

**Première partie de l'épreuve****No touchscreens, more space: welcome to the post-pandemic office?**

**With new safety protocols prompting design changes, traditional office spaces may be a thing of the past.**

The pandemic has shown us that work can go on without a workplace. If it can be done online, it can be done from virtually anywhere with an internet connection. At the same  
5 time, however, the move to remote work has revealed the value of the workplace, as many employees hanker to return to the office.

In light of these two opposing trends, what might the office of the future actually look like?

Elvira Muñoz Beraza, director of the master's in strategic design of spaces at IE School  
10 of Architecture and Design, in Madrid, says that this year's disruptions will transform offices for the better. "The pandemic has accelerated trends that were already there and has forced companies and experts to have difficult yet necessary conversations," she says. "The office is the place for collaboration, social interaction and a sense of belonging. This implies less 'me' spaces and more 'we' spaces: the long open areas  
15 filled with individual workstations or filled with cubicles are gone."

With individual workstations effectively relocated to people's kitchens and living rooms, offices are being reconfigured as places that primarily exist for teamwork and collaborative activity – albeit with strict social distancing measures in place and partitions separating different teams and departments.

20 Architects and office planners are already busy with a raft of changes, including larger desks and layouts that make more use of stairwells to reduce the use of enclosed lifts. And, of course, there's the ongoing drive to minimise the use of frequently touched surfaces, such as taps, door handles and buttons.

Beraza is focused on how offices can evolve to meet the changing needs of a company  
25 and its employees. "I believe the design of the workplace will need to focus on a hybrid combination of physical and virtual, of individual and collective, of internal and external actions, tasks and collaboration."

30 She notes the importance of supporting a hybrid form of office and remote work. “Remote working should stay, combined with physical encounters. Remote work is sustainable because it provides more choice and is more inclusive and diverse. The nine-to-five office culture is gone for good.”

35 Lewis Barker, ServiceNow’s senior manager of workplace services, EMEA, believes that, post-Covid, the distinction between “working from home” and “work” will cease to exist. “For many employees, the traditional office and desktop workspace is over. For them, work is wherever they want or need it to be, on whatever screen and digital device they prefer,” he says. “This agile, more distributed ‘anywhere, anytime’ workplace of the future will transform how companies operate.”

40 Barker believes this flexibility will become an increasingly important factor for attracting and retaining staff. “If businesses don’t look to change, whether that’s with a hybrid model or all the way to completely remote, they will struggle to bring in the talent needed,” he says. (...)

45 Other design changes will need to take place, too. Daaf Serné, ServiceNow’s director of global real estate and workplace, suggests this will include allowing more square metres per person, as well as improving the amount of space in high traffic areas, and re-thinking how we can meet and collaborate in our offices. “One thing that will be key, is how technology will influence the physical environment. When thinking about the role that AI will play in the future workplace, it will help us predict when people are coming in and how we can optimise/better utilise our spaces to support our employees better.

Adapted from Hattie Gladwell, The Guardian Labs, 2021