

Collaboration to Thrive at Work



As the work from anywhere culture gains momentum, ensuring that all members of a team can actively participate in collaborative efforts—even from a distance—is key. Growing companies and those who thrive through talent are looking to iterate fast and learn, innovate, and figure out how to work more effectively together as agile, cross-functional teams.

Regardless of an organization's culture, collaboration happens—both in planned gatherings and spontaneous interactions. There is richness in the diversity of exchange and more thoughtful outcomes when people come together to contribute their own ideas, knowledge, and perspectives. Designing for collaboration helps create an environment where employees feel valued for their unique experience and input, and the organization moves in sync and forward faster to reach organizational goals.

Office is for Collaboration

#1 Answer

“Working in-person with team/colleague” is the number one reason to come into the office, per Gensler's global workplace research. It was the top reason by industry, by generation, and by country. In the US, connecting and socializing with coworkers were also cited as important.

Being with people may be the new workplace amenity—and the draw to the office.

Source: [Gensler, 2022](#)

Collaborative Modes

Research continues to build evidence that we are social and thrive in community, that people accomplish more together than alone, and these tenets are inherently intertwined in the workplace. The reasons people gather at work can be distilled down to four reasons:

Collaborative Modes Framework

- To **connect** socially
- To **think** together
- To **do** something specific
- To **inform** one another



Source: Haworth white paper, *Aligning Organizational Culture & Collaboration Spaces*, 2020

Collaboration is a common denominator in the ideal workplace culture. In other words, every organization, regardless of the type of culture, toggles between people gathering to either connect socially, think together, do something specific, or inform one another. Depending on the culture, the collaborative mode is supported in different ways.

Given the shift for many to remote or hybrid work, we've learned that team members don't all need to be in one physical location to collaborate. The most successful organizations enable people to work well together, and support the need for individual, heads-down focused work—whether they are in the office, at home, or in a third place of their choice.

Finding Common Ground

We know involving others is quite important to move creative ideas toward innovation. Employees need the interaction of others to test out their own ideas and build upon theirs.

In large organizations where thorny problems are tackled by experts from diverse disciplines, developing relationships with peers and leadership is critical to being effective. When collaboration is built on trust and shared values, employee engagement soars and objectives are met more efficiently and effectively. Through productive collaboration, performance is enhanced and employees feel a greater sense of belonging.

Differing perspectives, specialized language, and physical distance are all barriers that can hinder collaboration. Giving employees the space—literally and figuratively—to develop empathy and foster trusting relationships sets all teams and the organization up for success.

Video Versus Face-to-Face

Although it can be done via video, people working together simultaneously on the same task is better done in shared space, face-to-face. Collaborative technology has yet to fully replicate the information-rich context found in workspaces where teams gather. What's more, virtual teams must put forth effort, time, and intentionality toward developing and maintaining their social connections.

All that being said, unlocking performance, particularly among high-performing teams, requires collaborative technology. One or more workstream collaborative platforms that allow for seamless access and communication between teammates, no matter where they work, can maximize problem solving and elevate efficiency and alignment toward goals. Beyond this, a shared workspace can help minimize any friction between teams, as well as eliminate waste and tension.



Ways to maximize the value of collaborative platforms within high-performing teams:

- Ensure new technology provides advantages while reducing complexity
- Encourage leaders to demonstrate desired behaviors and advocate for adoption of new tools
- Commit the necessary resources to support adoption of new technologies and work through possible pain points

Aligning Activities to Collaborative Space

Shared activities ebb and flow, depending on the stage of a project or task. The number, size, and arrangement of collaboration spaces preferred by a particular group or team will depend on the goals and the tasks they need to perform. We know that where collaboration spaces are located on the floorplate directly correlates to how well they are used and how well they support the desired activity.

Workplace design that strikes the right balances of common areas, shared workspaces, and individual workstations can enhance collaboration. Given the right places, spaces, and tools, people can be free to do what they need to do to create and innovate.

As work shifts to more distributed and hybrid collaboration, it becomes increasingly important to understand how to collaborate effectively. By aligning collaborative modes to support desired behaviors, spaces that foster teamwork help achieve business goals.

Want to learn more?

To explore workspace needs and create environments where employees can connect, think, do and inform, contact your local Haworth representative.