinking their future office:

● **The office as a cultural pillar and social meeting ground**
● **An ideal place to work, individually and together**
● **A magnet with a focus on employee well-being**

You will also meet the Fiskars Group, who will describe how they got employees involved in designing their new headquarters outside Helsinki with the aim of making every day extraordinary for the employees. ●

The office as a cultural pillar and social meeting ground

The office plays an increasingly important role in company culture, but the core of that role is the people and the way they work. But technology, services and above all the physical environment are also crucial.

Hybrid working is here to stay, which means that companies need to take a new approach and consider how the office reflects the company's culture.

"The culture is built every day, all the time," says Carina Hörnfeldt Bylund, workplace expert at Coor. "So it must be clear what direction the company is going in. You have to get the employees involved and they need to understand how they as individuals and as a group contribute. Managers have a great responsibility here—to build support for the chosen strategy regarding remote working, as well as to explain the company's need for a certain presence in the office and how it contributes to the company culture."

It is also important to identify the office as a place for knowledge transfer, which bolsters both the team and the individual, while also building the corporate culture.

One way to break up silos and enhance the feeling of a shared corporate culture is to change where the teams sit, with the aim of increasing interaction between employees.

"But the most important thing is to create engagement and a feeling of 'ownership' in the workplace among the employees, get a feel for their needs, give them space to try out new ideas and evaluate how they worked. Flexibility, involvement and engagement are the watchwords."

Carina Hörnfeldt Bylund,
Workplace expert at Coor,
on people and working methods

#1

Strengthening the company culture is the single most important role of the office, decision-makers say.

60%

… of employees point out a need for **more** social spaces and activities at their office.

45%

… of the decision-makers see the expression of the company's identity in the office as a priority area of improvement.

"The office should express the identity and vision of the company and its activities."

Georg Lindén, Innovation Manager at Coor, on how services can contribute to developing the office into a meeting place and bearer of culture:

In office environments that offer space to converse in a relaxed manner, there are natural gathering places for the employees.

"For example, having a really good coffee machine where people can make their own espresso invites people to have a little break."

So says Georg Lindén, who explains that a sense of community as well as corporate culture can be enhanced by giving someone general responsibility for it, such as a *workplace community manager* tasked with creating events at the office.

"Activities at the workplace allow the employees to do something together beyond their daily work, which creates a sense of fellowship. It might be something like a yoga session or inviting in a coffee supplier to try different roasts."

A warm welcome to the office is also important, so a *welcome experience host* can help create a better experience at the office. This is a role that is not only about welcoming new employees and visitors, but also about managing the big picture.

"They are responsible for your overall experience when you come to the office. Perhaps making sure the right kind of music is playing, what setting the lighting is on, what scent is in the air, or making sure you get a good cup of coffee."

Ola Lind Isaksen, workplace expert at Coor, on the importance of technology for making the office a meeting place and a bearer of culture:

Technological solutions are important tools for creating an environment that promotes the company culture and a sense of community between colleagues, he says.

"Hybrid meetings are here to stay. That means that technology has an increasingly important role in creating interaction and allowing inclusion, whether the employees are at the office or participating remotely."

When many meetings are hybrid, our meeting rooms will need to have the necessary technology to accommodate colleagues participating remotely. It is more important than ever that remote workers can be included in the office community.

Various digital platforms also facilitate the planning of physical presence and togetherness with colleagues at the office.

"For many people, it is important to meet with colleagues when they come in to the office," Ola says. "With easy access to how others plan their on-site days, or knowing which meeting participants plan to be there physically, you give a good foundation for using the office as a social meeting ground."

Helle Nøhr, workplace expert at Coor, on the importance of the physical environment for making the office a meeting place and a bearer of culture:

The office should express the identity and vision of the company and its activities. This means that the physical environment is very important for people to thrive and grow there—and also to build and enhance the company's culture, says Helle Nøhr.

"Offices should be adjusted to the people's needs, not vice versa. So it's natural that the physical environment is continuously adapted to new needs as they arise."

The goal of the entire office should be to create comfort and inspiration in the employees.

"The social areas are important so employees want to be at the office and spend time with other people. Light and color are good ways to create mood and different environments.

"You can also see the office as a good democratic meeting place, where we encounter all different kinds of people. Genuine meetings with others are where we create understanding and learn new things." ●

An ideal place to work, individually and together

The role of the office for efficiency, creativity and collaboration has become increasingly important. The physical environment is essential, but technology, way of working and access to various services are also very important.

The offices of the future must be designed to allow people to complete various tasks to the best of their abilities: focused work, networking, relationship building and joint problem-solving. A lot of office work is actually better accomplished in other environments than at a desk, says Helle Nøhr, workplace expert at Coor.

"We need to create an office where everyone can find a place that suits them and their tasks. Sofas, lounge chairs, walls you can write on, soothing colors, green plants … Variation creates options that benefit productivity, but there are no standard solutions; everything must be tailored for the individual company."

The physical environment is so many things—rooms for big meetings, small meetings, or focused individual work. It can also be about lighting, which affects us more than we think. Poor lighting in the office creates headaches, backaches, stiff shoulders and poor concentration. Offering a variety of lighting for different office spaces can mean a lot for the employees' working environment.

"Many aspects are about understanding human nature and working with it instead of against it."

Helle Nøhr,
workplace expert at Coor,
on the physical environment

70%

… of surveyed companies say that the office is important or very important for the employees' productivity.

#1

Meeting technology is the highest priority area for office improvements also in the future, decision-makers say.

65%

… of employees in the survey want better support for individual focused work.

Carina Hörnfeldt Bylund, workplace expert at Coor, on how the right way of working can enhance efficiency, creativity and collaboration:

The working day consists of many different activities. You mentally transition between periods of complete focus and periods of creativity and socializing, which means that the modern office needs to offer a variety of spaces for different activities, both for individual work and various types of collaboration.

"Managers and leaders play an important role in guiding employees as to how to best utilize different areas of the office," she says. "It is important to set a good example and show how different parts of the office can enhance creativity and collaboration."

It is also important to have shared guidelines for employees describing what is and isn't okay in the different working environments.

"One of the great challenges in workplaces today is distraction," she explains, "and there are many studies that show how quickly we lose energy and focus when our 'savanna brain' is subjected to small talk and movement around us."

She says that having different zones and the ability to close out distractions is often a part of the solution, but guidelines as to how to keep these boundaries are just as important. Many companies stand to gain a lot of productivity this way."

> ## "Managers and leaders have an important role in guiding employees as to how to best utilize different areas of the office."

Georg Lindén, Innovation Manager at Coor, on how services can enhance efficiency, creativity and collaboration:

Simplicity is often the key to a productive, creative working environment.

"Everything has to work," Georg says. "If it doesn't, it has to be easy to report the problem and get support."

He gives the example of a workstation in a flexible open-plan office—if it doesn't work, the employee will often just switch to another workstation. Perhaps it's the monitor that isn't working, or the sit-stand desk is jammed. If the problem is not reported, the number of workstations that don't work will increase over time, leading to poor working conditions at the office.

"The service provider plays a key role here. By continuously monitoring and correcting problems at the workstations, they can prevent such a development."

The overall environment can also affect productivity.

"What we as employees see and hear affects our senses; so does the air quality and the temperature. These days, the working climate at the office is increasingly in focus, and such things must be monitored continuously, and proactively."

Workplace needs are much more variable than before, and flexible use of spaces and furnishings has become increasingly important.

"Offices can be temporarily re-furnished to allow for different types of work. For example, depending on the situation, an area might be transformed into a project space, a lounge or individual workstations."

Ola Lind Isaksen, workplace expert at Coor, on how technology can enhance efficiency, creativity and collaboration:

Well-functioning technology has long been vital to productivity in the office. Digital technology creates new solutions that benefit both the company and the individual.

"Systems are becoming more complex, but at the same time they must be perceived as simple and functional," Ola says.

So the employee's experience is pivotal; technology and new smart solutions must be based on the user perspective.

"If supervisors want more people to work at the office, the technology—the Internet connection, audio and video, for example—has to work better at the workplace than at home."

Technology also makes it possible to plan and optimize office space. Digitally mapping out the office to create an understanding of how it is used and how it could be used better can often be a helpful tool and a good place to start.

"We can use sensors to measure utilization, temperature and air quality. This would show us which parts of the premises are most heavily used over time and which are not used at all."

Smart systems and apps also make it easier for employees to plan and streamline their workdays at the office, in part by showing where their colleagues are in the office, how many workstations are open and which meeting rooms are available.

"There is a wealth of solutions depending on your needs, and many companies have made huge investments in technology during the pandemic." ⬤

A magnet with a focus on employee well-being

Health and well-being are top priorities of employees and employers these days. This makes an attractive, health-promoting workplace a competitive edge for companies in the future.

Creating routes for different lengths of *walk-and-talk meetings* is a way of encouraging better health. Another way can be more healthy lunch options, or offering complete food packages or ingredient kits that employees can buy to take home at the end of the workday.

"This way, we can help employees eat healthy even outside the office, as well as eliminate a stress factor by giving them a fully planned, or even ready-made dinner," says Georg Lindén, Innovation Manager at Coor.

By offering fitness activities or services that can facilitate daily life, such as bike repairs, dry cleaning or a car wash, companies can build up employee well-being—and a more attractive workplace.

"One simple, but appreciated, service is a massage chair with relaxing music, where employees can unwind and recharge for a while."

Georg points out that employers should see the cost of employee health measures as an investment.

"When employees are happy and healthy, it reduces sick leave and staff turnover, which has a great effect on the bottom line for the company."

Georg Lindén,
Innovation Manager at Coor,
on services for the office

74%

… of decision-makers say that the office is important or very important for employees' health and well-being.

#1

69% of employees think that better ergonomics and support for health and well-being is the most important consideration when designing an office.

34%

… of employees say that better lunch options would improve their willingness to come in to the office.

Carina Hörnfeldt Bylund, workplace expert at Coor, on how the right working method can contribute to an attractive workplace with a focus on well-being:

Our well-being depends on setting aside time for rest and recovery during the workday, says Carina Hörnfeldt Bylund.

"Our meeting calendars and inboxes are full. Leaders and managers have an important role in setting boundaries that allow and encourage relaxation in the workplace. And of course each employee also has a responsibility."

One example can be to schedule 50-minute sessions instead of the usual one-hour meetings.

"That creates space for a break, time to reflect and maybe prepare for the next meeting."

Employers can also promote a greater focus on employee health by offering physical activity during working hours.

"Make it possible and encourage employees to take a walk and soak up some sun, get some exercise at lunchtime, or just withdraw to a quiet place in the office. Just getting away from the computer and phone for 5–10 minutes to just be, can give so much.

"Work-life balance has come to be one of the most important benefits when selecting an employer. To retain employees in the long term, employers will have to get to know their staff's individual needs, in terms of both physical and mental well-being."

"Work-life balance has come to be one of the most important benefits."

Ola Lind Isaksen, workplace expert at Coor, on the importance of technology for an attractive workplace with a focus on well-being:

With the right technology, employers can create values that give their staff a better experience at the office than they can have at home.

"This makes the office not just a place where you sit and do a job; it becomes a place where you go to feel good. Technology can help to create well-being, both for mental and physical health.

One example is a multipurpose room for digital training activities with colleagues on location or remotely. Perhaps for a physical workout or mindfulness, with technology providing ambient noise, scents and illumination to enhance the office experience.

"A zone with dynamics and activity can have one type of music or sounds, while an area where you want calm and quiet could have more natural ambient noise."

Sensors can also create a better indoor climate, while a cell phone can be used to give feedback on how a meeting or a dining experience was, or to get advice after filling in how you feel.

"We can also use sensors to register health data at the office, for example counting steps or how many people rode their bikes to work or follow online workouts. Then we can use that data to improve different parts of the office to promote health."

Ola Lind Isaksen,
workplace expert at Coor, on the importance of technology for an attractive workplace with a focus on well-being.

Photo: Robert Eik

Helle Nøhr, workplace expert at Coor, on how the physical environment can contribute to an attractive workplace with a focus on well-being:

Creating lighting for different needs in the workplace is becoming increasingly important to make the office more attractive.

"When building new offices or remodeling, it is important to look at how you integrate more natural light," Helle says. "The light shouldn't be the same everywhere all the time."

Different tasks require different lighting, because different types of light affect the mood and atmosphere differently.

"When we need to concentrate, we need more focused light. For a break room, you want more muted, cozy lighting."

To promote well-being in the workplace, spaces for exercise are a key factor. Other measures, such as offering bike storage, can increase willingness to get to and from work in a healthier way.

"If you focus on creating a workplace with a diversity of options for different tastes, then employees will find their own ways to get more exercise."

Another factor that contributes to a pleasant, health-promoting office environment is green materials in furniture, interiors and construction material.

"Many products contain toxins or glues that spread harmful particles in the air. Investing in environment-friendly products creates a healthier working environment that is better for companies and employees alike." ●

"The employees helped plan the office"

When the Fiskars Group in Finland were planning their new headquarters in 2019, their stated goal was to make every day special for those who worked there. To make sure they achieved that goal, they got their employees involved in the planning right from the start.

The Fiskars Group's headquarters in Espoo outside Helsinki

The Fiskars Group's new headquarters

Number of floors: 9.
Area: 9,900 m².
Number of employees: About 400.
Facilities: Reception, restaurant, showroom, space for events, conference center, activity-based office spaces, gym, resting rooms, workshop for product development and innovation, kitchen, terrace.
Place: Keilaniemi subway station, Espoo.
Certification: BREEAM Excellent environmental certification.
Architects: SARC Architects.
Construction company: NCC Property Development Oy.

In the middle of March 2022, the Finnish company Fiskars Group, which designs and manufactures kitchen and garden tools, moved into its newly built headquarters in Espoo outside Helsinki. The nine-story building is spectacular, reminiscent of a diamond with its irregular shape and many windows.

Four hundred people work here in an activity-based office environment, but the building also contains a lunch restaurant, gym, private relaxation room and a an area for for product development and innovation.

The Fiskars Group's motto is "Making the everyday extraordinary". When planning the new headquarters, the goal was to make every day extraordinary for the employees.

"We want to keep our skilled employees and also attract new talents to the company," says Jaana Saarenpää, senior project manager at the Fiskars Group.

The sustainability aspect was also important, as well as having the interior of the building reflect the company culture, which is defined by transparency and trust and a very low degree of hierarchy.

Previous employee surveys had shown a desire for a workplace without disruptive elements. The solution was an activity-based office with three types of areas: quiet focus areas, interactive areas where colleagues can converse but phone calls are banned, and collaborative areas for creative meetings and joint projects. In addition, there would be many meeting rooms of different sizes and little rooms for phone calls.

"The employees participated in planning from day one," Jaana says, "first in physical workshops and later in digital workshops during the coronavirus pandemic.

"The transparency and trust that characterizes our corporate culture are reflected in the open spaces where nothing is secret or hidden."

For the employees' well-being, there is a gym and areas for activities such as yoga. There are also two resting rooms to which people can withdraw to sleep away a headache, nurse a baby or say their prayers. In addition, the employees have access to a massage therapist, free coffee from top-notch coffee machines, and bike and car parking with chargers for electric vehicles.

In one big room that seats 50 people for workshops and training, Fiskars has invested in a lighting system that imitates daylight and matches our biological clock.

"Exposure to daylight affects the quality of our sleep, our efficiency, our ability to pay attention and our mood," says Kari Selkälä, vice president for real estate at the Fiskars Group. "Quite simply, daylight is generally important for our health.

"The activities in this room often last all day and the daylight system helps the participants stay alert and feel good."

The diamond shape of the building also means that practically every workstation is next to a window. On the ninth floor there is also a terrace where employees can sit outside on their lunch break on warm summer days. There is also a kitchen where those who bring their own lunch can store and heat their food.

The entire ninth floor is furnished with furniture from the old headquarters and Artek 2nd Cycle products—all in accordance with the company's sustainability goals. The entire property is energy certified and consists of natural materials like wood and wool as far as possible. Cleaning is done without toxic chemicals and the restaurant aims to minimize food waste to as close to zero as possible.

Asked whether the pandemic in any way affected the design of the office, the answer was no.

"We were already counting on not everyone being in the office at the same time; the pandemic only sped up the transition from on-site work to remote work," Jaana says. "We also learned to manage work remotely and now all of our work is hybrid. Our employees prefer working from home a few days a week and it works perfectly." ●

Inspiration for happier employees

Coor's vision is to create the best workplaces in the Nordic region for our customers. But we also put a lot of work into our own offices, with the aim of creating workplaces of the future for our employees. Here are some concrete tips from that work.

1 Dare to go unbookable!

Having a large proportion of unbookable rooms generally increases office utilization. But it can also increase on-site presence of employee groups that find it challenging to plan their office visits in advance.

2 Design for breaks!

Make sure to have spaces for breaks—areas that can help employees check out from screen time. This reduces stress levels and is the best foundation for building relationships with colleagues. This area can look a bit like a quiet square in a busy town—an oasis of solitude and greenery, or perhaps a library or newspaper café.

3 Go outside the office walls!

The office experience and the desire to work from the office are often affected by factors in the immediate vicinity. Two examples that can enhance the experience are planned routes for "walk & talks" and outdoor workstations, which for many offer an energy-boosting change of environment and an opportunity for valuable exercise during the working day.

4 Think: "Standard is king!"

Have a uniform standard for connecting to screens and units in all meeting rooms. You don't want employees wasting time and energy trying to figure out how to connect to the meeting. Choose a standard that is simple and intuitive.

5 Build in flexibility!

The future is changeable, and we don't know what new needs might come along. So avoid permanent solutions—they can be costly in the long run. For example, meeting pods that that can be relocated can be an excellent way to meet a greater need for small conference rooms. Renting or leasing furniture can create good flexibility for the future and is also good for the environment!

Do you want support in your workplace journey?

For more inspiring reading about
the workplace of the future,
visit **coor.com**

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