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WORKTECH 2023 – 5 Global Office Trends of the Future.



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In this article, we're going to explore 5 global office trends that the UK-based intelligence group, Worktech, has identified as key designs of the future.



It's no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic changed the nature of work as we know it. From remote and hybrid working arrangements to office technologies that foster collaboration, the modern office has had to evolve in order to meet the needs of the 21st century. In saying that, not every attempt to entice workers back into the office has been successful. So, when it comes to emerging global trends, which "office of the future ideas" have actually worked?

In this article, we're going to explore 5 global office trends that the UK-based intelligence group, Worktech, has identified as key designs of the future. We'll explore the thinking behind these trends, as well as share examples of how they've worked in real life. By the end of this article, you'll be a budding futurist and will know which trends will be the new office normal.

Who is Worktech?

[Worktech](#) is one of the world's leading membership clubs and intelligence networks. Publishing several reports every year, Worktech's whole purpose is to measure, predict and advise on global office trends to make businesses more efficient.

On the 4th of April 2023, Worktech held their conference at the NSW Art Gallery in Sydney. Given the title "Explore the Future of Work and the Workplace", the conference featured presentations from architects, people managers, project managers and CEO's of some of the world's biggest companies.

Worktech and the State of the Modern Office

During the various presentations, one theme soon became painfully clear. Staff had become accustomed to the freedom and comfort of remote working and were resisting calls to return to the office. It made the request to come back in somewhat heated. A good proportion of staff would rather skip the commute to be able to do their shift in their pyjamas.



The remote workers have a point though. Besides the health and wellness benefits, studies have found that "deep working", or doing long periods of uninterrupted work was up to 40% more efficient at home versus the office.

Despite this, there are also cases to be made for the humble office worker. Other studies have concluded that in-person collaboration boosts social well-being and generates higher amounts of planning productivity.

With both arguments in mind, most businesses have landed on a 60-40 split of remote and in-person work, allowing staff to choose which days they come to the office. Even with this flexibility however, there is still resistance from workers who've grown accustomed to their new freedom.



“So, if hybrid working is the future of the modern office, how do we get staff to come back to the office?”

Magnetize, Not Mandate

No-one likes being told what to do. Ask any toddler. So demanding your staff come back into the office 5 days a week is only going to make them more defiant. The key to having your staff enthusiastically return is actually quite simple.

“You need to provide a space, environment or experience that they can’t get at home.”

Whether this be amenities, technology, or relaxation zones built into the floorplan, employees need to feel like they are getting something out of coming in to work.

5 Global Office Trends of the Future

Worktech Academy’s Development Director, Matthew Myerson delivered a presentation entitled “What’s on the cards for 2023? Top 20 Trends Explored”. This presentation was the culmination of 12 months of research, data collection and surveys from the world’s biggest organizations.



As many of his observations centred around building construction, environmental sustainability and people management, we’ve chosen five of the most relevant trends that applies to office furniture, design and fit-outs.

1. New Suburbia

At the beginning of the pandemic, landlords of office real estate suddenly panicked. Their once-bustling floors of office buildings had suddenly dwindled to a ghost town of skeleton staff coming in occasionally. Remote work had taken over, and the exodus out of the office also translated to people moving from the cities to the suburbs and beyond.



In response, many companies moved to set up smaller, inner suburban work hubs that were accessible on a faster commute. Businesses traded their inner-city office leases for practical locations in satellite cities.



The famous example is San Francisco and the adjacent Silicon Valley. Despite the tech boom during the pandemic, many residents fled the overpriced real estate prices and rapidly rising cost of living, moving to cheaper cities. The result was smaller tech hubs emerging in surrounding cities, the most notable of which being Austin, Texas which has grown up as a mini-Silicon Valley in its own right.



Closer to home, we see this in the growth of secondary cities outside of some of Australia's state capitals. Sydney's second CBD is the ever-growing Parramatta, whose council area covers multiple suburban regions. Businesses can enjoy world class infrastructure with drastically cheaper rents than in the city CBD.

"New Suburbia", or the "blending of the city with the 'burbs" is a fantastic way to not only save money, but convenience your staff with a shorter commute at the same time.

2. Office as Offsite

Some of the attended work events are those that involved travelling and meeting at a new location. Whether it was a team building exercise at an axe-throwing range or a training day at a manufacturer's factory, staff generally enjoy the novelty of working in an "office away from the office".

It doesn't matter how bright the décor is in your office, eventually staff get bored of looking at the same 4 walls and clichéd inspirational quotes on the wall.



Having an “off-site office” or workplace that doesn’t feel like an office is a great way to motivate your staff to return in from their remote hibernation.

One famous example is Salesforce’s Trailblazer Ranch, a 75-acre property out in the Redwood Forest of Scott’s Valley California.



Salesforce employees have the opportunity to participate in tactile experiences like guided nature walks, restorative yoga, garden tours, group cooking classes, art journaling, and meditation. There are spaces for training and working as well, but it feels more like a nature retreat than an office for obvious reasons.

Having an “office as an offsite” can reinvigorate an employee on the verge of burnout, as well as foster a deeper bond between colleagues who would otherwise be virtual strangers.

3. Mixed-Up Use

Long before the Covid-19 pandemic altered our relationship with the office, the city, technology and each other, the smart mixed-experience precinct was already on the horizon. Office towers were being planned with retail, nightlife and residential all factored into a larger “precinct-style” feel.

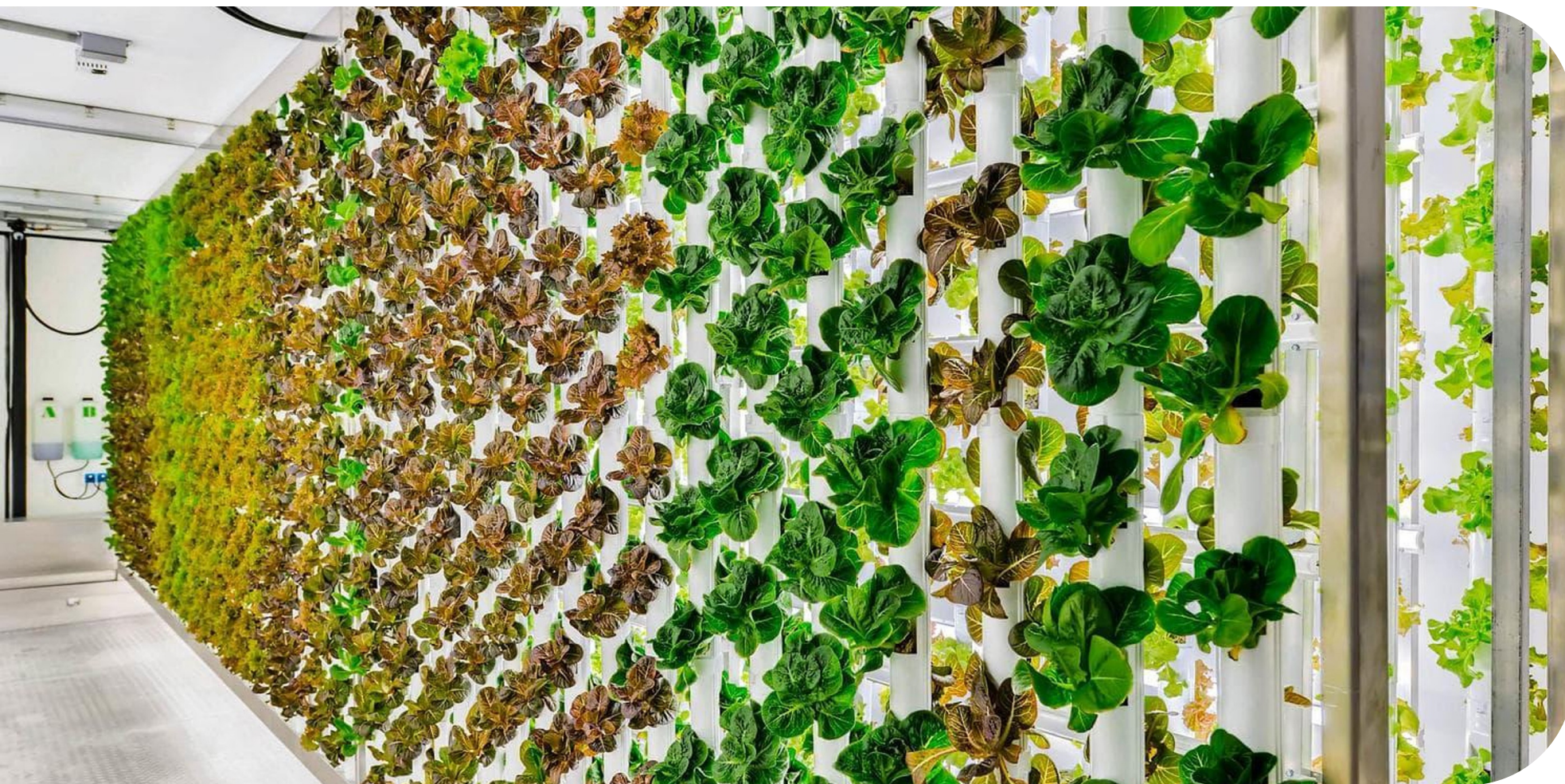
We’re seeing this in action in the Barangaroo and Circular Quay redevelopments right now. You’ve got massive office towers built on top of commercial businesses, all interwoven by park spaces, high-density residential and entertainment zones.

But if we zoom in for a second to the office itself, mixed-up use still applies just as much. Research has shown that post-pandemic, businesses still allocated more than three times the amount of traditional cubicle-style desking than is ever needed at any given time.

Business that can reallocate traditional desked areas into mixed-up use or multi-purpose areas find that they can save money on energy and the square-metre floorspace required for your team.

4. Biophilia & Vertical Gardens

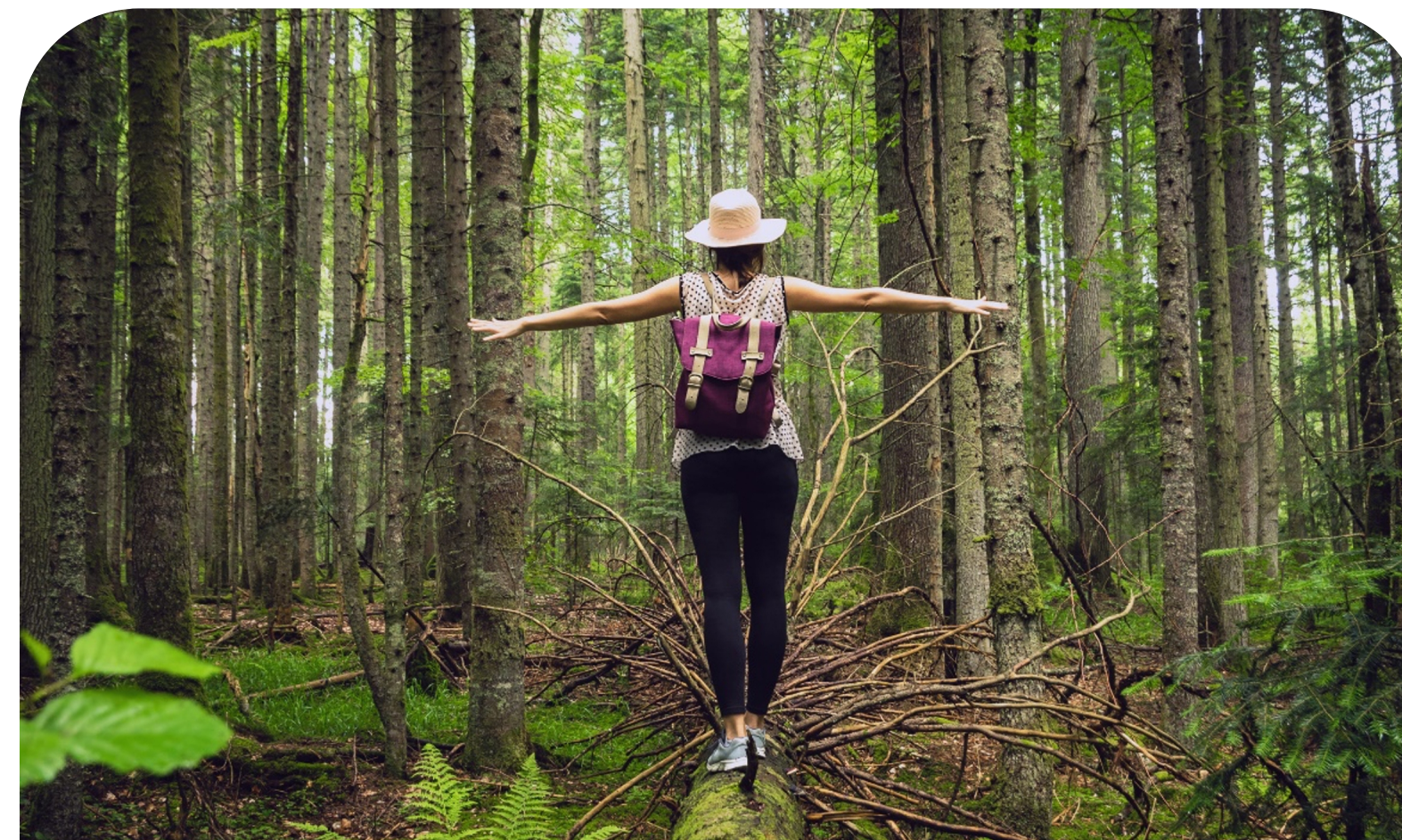
The incorporation of nature into corporate office environments has been gaining traction in recent years, and for good reason. From vibrant vertical gardens to hydroponic balcony farms, nature comes in many forms and has been shown to have a positive impact on the well-being of office occupants.



Biophilic design and the incorporation of vertical gardens is rooted in the human innate desire to connect with nature. It draws inspiration from nature and has been found to lower stress levels, enhance cognitive function, increase productivity, and stimulate creativity in the workplace.

As stay-at-home orders are lifted and workers transition back to the office, biophilic design can be utilized to entice them away from the comfort of their home office and make their daily commute worthwhile. Incorporating biophilic elements into office spaces can improve the well-being of occupants and promote a productive work environment.

Effective biophilic design creates a harmonious ecosystem that satisfies the human desire to be close to nature and fosters an emotional attachment to space and place. This attachment motivates performance and productivity, while also promoting positive interactions and relationships among people. In contrast, artificial settings can lead to fatigue, symptoms of disease, and impaired performance.



Studies of the ancient Japanese practice of forest bathing, or Shinrin-yoku, provide further evidence of the benefits of introducing nature into the office. Forest bathing involves mindfully taking in the sights, sounds, and smells of the forest and has been shown to have numerous physical and mental health benefits.

Trees release phytoncides, or essential oils into the air as a means of protecting themselves from germs and other parasites. When humans breathe in these compounds during forest bathing, they gain therapeutic benefits such as decreased stress, anxiety, and blood pressure, and increased immune function.



– Biophilia in Action: The Lahti Experiment

In an extension of forest bathing, the Finnish city of Lahti has come up with a brilliant idea. Out in remote locations in Lahti's forests, you'll find tree-hung laptop desks installed in random locations. These desks have proven popular with people working from home during the pandemic and now by digital nomads. The idea is contagious as well, with other towns in Finland and Sweden considering following Lahti's lead.

The statistics are sobering. The majority of people spend an alarming 90% of their time indoors. Embracing biophilic design and introducing nature into the office is a sensible way to promote well-being and enhance productivity.

5. Immersion

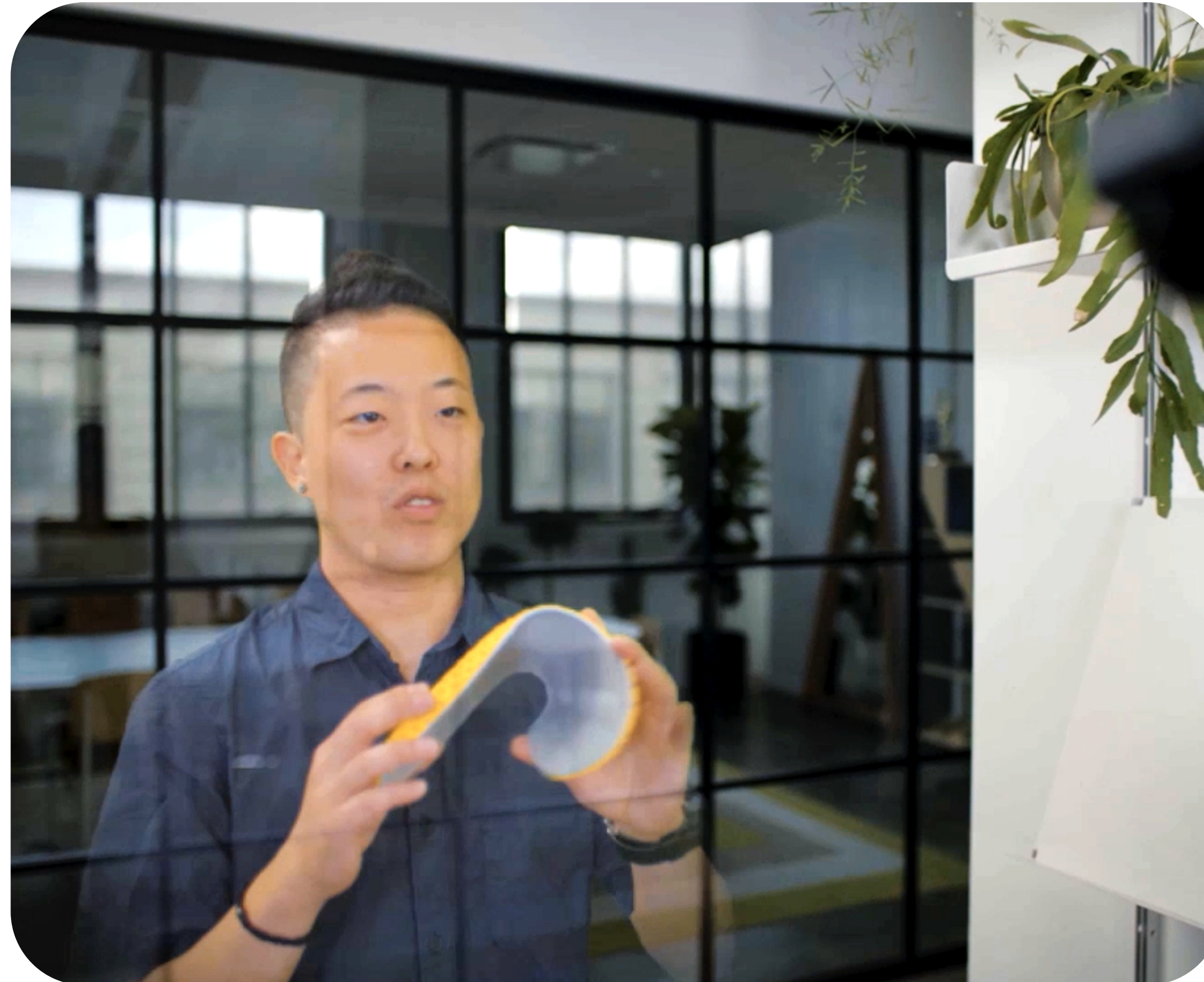
Immersion describes a phenomenon that appeals to multiple senses simultaneously, altering the way you perceive the world. It can make something impossible feel real or can make you feel like you are part of the story. An immersive experience can be anything from a captivating movie to a virtual-reality game.

There are several ways the offices of the future are using immersion, all of them equally fascinating in principle. The first is around the humble Zoom meeting. Despite video conferencing being standard across most businesses, there is still a disconnect between those in the office and those at home.



For starters, let's consider how much screen real estate each participant gets. Someone dialing in from home gets their own little square on the call screen and is highlighted when they're speaking. You might have four office workers in the board room, all competing against each other for the same size space. It becomes a challenge for remote workers to know who is talking when multiple people are in one location.

Likewise, when short, round-the-table discussions happen, people dialing in can feel left out.



There's been great strides made in virtual and augmented reality, as well as holographic displays. This means that meetings can soon be conducted in a virtual room, connecting all participants equally. The immersive quality of these technologies means that everyone feels truly connected and has an equal voice in meetings.

Remember, immersion tricks the brain into believing things are real. This could ultimately address that disconnect that some remote workers feel as a result of being offsite.



The Office of the Future Requires Out-of-the-Box Thinking.

While this is a pretty helpful list of future trends, it's by no means a conclusive one. More often than not, clients will have complex requests that require true out-of-the-box thinking and a creative solution. If you're stuck for ideas, or simply want an office furniture wholesaler you can rely on, we're here to help. Give us a call us at [02 8188 2732](tel:0281882732) so we can discuss some options.

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