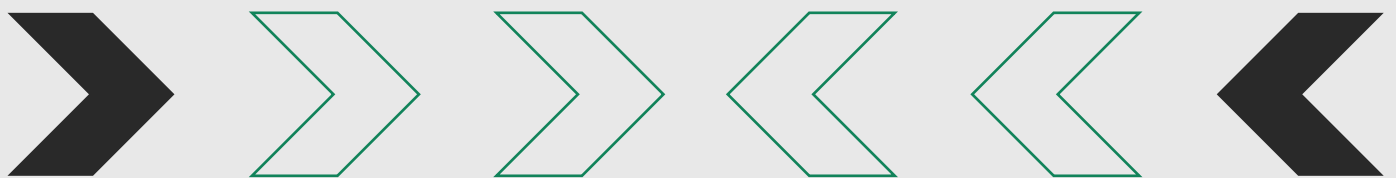




ACCESSING EXPERIENCE

How evolving behaviours and data
insights are transforming the workplace



INTRODUCTION

Today's landscape of work is undergoing a significant transformation with the continuous evolution of employee behaviours and the influence of data insights on workplace decision-making. Balancing employee expectations of autonomy and flexibility with the productivity and output needs of the business is a top priority for organisations managing a hybrid workforce. It is a complex equation that will have a considerable impact on the physical office environment.

Employees are increasingly curating their own work patterns and schedules based on their personal and professional responsibilities. This is leading to unpredictable workplace occupancy levels throughout the working week. Without the consistency of knowing who will be in the office, organisations struggle to manage and design spaces that can adapt to employee preferences and needs, while employees lack the ability to reliably plan in-person collaboration with available colleagues.

Academic research links positive workplace experiences to the overall success of an organisation and finds that happy employees are often notably more productive.

Research conducted by Oxford University's Saïd Business School in collaboration with BT¹ found that wellbeing was strongly associated with firm profitability, showing a strong positive relationship between employee wellbeing and organisational performance. This link reinforces the economic value of investing in employee wellbeing and implementing strategies that foster a happier workforce.

Data plays a critical role in developing successful workplace experiences, enabling organisations to make informed decisions and providing real-time insights into employee behaviours, needs and preferences. As organisations strive to find the right balance between functionality and experience in the workplace, the role of data will become increasingly important to gain a deeper understanding of who is using the office, and how.

This report by Accessia, in partnership with WORKTECH Academy, explores how employee behaviours have shifted in recent years and the emerging reliance on accurate data to design great experiences and effective workplaces. It builds on an article series exploring these themes in detail by conducting interviews with thought leaders in the field of workplace transformation and digital experience.

The report aims to set out a guideline to help steer organisations towards an effective data-led workplace strategy for the future, categorised for four key steps: Understanding evolving employee demands, applying the data overlay, creating human-centred workplaces and implementing data-driven changes.

¹ Workplace Wellbeing and Firm Performance, May 2023, University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper 2304



UNDERSTAND evolving employee demands

The hybrid work movement is perhaps the most significant shift in employee behaviour in recent years. As the balance of power tilted in favour of employees, office workers voted firmly and confidently with their feet on how and where they wanted to work in the future. Today, hybrid working patterns have settled at around 3.5 days per week in the office, according to research by McKinsey². In response, organisations are re-evaluating their policies and office environments to respond to new, more flexible, ways of working.

One strategy for creating effective flexible spaces is to understand how different teams work and collaborate together in the office. In a report published in the *Journal of Administrative Sciences*³, findings indicate that whilst employees prioritise flexibility with their time, the ability to work locally is also growing in importance. This highlights a shift in employee preferences around work arrangements, emphasising that flexibility is no longer limited to just flexible hours or remote work, but rather shifting towards employees wanting the option to work closer to home or in locations that reduce commuting times. The report emphasises that the organisations designed with employee needs in mind are the ones who will maintain a competitive edge in the future. The implication here is significant for shaping organisational policies: employers must consider aligning workplace practices with evolving employee expectations.

Introducing and sustaining flexibility into working practices extends to the physical office environment. Research from CBRE⁴ indicates that 80 per cent of current office occupiers have adopted and will sustain hybrid work policies. The hybrid experience is the pinnacle of the future workplace. Get it right, and organisations can provide the best of both worlds: the autonomy to work remotely when needed, and the opportunity to engage face-to-face in vibrant, inspiring workspaces that strengthen team bonds.

A key challenge here is navigating how hybrid work increases the variation of in-office attendance. Employees making the journey into the office want to know that their time spent working in person will be valuable – that they will have access to the people and resources they need in order to get their work done. Today, the demand for hybrid work and hybrid workspaces is shaped by a blend of workplace policies and diverse employee working styles, which can be best understood by analysing patterns of office usage and attendance.

The more flexibility that a workplace affords its employees, the more complex it becomes to navigate employee behaviours. Decisions must be made about what types of workspaces best support the desired workplace experience, and research by CBRE⁵ indicates that the majority of employees choose to go into the office for team connection and community. In addition, a study led by University of Essex and University of Chicago economists⁶ highlighted that staff who worked in a remote or hybrid model were less likely to come up with innovative ideas than colleagues who always worked in the office. This research reinforces that organisations should create intentional and collaborative in-office experiences that foster team interactions.

² Empty space and hybrid places: The pandemic's lasting impact on real estate. McKinsey, 2023

³ Hybrid Work Model: An Approach to Work-Life Flexibility in a Changing Environment, June 2023, Administrative Sciences

⁴ The Math Behind the Hybrid Workplace, January 2024, CBRE

⁵ The Math Behind the Hybrid Workplace, January 2024, CBRE

⁶ Employee innovation during office work, work from home and hybrid work, July 2024, Scientific Reports

Currently, the average workplace experience is not a powerful attractor back to the office. A recent report by Leesman, titled *The Power of Place*, found that ‘the average home supports the average worker better than the average office’⁷. Additionally, a survey published in May 2024, led by Charu Srivastava from Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design⁸, showed that while employees perceive their work performance to be notably higher in the office, their comfort and wellbeing are significantly greater when working from home.

Further research from Gartner⁹ highlights how a human-centric approach, which provides people with more control over their work environment, results in greater employee productivity. As comfort and wellbeing become more prominent factors in job satisfaction, companies may find it beneficial to invest in creating workplaces that make the workplace as appealing as home.

Research from McKinsey¹⁰ has found that 82 per cent of employees believe it is important for their company to have a purpose. Creating spaces that support collaboration, learning and wellbeing can make the office a valuable complement to home-based work. The research further suggests that a fulfilling workday clarifies the benefits of co-locating with colleagues¹¹. A clear, purpose-driven approach to office attendance helps employees make intentional choices about when to come in, aligning their presence with meaningful collaboration opportunities. When a company’s purpose guides in-office interactions, employees can more easily see the value of in-person work, knowing that their time in the office supports connections and productive teamwork.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to magnetising employees back to the workplace. Bridging this gap between the office and home environment will involve creating a seamless experience for employees that combines the best aspects of both environments. Since employees are primarily coming into workspaces to collaborate with their teams, there is a clear need to design spaces that support the preferred ways employees use the office and facilitate valuable, meaningful experiences.



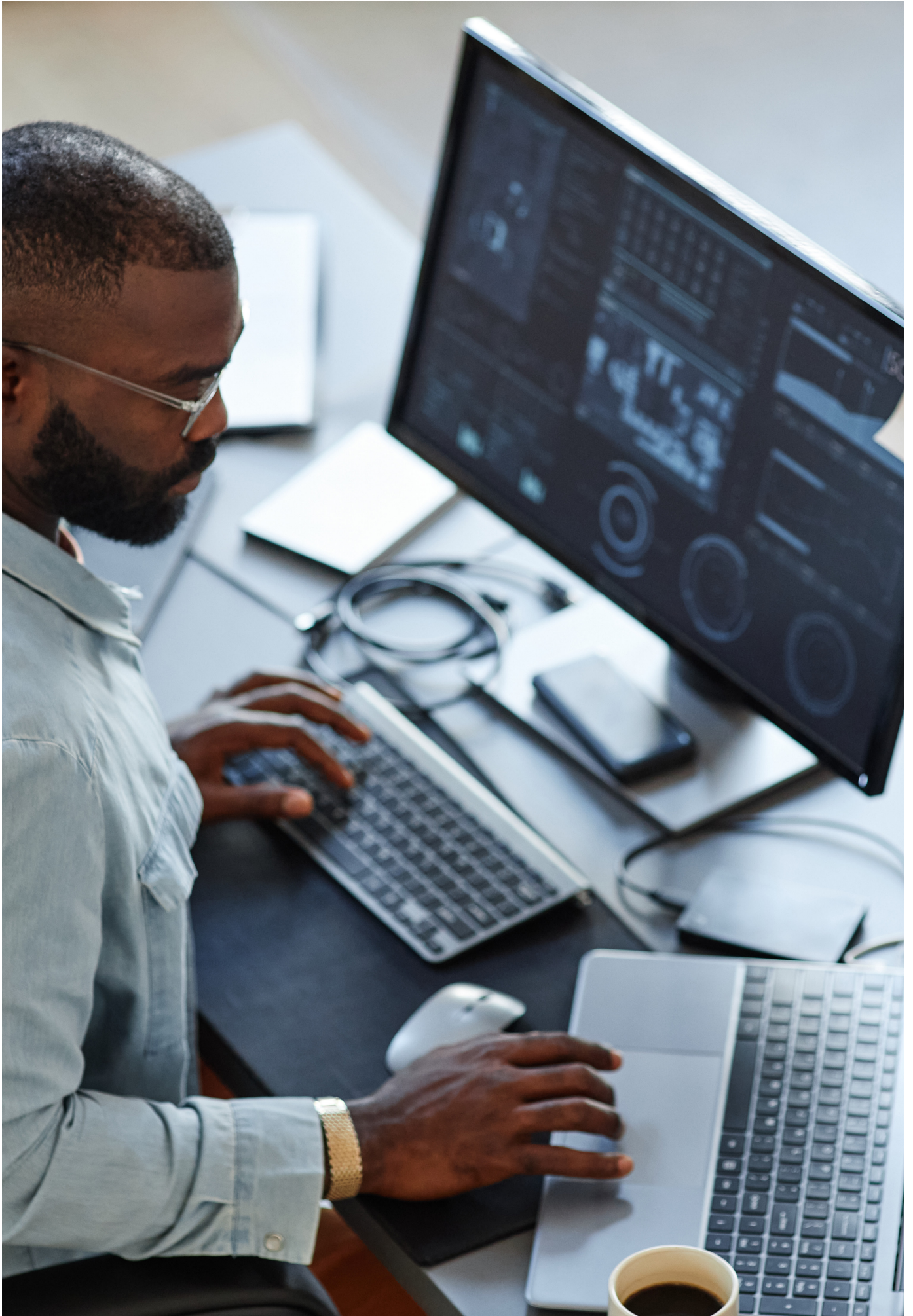
⁷ Power of Place, March 2024, Leesman

⁸ Impact of workplace design on perceived work performance and well-being: Home versus office, May 2024, Journal of Environmental Psychology

⁹ Employees Seek Personal Value and Purpose at Work, March 2023, Gartner

¹⁰ Purpose: shifting from how to why, April 2020, McKinsey & Company

¹¹ Your office needs a purpose, August 2022, McKinsey & Company



APPLY the data overlay

Evolving employee expectations demand a more personalised, optimised and flexible approach to workplace design. Collecting and analysing workplace data is an essential part of the equation to design spaces that are responsive to evolving employee behaviours, but without a universal guideline for what data needs to be collected, and how it should be interpreted, organisations struggle to transform it into actionable insights.

This is illustrated by research from Quantum Workplace¹² which outlines that two thirds of employees believe organisations fail to effectively translate the results of their engagement surveys into actionable strategies. Though a majority of organisations recognise the power of data in shaping their workplaces, many then struggle to fully leverage its capabilities.

Collecting high-quality, relevant data is paramount to ensuring accurate decision making in the workplace, as well as improving operational efficiency and optimising space utilisation. It is important that the methods used to obtain data are accurate in order to ensure that data is of high quality. Data collected through Wi-Fi, for example, can offer general insights into occupancy patterns but may lack the fine-grained accuracy to track movements in specific areas, whilst sensors are able to provide more granular data that offer a higher level of precision. Sensors are further beneficial in the way that they can generate person-attributed data, offering organisations the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals interact with particular spaces. By choosing the right data collection methods, organisations can ensure that the data they gather is relevant to their objectives.

The Harvard Business Review¹³ found that companies have most success with their workplace data when they treat it like a product. Companies that treat their data like a product by defining clear ownership and accountability can reduce the time it takes to implement it in new use cases by as much as 90 per cent. When organising and managing data so that it can be easily reused and applied across different business functions, companies are able to quickly deploy new data-driven solutions, significantly speeding up the responsiveness to market demands and keeping them competitive and adaptable.

Insights from workplace data can keep tabs on shifting employee behaviours by uncovering patterns in office usage, preferences for different workspaces and the demand for meeting rooms. This has important implications for shaping the workplace: with insights from technologies into how employees use spaces and which areas of the workplace receive more footfall, companies can tailor their spaces and amenities to meet employee preferences. A workspace that aligns with actual usage patterns can improve both satisfaction and productivity in a workforce, as employees feel that their environment better supports their needs.

¹² 65% of Employees Say Organizations Don't Take Effective Action on Employee Survey Results, November 2023, Quantum Workplace

¹³ A Better Way to Put Your Data to Work, July 2022, Harvard Business Review

But how do companies transform the insights they glean from their data into actionable strategies that enhance the employee experience? Currently, it seems there is much room for improvement. According to a Gartner survey¹⁴, poor data literacy is one of the top three barriers in building strong data and analytics teams. This is supported by consultancy firm Accenture¹⁵ who found that out of 9,000 employees in various roles, only 21 per cent were confident in their data literacy skills. Companies that are looking to make the most out of the data they collect must prioritise data literacy for those working with data, ensuring that they set a consistent framework for data language¹⁶.

Organisations must also refine their data collection processes to confirm that their findings are accurate. Ensuring the reliability of data is essential, as errors can not only undermine confidence in the data systems themselves but can also create resistance toward data-driven initiatives, thus limiting the organisation's ability to leverage data effectively.

In tandem with the collection of accurate and reliable data, organisations must also look at implementing a robust change management strategy to ensure that both employees and stakeholders are involved in the process. This process includes transparent communication with employees to ensure that everyone understands the purpose behind gathering data, and the benefit that each stakeholder can gain from its insights. By involving employees in the process from the outset, organisations can secure greater buy-in and ensure that the data collected is not only meaningful but also truly beneficial to shaping the workforce experiences.

According to Hilary Green¹⁷ – who leads the change management and workplace transformation at the Canadian financial institution, Scotiabank – when it comes to implementing data driven solutions ‘the value proposition has to be really high for employees, and you have to be able to show results.’ The conversation with employees should be explicit, helping them understand why particular data is being collected, and then pointing to specific results. Having access to this information empowers employees to take ownership of their work environment, ensuring they feel valued and respected rather than surveyed and monitored.

The purpose and value of the office is shaped by the people that use it. When employees make the journey into the office, they are looking for seamless experiences. As Gensler's 2024 Global Workplace Survey¹⁸ points out, the future of work is about implementing purpose-driven and impactful solutions. The employee journey starts right from the decision to come into the office, and continues through each interaction within the workplace, including navigating access control systems, locating meeting spaces and collaborating with colleagues.

¹⁴ Avoid 5 Pitfalls When Building Data and Analytics Teams, July 2020, Gartner

¹⁵ The human impact of data literacy, January 2020, Accenture

¹⁶ How to build data literacy in your company, February 2021, MIT Management Sloan School

¹⁷ Tech horizons: Trends and insights in workplace technology, October 2024, WORKTECH Toronto

¹⁸ Global Workplace Survey 2024, 2024, Gensler





CREATE human-centric workplaces

A holistic approach to data collection and analysis is essential to shape meaningful workplace experiences. This requires focusing on a broad range of data types that directly impact employee experience, from real-time occupancy levels to insights from feedback surveys.

Workplace experience plays a vital role in employee wellbeing and overall organisational success. Studies have highlighted that engaged employees contribute significantly to key business outcomes, ranging from profitability to retention. Research from Gallup's 2024 State of the Global Workplace Report¹⁹ has revealed that companies with high employee engagement tend to see improved performance across these metrics.

Further insights from a study by researchers from the UK and Nigeria²⁰ have recognised that when engaged, employees are more likely to take ownership of their work and align their goals with the organisation's. This has important implications when it comes to organisational resilience and adaptability: engaged teams are generally more adaptable to change, making it easier for them to rally around new goals and initiatives.

Creating a seamless and personalised workplace experience requires the integration of interconnected digital systems to understand and support each employee's unique workflow and preferences. A workplace ecosystem that integrates tools such as access control, room booking and HR platforms can enable organisations to move beyond siloed systems and create a cohesive, real-time picture of space utilisation and employee activity.

¹⁹ State of the Global Workplace: 2024 Report, 2024, Gallup

²⁰ Data-driven employee engagement: A pathway to superior customer service, September 2024, World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews

Intelligence gathered from digital platforms allows organisations to adjust resources and office layout based on actual employee behaviour and preferences, in turn creating a workspace that evolves with its users. For example, if access data shows certain areas are underused, the organisation may repurpose them for alternative uses that better meet employee needs. Similarly, if data shows that one area of the workplace is receiving far higher footfall than others, facilities management teams can adjust accordingly and pay more attention to cleaning patterns and resource allocation.

Data-driven approaches allow HR teams to track and assess the effectiveness of engagement initiatives over time, creating a feedback loop that helps refine these efforts. This iterative process ensures that engagement strategies stay aligned with the shifting needs of the workforce²¹.

Alongside workplace teams, employees can access data to effectively plan and manage their schedules, giving them the flexibility to choose the days to come into the office that align best with their goals and need. Giving back the data to employees promotes trust and empowers them to choose the right working environments for their role. Employees can easily find workspaces they need through workplace apps and digital signage as soon as they arrive at the office.

Paramount to this is ensuring that employees understand the functionality of the solution they are contributing to. When an employee understands how a technology is collecting, using and protecting their data, trust in the organisation is fostered. Employees who understand an app's purpose are also more likely to engage with it effectively. If an employee knows that an app analyses workspace preferences in order to then optimise layouts, they may be more diligent in updating their own preferences. Underscoring this is ensuring that employees have clarity around data usage and interpretation, so that a lack of understanding does not lead to resistance.

By combining access control with real-time location data with other smart technologies such as occupancy sensors and digital signage, organisations can craft personalised and collaborative environments that are responsive to employee needs. Leveraging these data insights effectively enables organisations to continually adjust and improve the workplace experience, enhancing both digital and physical interactions within the office. Investment in these areas can help to not only optimise space usage, but also foster a more engaging environment that is adaptable to employee needs, boosting both satisfaction and connection to the workplace.

²¹ Data-driven employee engagement: A pathway to superior customer service, September 2024, World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews

IMPLEMENT

data-driven changes

Agile responses to changing workforce needs should be prioritised when it comes to data-driven decision making. Organisations must embrace a mindset of flexibility and adaptability whilst working with technology that enables continuous improvement. A study by researchers in Slovenia²² has highlighted the need for an agile work environment to enhance companies' performance, growth and commitment to sustainability. The research emphasises that agile structures require a mindset shift in management, knowledge and culture.

An agile workplace thrives on flexibility and responsiveness, and data collected on employee engagement, productivity and feedback can be used to inform management practices to align with agile principles. A study on agile workplaces²³ has stressed the importance of employee autonomy – offering people the choice to work in a place and at a time that best suits the needs of the individual, customer and the industry. By using data to better understand working patterns, organisations can tailor working environments to create a more inclusive, cohesive workforce.

While technology today can facilitate the shift to more agile working environments, many organisations are still playing catch up with how they can use data and insights. Research from global consultancy firm Deloitte²⁴ shows that 83 per cent of organisations believe that leveraging employee data to create benefits for both the organisation and its workers is important, or very important, to their organisation's success.

According to Paav Gandhi, the Head of Product and Co-Founder of workplace experience technology company Accessia, the future will see an increased focus on integrating the insights enabled by workplace technology into every level of decision-making. This insight is what will ensure organisations can align their goals with employee expectations for an enhanced workplace experience.

The key to implementing data-driven changes is ensuring employee buy-in, fostering a sense of ownership and creating a culture of transparency and trust. However, according to PwC's latest Global Workforce Hopes and Fears survey²⁵, over half of workers feel there are too many changes at work happening at once, and 44 per cent don't understand why things need to change at all. When workers feel overwhelmed by the volume of change, there is a heightened risk of burnout and disengagement. Furthermore, when employees do not understand why change is necessary in the first place, there is risk of resistance to new initiatives. Engaging employees from the outset is paramount to making transitions smoother and more effective.

There is no one-size-fits-all to delivering the 'right' workplace experience. Every company is nuanced, with different values, priorities and job roles. The solutions that are best for companies and employees will evolve over time, and organisations must adopt a continuous trial and learn cycle. The insights derived from data will become the repository of knowledge in which companies can refer, to understand shifts in behaviours and work patterns.

²² A Conceptual Model of Developing an Agile Work Environment, November 2022, Sustainability

²³ The Complete Guide to Agile Working, N.d., The Changing Workplace

²⁴ 2024 Global Workforce Trends, March 2024, Deloitte

²⁵ Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey, June 2024, PwC

CONCLUSION

To meet the evolving expectations of today's workforce, organisations must take deliberate steps to leverage data insights effectively, aligning them with organisational values and strategies. By doing so, they can better understand workforce trends, anticipate employee needs and make informed, impactful decisions.

The relationship between access control, workplace experience and data analytics is a critical component of delivering flexible, tailored workplace experiences. It enables organisations to create environments that are both responsive and personalised to employee needs. Access control systems provide essential data on when and where employees enter the workplace, offering insights into occupancy patterns and helping to tailor space utilisation. When combined with data analytics, this information can be used to analyse and identify peak usage times, underused areas and preferences for certain types of workspaces.

A thoughtfully designed system not only ensures smooth, secure movement within office spaces but also supports flexibility and a sense of autonomy for employees. A seamless access experience – from entry to workspace navigation – encourages employees to engage more fully with their physical environment, creating a workplace that supports productivity.

Looking to the future, embracing the evolving landscape of data will be essential for organisations seeking to remain competitive and adaptive. Companies that proactively implement intelligent access control technology, paired with real-time data insights, will be best positioned to create dynamic, responsive work environments. Accessia is a leader in this space, enabling organisations to use data to make informed decisions that enhance both security and employee experience. Leveraging its powerful data insights platform, organisations can access real-time information on workspace utilisation, heat maps and location data specific to dates and times. This allows organisations to design workspaces that respond directly to employee needs and optimise for both efficiency and engagement.

For Accessia, a typical workday begins before an employee even steps foot in the office. Employees can assess whether the commute is worthwhile based on who will be present and their own meeting schedules. Upon arrival, employees can access the office through their mobile devices, skipping the need for traditional badges. Inside, they can use the app to access pre-booked spaces, check real-time room availability, and locate colleagues – all made possible by accurate location-based data rather than traditional badge swipes. This streamlined experience reduces friction, improves wayfinding and enhances security.

To address workplace pain points, companies must commit to a flexible, data-driven approach. Technology is now advanced enough to facilitate a positive workplace environment, but organisations must define and refine their own strategies to maximise the potential of current tools. By unlocking actionable insights, companies can foster more engaging, seamless in-office experiences that boost productivity, connectivity and employee satisfaction.

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About Accessia

Accessia provides ultra secure, next gen workplace access, experience, and analytics technology that's simple to manage, easy to use, and delivers unparalleled intelligence into how spaces are being used.

Delivering instant and touch-free mobile access powered by UWB, visitor management, presence planning to see who's in, and room availability in one intuitive app, Accessia is more than just access control; it's the key to optimized workplaces.

Accessia was founded by a group of problem-solving innovators who believe in building better - better data and better experiences for better workplaces.

www.accessia.com

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About WORKTECH Academy

WORKTECH Academy is the leading global research platform and member network exploring how we'll work tomorrow. We look at innovation in the world of work and workplace through five key streams: people, place, technology, design, and culture.

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