Report 2023: Future of Work

The "Best-Fitted" Work Mode

What is the matching work mode for organizations and employees in the workplace future?

Produced by: Aleigha Knight, **Crystal Chen**, Yuanyuan Li, Shannon Robertson
Dec, 2023

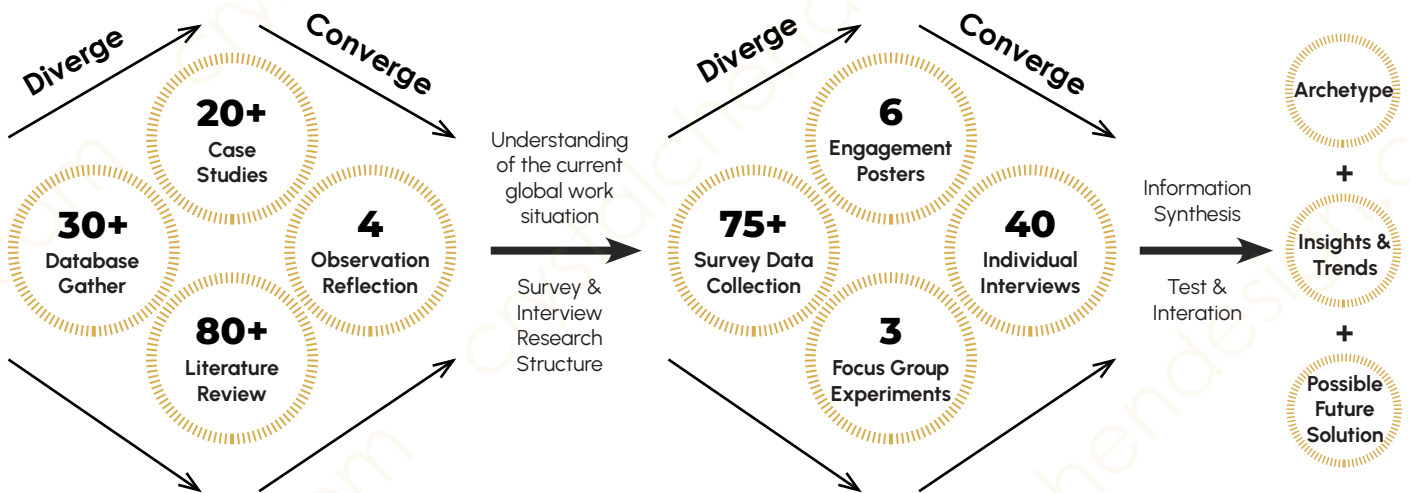# CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

This is a six-month research aiming to investigate the evolution of workplace culture resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and forecast future workplace trends.

Employing a comprehensive approach, including case studies, surveys, focus group observations, and individual interviews, we have conducted extensive research synthesized through iterative divergent and convergent processes. The study identifies five archetypes, illustrating the diverse factors influencing ideal work modes alignment between individuals and organizations. It also outlines five emerging trends regarding office space utilization, hybrid work culture development, and return-to-office compensation benefits. This project will continue for another six months, focusing on the development of in-depth strategies aligned with the identified trends.
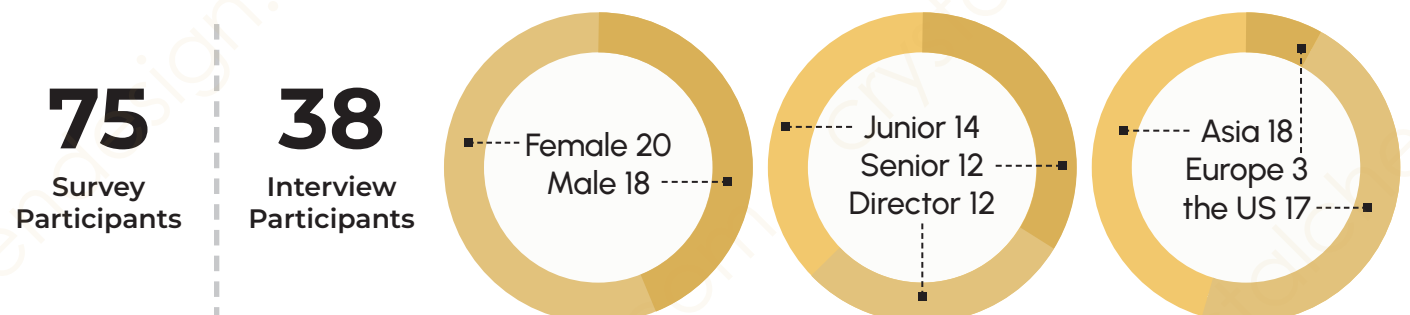
Research Objective

Origins/ history of work and the current working patterns	Individuals' & organizations perspectives on value and demands of work	Difference regarding work before and after the COVID-19 pandemic	Adaptivity within the "transition" under the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic	Difficulties and concerns under the "transition" of working patterns	Future trends and patterns of work

Research Process

Diverge — Converge

30+ Database Gather
20+ Case Studies
4 Observation Reflection
80+ Literature Review

Understanding of the current global work situation

Survey & Interview Research Structure

Diverge — Converge

6 Engagement Posters
75+ Survey Data Collection
40 Individual Interviews
3 Focus Group Experiments

Information Synthesis

Test & Interation

Archetype
+
Insights & Trends
+
Possible Future Solution

Research Participant

75 Survey Participants

38 Interview Participants

Female 20
Male 18

Junior 14
Senior 12
Director 12

Asia 18
Europe 3
the US 17

Current Landscape

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, corporate America has grappled with a myriad of intricate challenges and opportunities, predominantly propelled by the rapid integration of hybrid and remote work paradigms. As of 2023, Forbes data reveals that 12.7% of full-time employees presently operate from home, while 28.2% have embraced a hybrid work framework. Despite the consistent surge in remote work, the majority of the workforce, comprising 59.1%, persists in on-site operations.

From the side of individual employees, 32.2% of managers concur that productivity has increased, while remarkably, 94% of general employees report that their work productivity remains the same or has improved compared to their pre-remote work days (Zippia, 2022). Additionally, data reveals that despite 65% of respondents expressing a desire to work remotely on a full-time basis, approximately 50% of remote workers report experiencing feelings of loneliness at least once per week.

From the side of organizations, the controversy of working mode also exists. A survey among 185 HR executives from The Conference Board found that 73% are finding it difficult to encourage employees to return to workplaces (HRD, 2023). Some companies, for example, Grindr, the world's largest social networking App for LGBTQ, has lost about 45% of its staff as it enforces a strict return-to-office policy that was introduced after a majority of employees announced a plan to unionize (LA Times, 2023). However, meanwhile, some companies, like Amazon, are more assertive, that they are strictly requesting employees return to office at least three days per week (Insider, 2023).
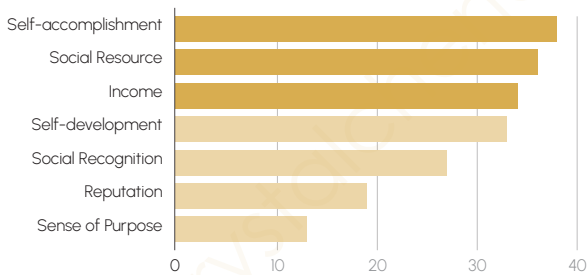
In summary, the future landscape of the workplace represents a pressing challenge that remains undefined and unresolved. Striking a balance between remote and on-site work modalities to maximize stakeholder interests is imperative. Within this context, both individuals and organizations constitute potential variables influenced by their distinct positions and considerations. Conducting comprehensive research and forecasting in this domain presents a substantial gap and an array of opportunities awaiting exploration.

Hybrid work and flexibility are the main trends. Alignment between employee's situation and company's expectation is crucial to determined individual working models.

88% **Advocate hybrid workplace / flexible arrangement**

92% **Consider hybrid mode as the dream mode**

Based on our research, 88% of our participants suggest hybrid workplaces and flexible arrangement as the prediction of the workplace future. 92% of them consider hybrid work mode with a high flexibility as their dream working models.

Self-accomplishment
Social Resource
Income
Self-development
Social Recognition
Reputation
Sense of Purpose

0   10   20   30   40

Priority Value of Work (Sample: 40, from interviews)

Besides, self-accomplishment, income, and social resource are the top three priorities for employees. People who have high satisfaction of their current work mode are more likely to perceive their job as a perfect match, and that significantly influences their achievement in those areas.

"

"I feel more stressful if I need to be on-site everyday, flexibility gives me more energy."
— Mid-level Project Manager

"Higher flexibility will bring more passion to work, but policy is good to set - clear work responsibility, definition, and timeline would offer some good foundation to put more flexibility on the top."
— Mid-level Creative Designer

"I think people, especially talented people, are less likely to be willing to be controlled by others."
— Mid-level Experience Designer

Flexibility / hybrid work is the trend, but the definition and standard of flexibility varies differently based on different individual's and organization's demands.

"Flexibility" varies differently between different individuals. How to find the best-fitted working model based on individual's situation in the future workplace to achieve the "match"?
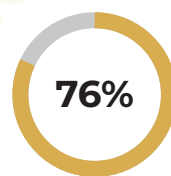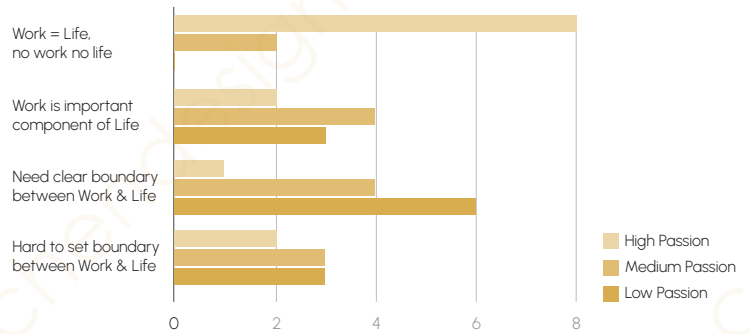
FINDING 1

Passion Level of Work affects individual's choice of working model

■ Employees with higher passions to their work are more likely to step in office and start interaction with their colleagues and the surrounding world.

Acorrding to our interviews, participants who state "passions" to their job, are more likely to consider "Work" as a large meaningful component of their "Life", and that would bring them more curiosity to engage in their company in person.

In contrast, people who proposed low passion to their job are less likely to "waste" time in office but to finish their daily work on their own pace with the least amount of time .

Work = Life, no work no life

Work is important component of Life

Need clear boundary between Work & Life

Hard to set boundary between Work & Life

High Passion
Medium Passion
Low Passion

76%

76% of Interview participants who state themselves "passionate" to their job, reported more concerns to "working online" due to the disconnection and decreasing engagement with their team and company environment.

> "I don't like online, because I can't sense, interact with others, and handle, guarantee the quality. It's also hard to show my passion."
> — CEO of a Middle-size Design Company

> "I feel like a dream job can let me say" I want to to go to job!" There are good friends around, I am doing sth important and create good product with the team. Boss satisfied with my job."
> — Entry-level Graphic Designer

> "My capability is far more than the requirement, so I don't want to perform, pretending that I am busy while I am in office."
> — Entry-level Marketing Specialist

FINDING 2

Work & Position Conditions affect individual's choice of working model.

◼ **Employees whose work involves large systematic complexity and high volumne of conversation prefer more to work in person.**

Our interview reveals that large systematic complexity work *(involves interdisciplinary collaborations, coordination, or creative development)*, and high volumne of conversation *(contains certain discussion, collaboration, and coordination to make progress)* tend to make employees more willing to have meeting or other interaction in person.

❞

"There are certain complex things that you should do in a designated location and that you wouldn't want to bring into a more casual or dispersed location."
— Senior Program Coordinator

"I hate waiting online for people's feedback. It's much better that I can walk to their seats and directly ask for feedback."
— Junior Financial Analyst

"This job doesn't need me to communicate with anyone and I don't want to waste my time sitting in the office. People speak a lot which is unrelated to the work."
— Entry-level Programmer

◼ **Employees whose positions involve strategic decision-making and team management are more willing to have face-to-face interaction.**

❞

"It's hard to build community and culture if it's completely online, connection decreases, not good for management."
— Creative Director

"Scene is important for a buisness, in terms of client, achievement, employees, and team culture..."
— CEO of a middle-size Design Company

Based on our interviews, strategic decision-making and team management responsibility are more adaptable via face-to-face interaction since they generally involve coordinations between several stakeholders. Employees within a relevant position generally report "work in office" as a more effective choice.

FINDING 3
Life & Relationship value affects individual's choice of working model.

■ **Employees who wants to establish strong relationship with their colleagues prefer more to work in office.**

Based on our research, people who intend to build trust, and friendship with their colleagues are more likely to meet their peers in person to establish meaningful conversation or connection.

In contrast, people who prefer to set clear boundary with their colleagues would like to work on their own individually.

> ❝
>
> *"I want a relationship with my team and be able to have energized team lunches to build these relationships."*
> — Assistant
>
> *"I hope to have personal relationship, I want to have more support under the super stressful working environment."*
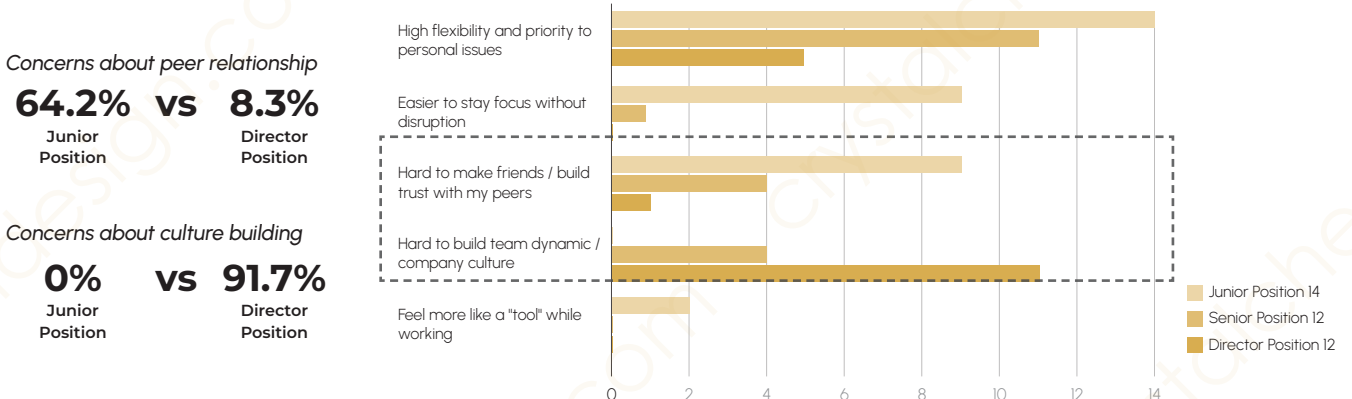> — Entry-level Financial Analyst
>
> *"Go into office is like go to meet people also meet people on the way to office and know what's going on outside."*
> — Freelance Consultant

* People with a higher position (mid-level or above) are more likely to value Team Management instead of Peer Relationship. These two factors share an inter-convertable relationship between.

Interview participants' response while asking their thoughts about "remote work"

Concerns about peer relationship

64.2% vs **8.3%**

Junior Position   Director Position

Concerns about culture building

0% vs **91.7%**

Junior Position   Director Position

Chart categories:
- High flexibility and priority to personal issues
- Easier to stay focus without disruption
- Hard to make friends / build trust with my peers
- Hard to build team dynamic / company culture
- Feel more like a "tool" while working

Legend:
- Junior Position 14
- Senior Position 12
- Director Position 12

Axis: 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14

8

ARCHETYPE SYSTEM

Complementary with our findings, we summarize our archetype framework. This is a theoretical system demonstrating the relation between individual's situation and the corresponding ideal working model. We have Working Stage, MBTI, Passion for Work, Working Conditions, Problem Solving, Relationship Views as our variable factors, moving each part will lead to different result. It aims to identify and match individuals' working model based on their situation.

Archetype Sample

Passion of Work

Work Factors (Communication & Complexity)

Simple (Low Complexity) — Complex (High Complexity)

Communication

Position Factors (Decision Making & Team Management)

Operational / Implementation — Strategic Decision Making

Team Management / Culture Building

Relationship Values (Peer Relationship)

Peer Relationship Building

Name: ABCD

Industry: Technology

Position: Junior XXX

MBTI: ENTJ (Personality)

Ideal Working Model

On-site Oriented Hybrid Model   Remote Oriented Hybrid Model   Other Model

Corresponding to Finding 1, the higher passion, the more tendency to choose on-site oriented hybrid model, vice versa.

Corresponding to Finding 2, the higher complexity the work is, the more communication the work required, the higher tendency to choose on-site oriented hybrid model, vice versa.

Corresponding to Finding 2, the more decision-making and team management the work involved, the higher tendency to choose on-site oriented hybrid model, vice versa.

Corresponding to Finding 3, the more peer relationship be valued, the higher tendency to choose on-site oriented hybrid model, vice versa.

Ideal Working Model matching result.

Personal Information that might affect the result.

Archetype Summary

On-site Oriented Hybrid Model - Junior

Passion of Work

Work Factors (Communication & Complexity)

Simple (Low Complexity) — Complex (High Complexity)

Communication

Position Factors (Decision Making & Team Management)

Operational / Implementation — Strategic Decision Making

Team Management / Culture Building

Relationship Values (Peer Relationship)

Peer Relationship Building

Name: Ivy

Industry: Finance

Position: Junior Investment Analyst

MBTI: ENTJ (Personality)

Ideal Working Model

On-site Oriented Hybrid Model   Remote Oriented Hybrid Model   Other Model

On-site Oriented Hybrid Model - Senior

Passion of Work

Work Factors (Communication & Complexity)

Simple (Low Complexity) — Complex (High Complexity)

Communication

Position Factors (Decision Making & Team Management)

Operational / Implementation — Strategic Decision Making

Team Management / Culture Building

Relationship Values (Peer Relationship)

Peer Relationship Building

Name: Tony

Industry: Design

Position: Senior Product Desginer

MBTI: ENFJ (Personality)

Ideal Working Model

On-site Oriented Hybrid Model   Remote Oriented Hybrid Model   Other Model

Remote Oriented Hybrid Model - Junior

Passion of Work

Work Factors (Communication & Complexity)

Simple (Low Complexity) — Complex (High Complexity)

Communication

Position Factors (Decision Making & Team Management)

Operational / Implementation — Strategic Decision Making

Team Management / Culture Building

Relationship Values (Peer Relationship)

Peer Relationship Building

Name: Dennis

Industry: Technology

Position: Junior Programmer

MBTI: ISTJ (Personality)

Ideal Working Model

On-site Oriented Hybrid Model   Remote Oriented Hybrid Model   Other Model

Remote Oriented Hybrid Model - Senior

Passion of Work

Work Factors (Communication & Complexity)

Simple (Low Complexity) — Complex (High Complexity)

Communication

Position Factors (Decision Making & Team Management)

Operational / Implementation — Strategic Decision Making

Team Management / Culture Building

Relationship Values (Peer Relationship)
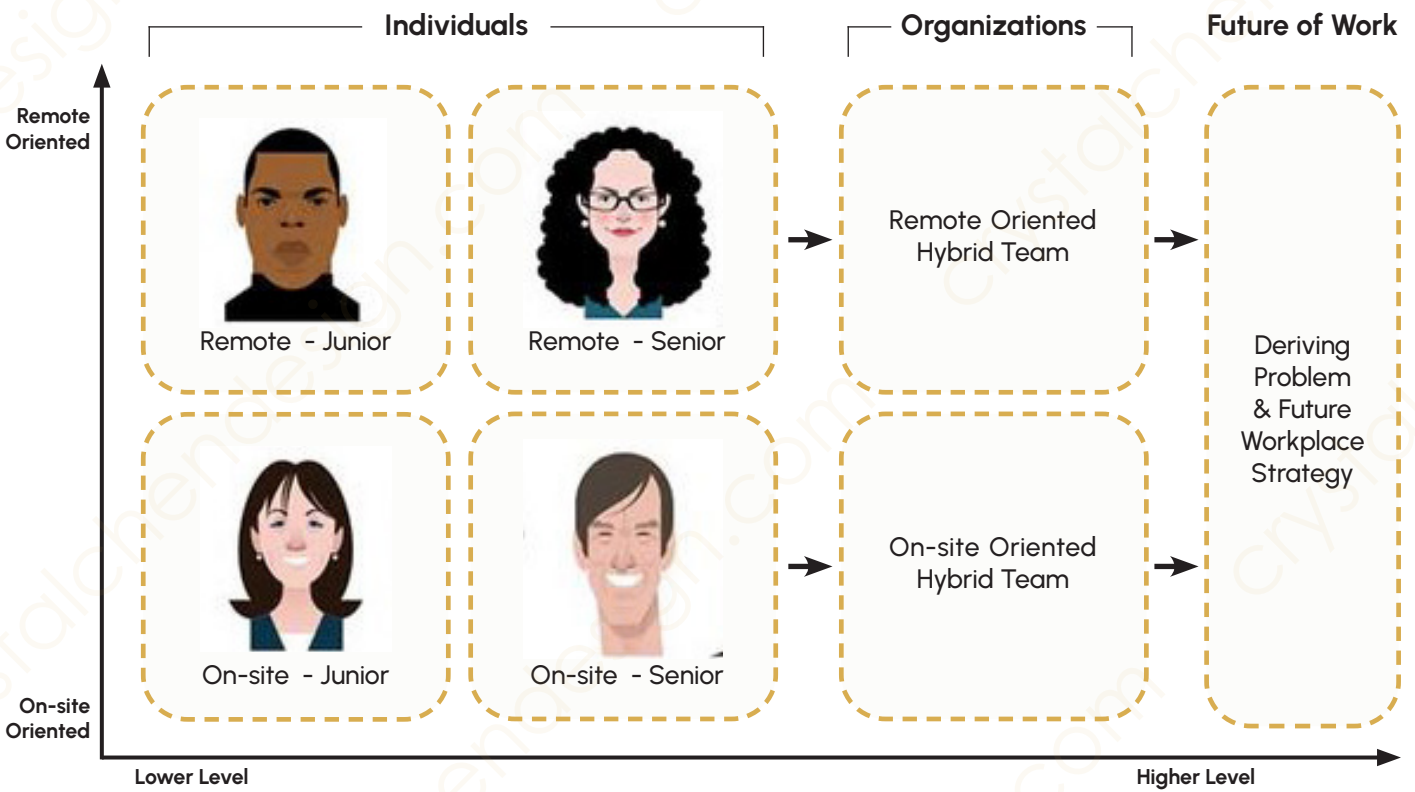
Peer Relationship Building

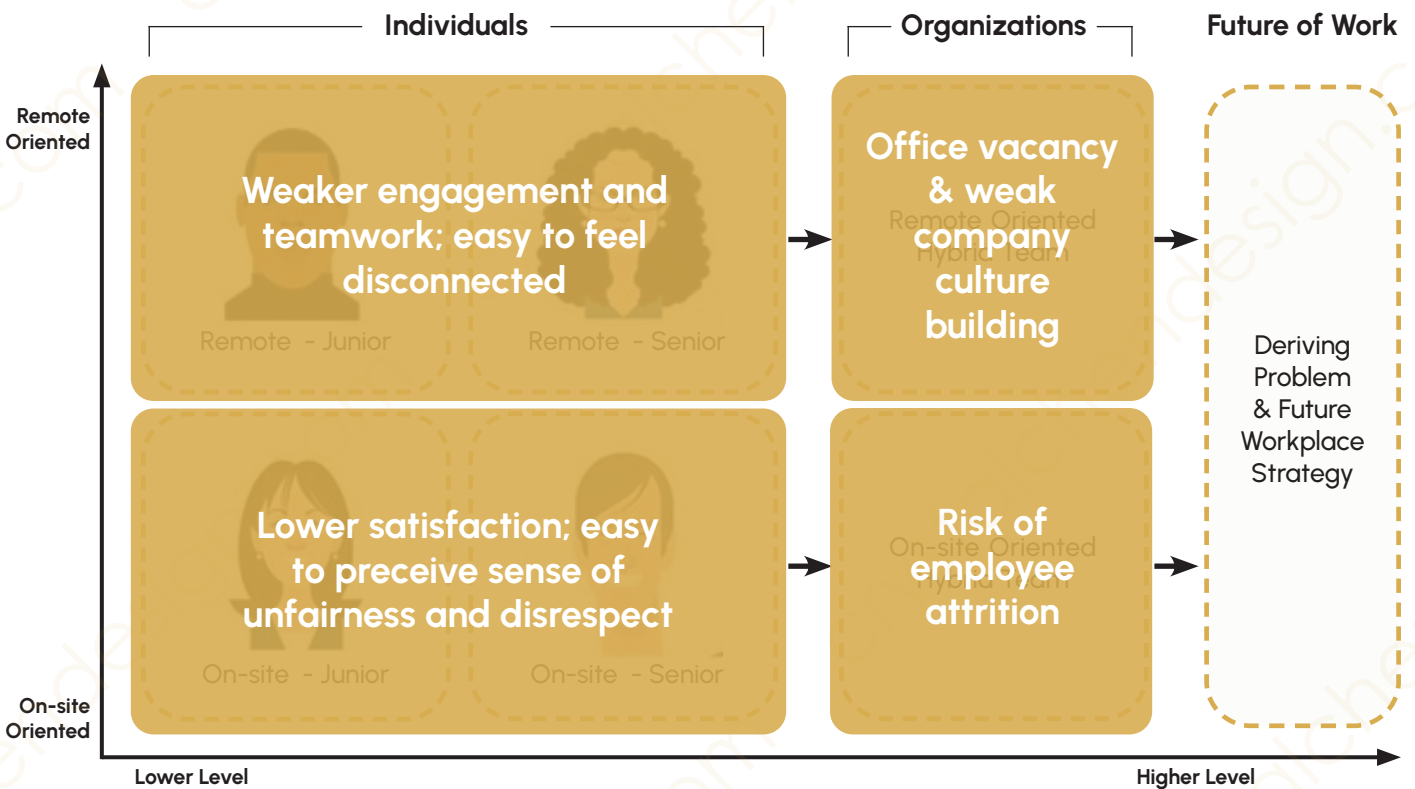**Name:** Jenny

Industry: Law

Position: Team Manageer

MBTI: INTP (Personality)

Ideal Working Model

On-site Oriented Hybrid Model   Remote Oriented Hybrid Model   Other Model

System Structure

	Individuals		Organizations	Future of Work

Remote Oriented

Remote - Junior | Remote - Senior | Remote Oriented Hybrid Team → | Deriving Problem & Future Workplace Strategy

On-site - Junior | On-site - Senior | On-site Oriented Hybrid Team →

On-site Oriented

Lower Level ———————————————————————— Higher Level

Problem deriving from each situation
(They set a direction for workplace future strategy)

	Individuals		Organizations	Future of Work

Remote Oriented

Weaker engagement and teamwork; easy to feel disconnected
Remote - Junior | Remote - Senior

Office vacancy & weak company culture building
Remote Oriented Hybrid Team →

Deriving Problem & Future Workplace Strategy

Lower satisfaction; easy to preceive sense of unfairness and disrespect
On-site - Junior | On-site - Senior

Risk of employee attrition
On-site Oriented Hybrid Team →

On-site Oriented

Lower Level ———————————————————————— Higher Level

CONCLUSION
Workplace Future (Strategy) Direction
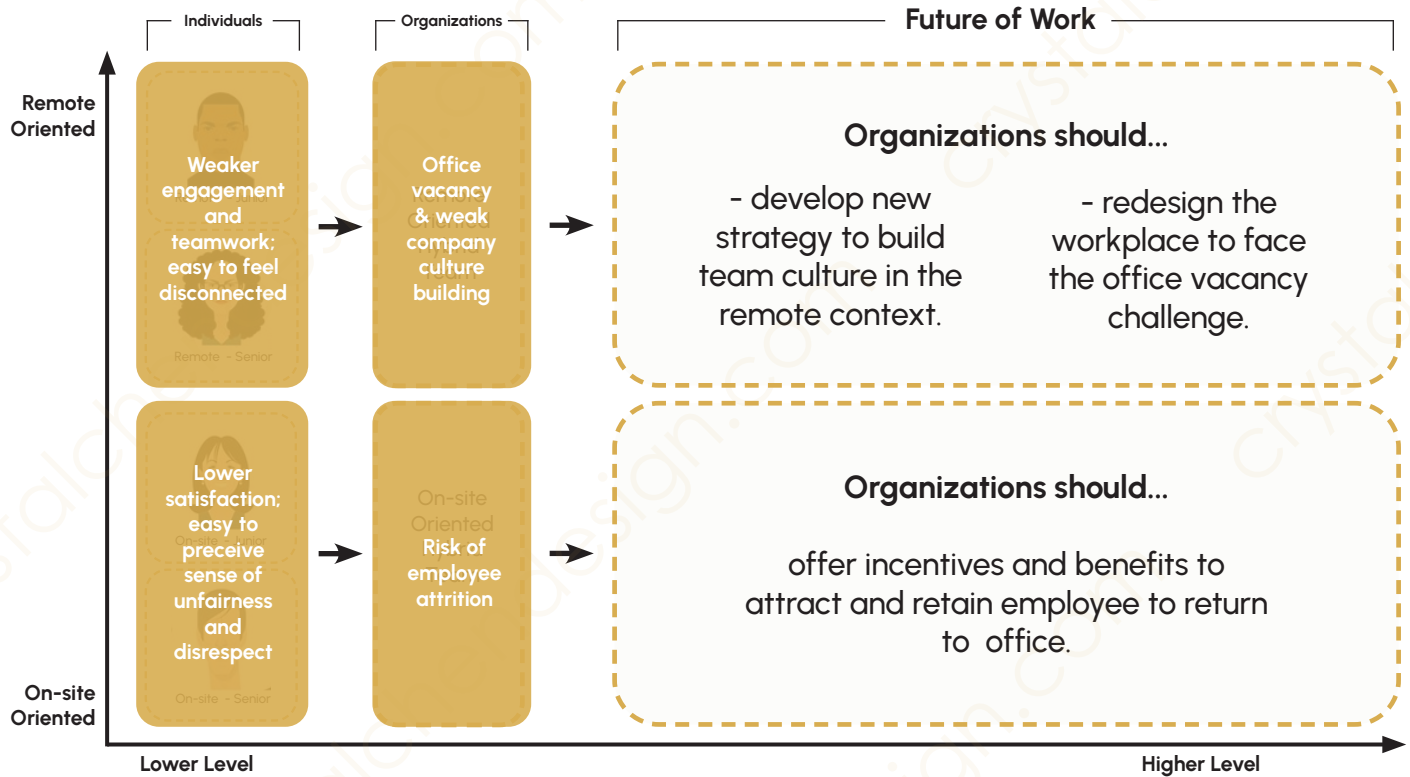
Future Step - HMW Questions

- HMW build distinctive and dynamic organizational cultures for both on-site and hybrid/remote teams?
- HMW redesign office space to strengthen collaboration between coworkers and provide flexible environments for other users?
- HMW create benefits and incentive programs to strengthen and transform working models?

Research Summary & Conclusion

Based on our research, in the future workplace, flexibility is crucial, and the prevailing trend is the hybrid mode. Different individuals and organizations have varying demands, influenced by factors such as, passion level, work conditions, position conditions, and relationship value. There are four archetypes, on-site-oriented team member, on-site-oriented team leader, remote-oriented team member, and remote-oriented team leader, identified based on the findings of workplace future. Each of them will lead to different strategic results.

On-site-oriented models may lead to lower satisfaction, unfairness, and respect issues of employees, and risking employee attrition of organizations. As a result, organizations should create incentives and benefits to attract and retain employee to return to office in their future workplace strategy. On the other hand, remote-oriented models may result in weak engagement and team culture to employees, while lead to office vacancy and a weak company culture of organizations. Therefore, organizations should devise strategies to reutilize the workplace and foster team culture in remote settings. This system illustrates the dynamics of future hybrid models, elucidating the relationship between individuals and organizations to identify the best-matching model. The project will continue for the next six months, with detailed strategies developed based on the HMW questions.

APPENDIX

Glossary of Terms

Future of Work: Concept describing when, where, and how work will be done in the future, how workers and organizations will evolve, and how systems of change will affect employees and employers.

Flexible Work: Employee discretion for when, where, and how work takes place regardless of role, geographic location, or hours per day.

Hybrid: Working model wherein employees are partly on-site in an organization's physical workspace and partly remote, either at home, or another physical space.

On-site: Working model wherein employment takes place at an organization's physical location.

Remote: Working model wherein employees work from home or from another physical space.

Working Model: On-site, remote, or hybrid work; the when, where, and how of work.

Methodology

We emcompassed various method in our whole research process, mainly including desk research, generative/exploratory research, case study, engagement poster, survey, in-depth interview, and focus group.

Desk Research: Extensive desk research across various data platforms to gather data and achieve a broader understanding of the overall landscape of current workplace culture.

Generative/Exploratory Research: Entailed conducting internal group discussions and dynamic brainstorming sessions which sparked the emergence of fresh and innovative insights. This approach served as a catalyst for generating novel ideas and concepts. Our team members actively engaged in sharing unique perspectives and experiences to foster innovation.

Case Study: Deep dive in different companies which have different approaches to work environment policies to get overview of the current working model.

Engagement Poster: Interactive and unstructured survey methods by strategically placing 6 informative posters within our school building. These posters provided inviting gateways for participants to conveniently record their responses. To incentivize participation, we offered incentives including candy to create an engaging and enjoyable survey experience.

Survey: Quantitative research method, a pivotal data collection, which was designed to elicit a broad spectrum of opinions and perspectives from a diverse pool of participants, spanning various demographic categories. This survey yielded 75 respondents and provided a bank of potential interviewees as well as quantitative data.

In-depth Interview: one-on-one dialogues with participants, aimed to obtain profound insights into their individual experiences, perspectives, and values. This approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the nuanced attitudes toward work model issues across various demographic categories, including age, industry, family structure, professional position, geographic location, and more. It is imperative to underscore that we are committed to ensuring a secure and confidential communication environment for our participants throughout the interview process, fostering candid and open discussions. We are speaking to both users (employees and managers) and experts (managers, senior leadership at organizations, and industry leaders) and have devised separate questions for each type of participant. To date, we have conducted 38 interviews.

Focus Group: Gather a selected group of participants who represent our target demographic to test our research and outcome. 2 focus groups were employed in total.

Limitation / Possible Bias

Through a balanced synthesis of qualitative and quantitative research methods, we strived for a well-rounded and insightful research from a diverse array of resources, including different origins, regions and demographic. We endeavored to minimize bias and ensure a comprehensive understanding of our research topics. However, certain bias might still exist due to several restrictions such as, time, budget, human resource, etc. Our power is also limited due to our team volumne. This research will continue for another six months for further research and solution design. Please kindly take these limitation into consideration when viewing and assessing this report.

Bibliography

"3 in 4 HR Leaders Finding It Hard to Bring Back Staff Onsite," August 23, 2023. https://www.hcamag.com/us/specialization/benefits/3-in-4-hr-leaders-finding-it-hard-to-bring-back-staff-onsite/454874.

"Airbnb's design for employees to live and work anywhere," Airbnb, April 28, 2022. https://news.airbnb.com/airbnbs-design-to-live-and-work-anywhere/

"Allstate on its Remote-Work Policy: 'It's Enabled Us to Find the Best Talent,'" SHRM, February 21, 2023. https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/benefits/pages/allstate-on-its-remote-work-policy-%E2%80%98it%E2%80%99s-enabled-us-to-find-the-best-talent%E2%80%99.aspx

"Allstate stands committed to creating a workplace that changes how, when and where work is done - to lead boldly into the future," Allstate, accessed November 24, 2023, https://www.allstate.jobs/2021/10/28/for-allstate-the-future-of-work-is-virtual

Arunprasad, P., Chitra Dey, Fedwa Jebli, Arunmozhi Manimuthu, and Zakaria El Hathat. "Exploring the remote work challenges in the era of COVID-19 pandemic: review and application model." Benchmarking: An International Journal 29, no. 10 (2022): 3333-3355.

Bloomberg, Natalie Lung. "Grindr Loses Nearly Half Its Staff to Strict Return-To-Work Rule." Los Angeles Times, September 7, 2023. https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2023-09-07/grindr-loses-nearly-half-its-staff-to-strict-return-to-work-rule.

Buzzsprout. "The Future of Work with McKinsey's Phil Kirschner - The Hire Thru Retire Podcast," January 23, 2023. https://www.buzzsprout.com/1651156/12087358-the-future-of-work-with-mckinsey-s-phil-kirschner.

Collins, Katie. 2023. "Work All over the World without Ruining It: Ethics for Digital Nomads." CNET, June 1, 2023. https://www.cnet.com/culture/features/work-all-over-the-world-without-ruining-it-ethics-for-digital-nomads/.

Curry, David. "Microsoft Teams Revenue and Usage Statistics (2023)." Business of Apps, July 18, 2023. https://www.businessofapps.com/data/microsoft-teams-statistics/.

Development, PodBean. "S2, E2: Rethinking the Future of Offices | Looking Forward: Conversations about the Future of Work." PodBean, July 13, 2022. https://lookingforwardhermanmiller.podbean.com/e/rethinking-the-future-of-offices/.

DiDomenico, Patrick. 2023. "Why CEOs Want Employees Back in the Office." SHRM, July 17, 2023. https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/why-ceos-want-employees-return-to-office.aspx.

Ernst Kossek, Ellen, Patricia Gettings, and Kaumudi Misra. "The Future of Flexibility at Work." Harvard Business Review, November 8, 2022. https://hbr.org/2021/09/the-future-of-flexibility-at-work.

Fathurahman, Muhammad. "Path Analysis Between Job Satisfaction And Loyalty With Work Environment And Culture As Explanatory Variables." PRODUKTIF: Jurnal Kepegawaian dan Organisasi 1, no. 1 (2022): 36-43.

Fung, Brian. "Amazon CEO tells employees to return to the office or their days may be numbered." CNN, August 30, 2023. https://www.cnn.com/2023/08/29/business/amazon-jobs-return-to-office/index.html

Grantham-Phillips, Wyatte. "WeWork Sounds the Alarm, Prompting Speculation around the Company's Future." ABC News. Accessed September 10, 2023. https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/wework-warned-substantial-doubt-ability-stay-business-means-102288214.

Gratton, Lynda. Redesigning Work: How to Transform Your Organization & Make Hybrid Work for Everyone. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2022), 1.

"How AnyCart Virtually Replicated Their Office with Teamflow." Accessed November 24, 2023. https://www.teamflowhq.com/customers/how-anycarts-remote-team-uses-teamflow-to-feel-like-a-team-again.

Iqbal, Mansoor. "Zoom Revenue and Usage Statistics (2023) ." Business of Apps, July 18, 2023. https://www.businessofapps.com/data/zoom-statistics/.

Jassy, Andy. "Update from Andy Jassy on return to office plans." Amazon, February 17, 2023. https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/company-news/andy-jassy-update-on-amazon-return-to-office.

Kalev, Alexandra, and Frank Dobbin. "The Surprising Benefits of Work/Life Support." Harvard Business Review, August 16, 2022. https://hbr.org/2022/09/the-surprising-benefits-of-work-life-support.

Khoo, Natalie. 2023. "7 Virtual Spaces besides Zoom to Gather for Meetings, Events or Catch-Ups." BURO., April. https://www.buro247.my/lifestyle/technology/virtual-spaces-besides-zoom-for-meetings-events.html.

"Lead Winning Teams with a Virtual Sales Floor | TeamflowHQ." accessed November 24, 2023, https://www.teamflowhq.com/.

McKinsey & Company. "How Virtual Work Is Accelerating Innovation," June 6, 2022. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/operations/our-insights/how-virtual-work-is-accelerating-innovation.

"Our design to live and work anywhere and Live and Work Anywhere initiative," Airbnb, April 28, 2022. https://news.airbnb.com/our-design-to-live-and-work-anywhere-and-live-and-work-anywhere-initiative/

Partridge, Joanna. "WeWork Has ' Substantial Doubt' It Can Stay in Business." The Guardian, August 9, 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/aug/09/wework-has-substantial-doubt-it-can-stay-in-business.

Peters, Jay. "Amazon Is the Latest Company to Bring Staff back to the Office Three Days a Week." The Verge, February 17, 2023. https://www.theverge.com/2023/2/17/23604485/amazon-return-to-office-three-day-week.

Shirmohammadi, Melika, Wee Chan Au, and Mina Beigi. "Remote work and work-life balance: Lessons learned from the covid-19 pandemic and suggestions for HRD practitioners." Human Resource Development International 25, no. 2 (2022): 163-181.

Younger, Jon. 2022. "The Trends Shaping The Freelance Revolution In 2023." Forbes, December 22, 2022. https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonyounger/2022/12/22/the-trends-shaping-the-freelance-revolution-in-2023.

Report 2023: Future of Work
Produced by: Aleigha Knight, **Crystal Chen**, Yuanyuan Li, Shannon Robertson   Dec, 2023