

WORKING IN FOUR-PART HARMONY

More than ever, collaboration—and spaces to support it—are the key.



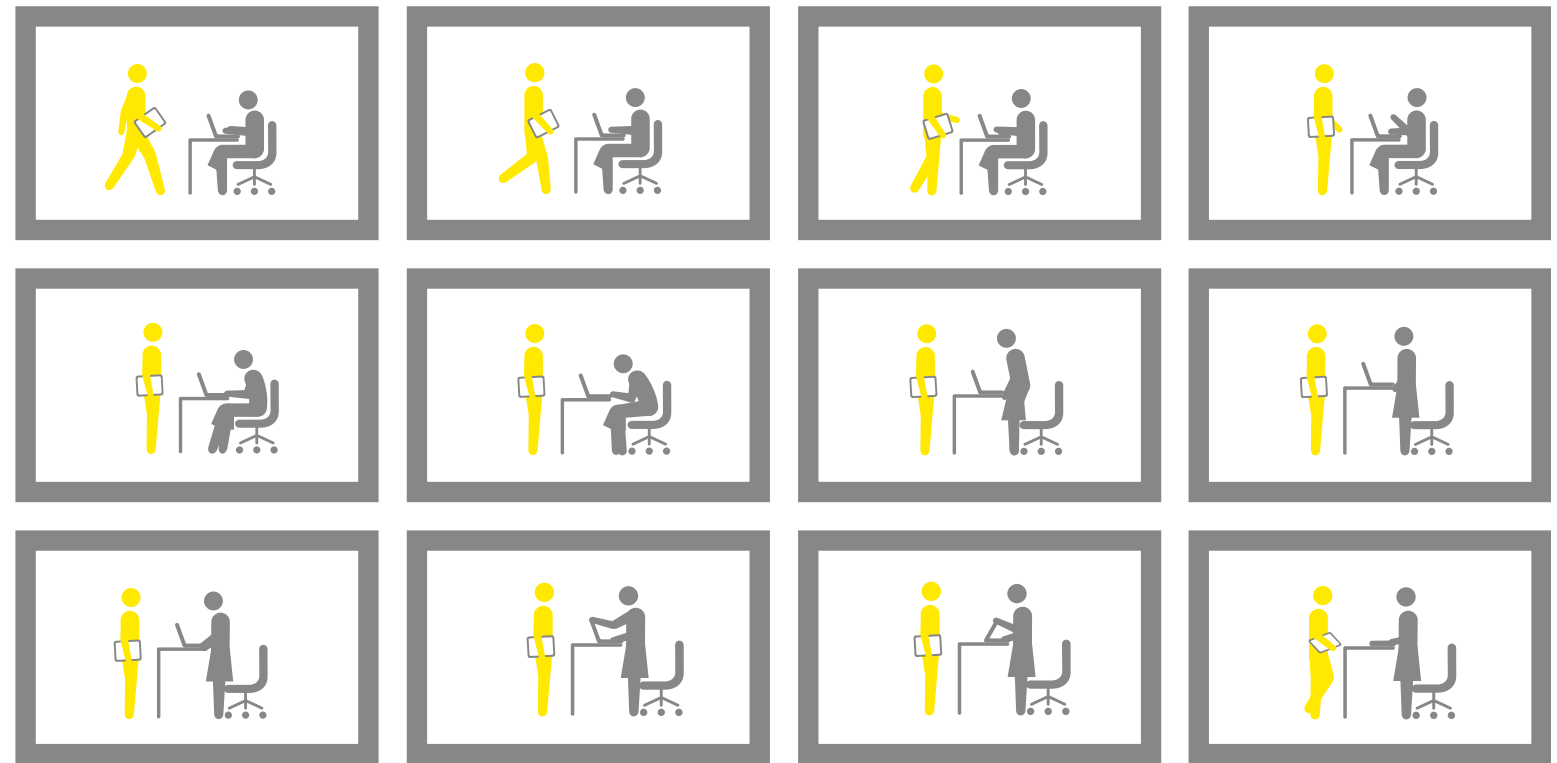
TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING OUR BEHAVIORS.

More than 2 billion people now use cell phones along with an estimated 50 million PDA's and 3.2 million BlackBerries®. We send an astounding 9 trillion emails a year. Because technology enables us to do so, professionals are increasingly spending each day working out of several different locations, leaving personal workstations unoccupied for much of the work day. Carole Kassir-Garcia, a senior interior designer at Seattle's Collins Woerman, says their research shows that "people are away from their desks 40 to 60 percent of the time. They're traveling, in meetings, telecommuting, in collaborative spaces," not to mention taking the occasional vacation day.

As a result, real estate is being reallocated. A recent survey of Fortune 500 real estate professionals conducted by CoreNet Global, the Atlanta-based association of real estate executives,

found that 65% of those surveyed have stopped providing an assigned workspace to at least 10% of their workforce. The percentage is expected to grow to 25% by the end of the decade.

Whether people work in a dedicated space or at a different "hot desk" every day, the performance of that particular workspace is pivotal to organizational success because it's not just a personal workspace, it's a place where collaboration takes place: where we meet with coworkers who drop by to seek an opinion, bounce ideas around, ask for information or ideas. Knowledge work today demands this collaboration. Tasks are more complex than ever before and require the thinking, opinions and ideas of a variety of disciplines and backgrounds. The work requires the attention of not just one person, but several.



Making all the spaces that comprise the workspace more effective begins with understanding how and where employees are spending the majority of their time.

4 WAYS OF WORKING

Steelcase WorkSpace Futures researchers and other social scientists divide the interactions between knowledge workers into four categories, distinguished by the number of people who are involved.

First, people work alone. Whether a dedicated workstation or just a workstation for the day, it's the individual's home base, or "I" space. It's where we focus, think, write and concentrate on individual tasks. The biggest concern for employees in this primary workspace is "having control over the level of privacy," according to the Steelcase

Workplace Satisfaction Survey. The key is control: having ways to fine tune privacy and focus on the task at hand.

Second, people work in collaboration with another person. People drop by each other's workstation and the "I" space becomes "you + me" space where information is shared, ideas are traded, decisions are made, and tasks move a few steps closer to completion. "You + me" work happens outside the workstation, too.

These two ways of working—alone and in pairs—combine to make up nearly 80% of our work day. People working in pairs, or dyads, as the social scientists call them, are a powerful force. Research shows that when two people collaborate, they build on each other's thoughts, help each other learn, and even solve problems better than working alone. There's an impressive body of evidence that the real

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entrepreneurial work done within companies springs from pairs of people working together. Since so much of each day is spent working alone or with one other person, the individual workspace, or “I” space, needs to support both individual and pairs work.

There are two other ways we work now that collaboration has become the de facto standard for knowledge work. We work in small groups of three to five people (“we”) or in larger groups of six or more (“WE”).

Group dynamics drive important distinctions between small group “we” space and larger group “WE” space. The more people you have in a group, the more ideas are generated and the greater likelihood of reaching the best decision. However, more ideas means more information has to be communicated and discussed, making the process more involved, more time consuming. In the worst case, people endure a pointless, meandering discussion and leave with one more reason to hate meetings.

Best case, of course, is a close working team that gels and performs at a very high level, or gets “in flow,” as Lewis Epstein refers to it. He works on advanced product concepts for Steelcase in the subject area of collaborative work, and says that six people, on average, forms the optimum size for group collaboration.

“For a true team—a group of people working around a common objective—versus a group of people who are simply meeting, studies show that six people, while not a prescription, is usually about right. But, there are always exceptions, at some point we’ve all worked on teams of four, or five, or seven people, and had it be a great experience.”

What’s the reasoning behind the less-is-more theory? According to Epstein “collaboration is not just about communicating and coordinating next steps with the group, it’s a high level interaction and that benefits from a smaller number of people.”

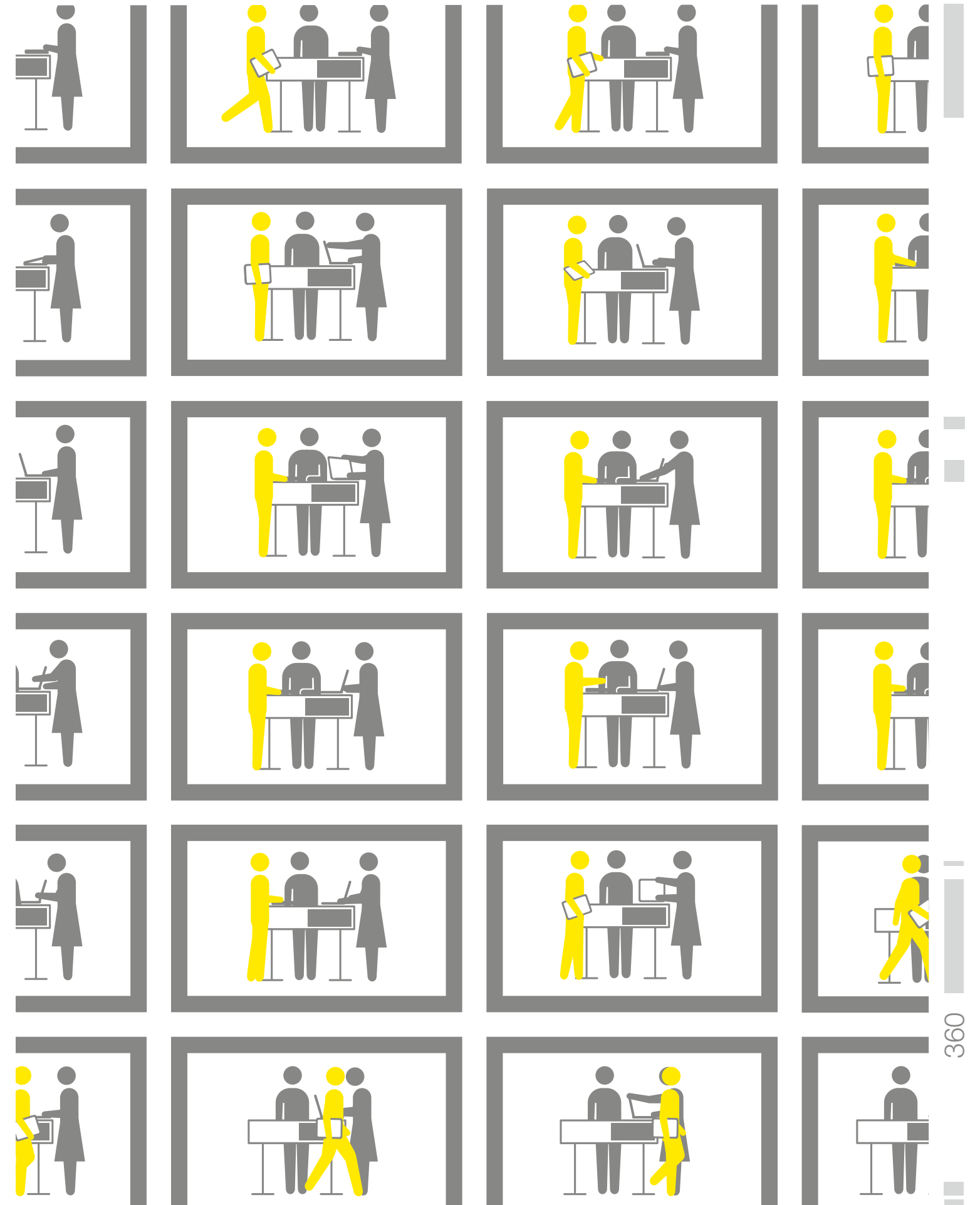
These four different ways of working—alone, in pairs, and in small and large groups—are how knowledge work gets done. The workplace must effectively support all four.

OH, THE PLACES WE GO

Sociologist Ray Oldenburg coined the term “third place” to identify public spaces—pubs, cafés, parks, etc.—where people gather to meet with others in comfortable, “great places.” They are separate from our first place (home) and second place (office). Thanks to WiFi, knowledge workers today can utilize these third places as a temporary work place, seeking out locations that best suit their individual preferences.

The social vitality of third places is both comforting and energizing, causing forward-thinking organizations to take note. However, the challenge for these same organizations is to find new ways to extend this third place vitality not just to individuals and pairs, but also to other spots on campus where groups gather.

Kassir-Garcia sees more and more companies going for “environments that are flexible and user friendly: neighborhood cafés, lounge areas, smaller ‘cave’ spaces, smaller conference rooms for two to three people, and some rooms for four to six people. There’s movable furniture because people like to rearrange things. Some have walls or curtains or screens you can move to accommodate different sizes of groups.” These spaces offer a third place ambiance while supporting a range of user needs.



“The overall trend to smaller workstations is the same, as well as the increase in more collaborative work styles.”

For a biotech company in St. Louis, Kerry Schuette, senior designer at Forum Studio is planning an average of four collaborative “huddle spaces” for every ten individual workstations. “These spaces are very relaxed, casual. Some have upholstered seating, some have standing height tables, some will have conference tables, some are just places to meet, spread out your work on top of a group of file cabinets.” They’re also adding enclosed enclave spaces where workers in open workstations can retreat for a quiet phone call or a small meeting. In essence these biotech workers will have a wide choice of workspaces to support the range from “I” to “WE.”

Collaborative spaces work in any department or discipline. “They joke about the accounting department at this company being the loudest group,” says Schuette. “The reason is they have huddle spaces in their workspace already, so people communicate more and work together more.”

THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WORKSTATION...

Just as organizations are building more collaboration spaces, personal workspaces are shrinking. According to a study by HOK of their corporate clients, median square footage for open workstations now ranges from 48 sq. ft. for the smallest workstations, to 64 sq. ft. for the largest.

Kassir-Garcia says the individual workstations she sees are typically 64 sq. ft. in size. Forum Studio’s Schuette agrees. “We used to start out planning in 8x8. Now it’s definitely getting smaller. Sixty-four square feet is the norm, but we’re also seeing 6x8’s and even 6x6’s.”

Workstations are shrinking for several reasons. As more businesses move workers out of private offices and into the open plan, the workstation requires less space than a walled office. Also, real estate

costs are rising so companies are looking for ways to cut space requirements; smaller “I” spaces are one way. And since work is more collaborative, organizations ask for more space for pairs and group work, and that real estate often comes from those increasingly unoccupied individual workspaces.

One trend has mitigated the shrinking workstation footprint: technology takes up less space. Gone are the heavy, ottoman-size video computer monitors that use to commandeer a corner work-surface. Laptops and flatter, lighter weight monitors and innovative new articulating monitor arms free up work-surface, so spaces don’t necessarily feel smaller.

Smaller workstations demand new strategies for acoustical and visual privacy. For example, for the biotech firm Schuette is planning workspaces for 120 workers. Many of them, including the entire management team, are moving from private offices into 8x8 workstations. To help them maintain their privacy, the layout lets workers “face out on to the aisle: their monitors are in front of them, facing in, so they have more control, more of a sense of privacy. People can’t walk up from behind and read over their shoulder.”

The biotech firm’s CEO set the tone, moving from a 400 sq. ft. private office to one of those 8x8 workstations. “He was comfortable with it in part because he’s spent a lot of his life in Europe, where they have more experience with open offices,” says Schuette. Workstations in Europe are generally smaller than in the U.S., but even those are getting squeezed, says Steelcase WorkSpace Futures studio leader in Europe, Catherine Gall. “The overall trend to smaller workstations is the same, as well as the increase in more collaborative work styles.”

MOVING FROM “I” TO “YOU + ME”

The individual workstation is where “you and me” work often begins. (See “My Workstation ‘n Me...and You” sidebar.) When a colleague comes calling the workstation should have space for a side-by-side conversation and a place for the guest to sit—even a nesting mobile ped with a padded top can work.

When pairs meet, they often need to view content on a monitor. Configuring the workstation so both can easily view the screen, such as with an articulating monitor arm and a work-surface that allows colleagues to sit side by side and view on-screen material, greatly enhances the sharing of information.

Next, the pair may need more shared space, other tools or materials. A nearby stand of files for a stand-up conversation, a low table and a couple of lounge chairs for a brainstorming session, or a meeting space with display and writing surfaces at hand—these are all convenient islands of “we” space that support pairs in democratic fashion. This equal footing is important: research shows that people working at the same level in fact learn more, work faster, and innovate more.

A person’s workstation location and their proximity to others they need to interact with frequently are two more factors that influence collaboration. The org chart only begins to help in planning these adjacencies. Innovators in an organization usually don’t have the authority to form teams and assign work to others. They succeed by leveraging their personal networks and influencing others through collaborating, teaching and inspiring. Flexible workstations and nearby “we” and “WE” spaces support the collaboration of these valuable workers.

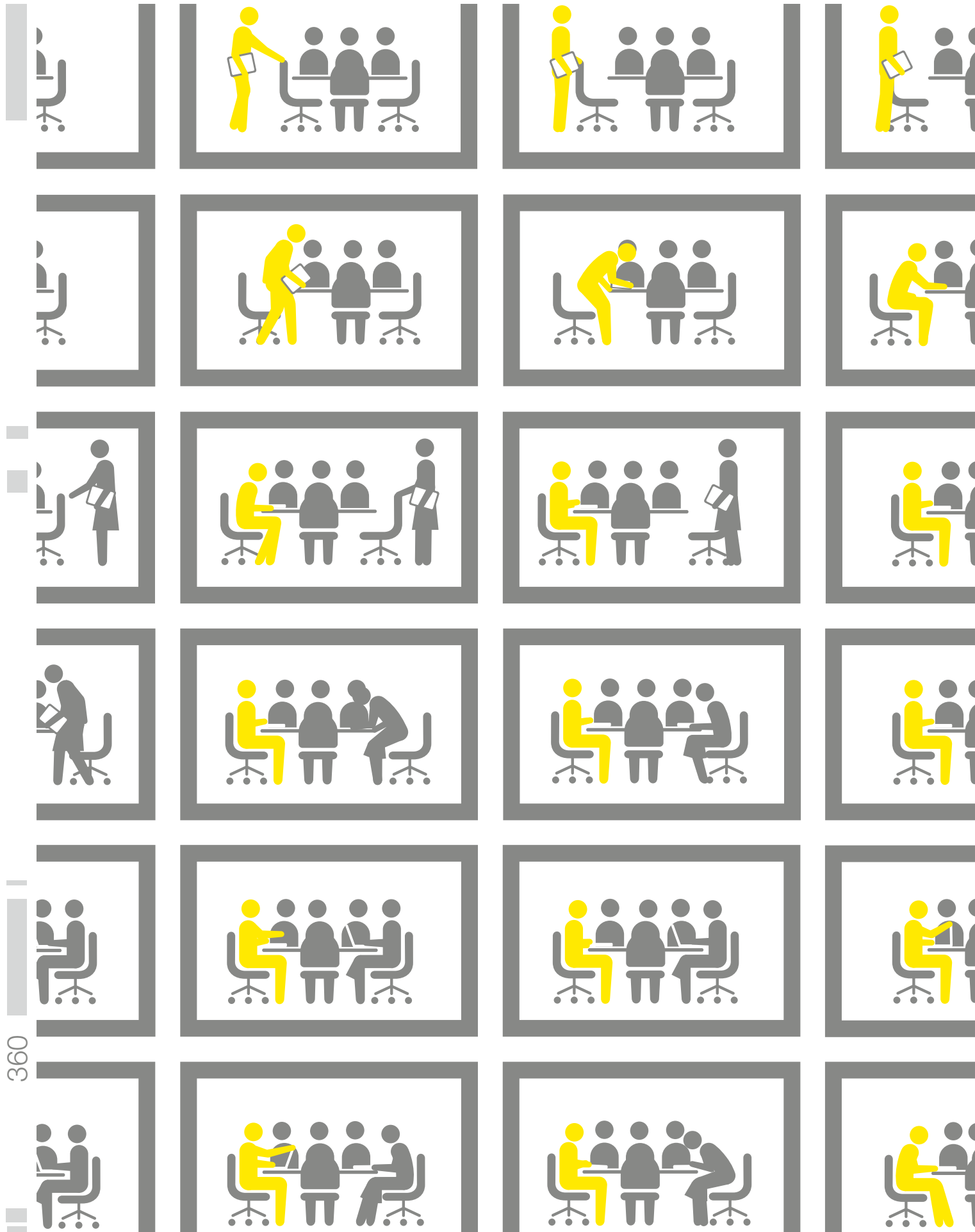
Some companies are planning stairways to support collaboration. Kassir-Garcia says Collins Woerman has a project under construction with “a three-story opening with a large glass stair with a water feature, and a Zen-like garden application at the bottom. Also at the bottom and at the landings we have docking stations and lounge furniture around the stairs.”



MY WORKSTATION ‘N ME...AND YOU

Workstations are getting smaller, yet people spend 80% of the day working alone or in collaborations with another person—often in a workstation. No matter the size, a well-planned workstation works for parties of one or two:

	“I”	“You + Me”
Balance Privacy and Interaction	Good for “head down” task work	Open to collaborative exchanges
Provide Flexibility and Control	Lets me work the way I need to	Lets me shift easily to talking/thinking/sharing
Manage Connections Between People	Enough acoustical and visual privacy	Facilitates unplanned brainstorming sessions
Support Technology	Voice, data, power support for fixed and mobile equipment	
Provide Storage	Easy access to materials	
Make Work Visible	Display thinking, work in progress, completed projects	Ways to share knowledge and information



"The stairs are like halls and corridors: so many times you meet people, have those chance encounters with others. Boom: 'I've been trying to reach you...' and it's a great way for people to interface. Stairs are an interactive zone, connecting people in a building horizontally as well as vertically."

"Project room" is what most people think of when planning "we" space for small groups of 3 to 5 people, and especially "WE" spaces for larger groups of six or more. Unfortunately, many project rooms are woefully lacking. According to Mark Greiner, senior vice president and leader of Steelcase's WorkSpace Futures team, "most project rooms I've seen, in companies big and small, are okay for simple, single-thread presentations, but terrible for true team collaboration: comparing information, contrasting ideas, cross-sharing, etc."

Too often, he says, "companies settle for a generic project room, a simple, low cost box that 'generic' users can configure for their 'generic' group meeting. Then they wonder why they get 'generic' results."

There are more small group collaborations than larger ones during the course of the day, so there should be plenty of small "we" spaces available. These are not rooms to be scheduled; they're "as needed" spaces that any group of 3 to 5 people can quickly settle into. Spaces that facilitate this "we" collaboration allow the team to focus on the task at hand so they can quickly complete their work.

These "we" spaces include small team tables and semi-private enclaves in the open plan, and small private rooms near workstation clusters. Small groups also like to meet in cafés, where booths are preferred seating: it's a semi-private space that's also open to others who may pass by and have something to add to the team. The most effective "we" spaces include mobile tables and chairs, wireless access, plenty of power outlets, and mobile whiteboards.



WHAT THE WELL-DRESSED "WE" SPACE IS WEARING:

- 1 sq. ft. of total wall display space for every 4 sq. ft. of floor space
- Both digital and analog display media
- Intelligent whiteboards that allow saving, printing, distribution, and access to the web
- Interactive visual displays to project computer displays and let users present, update, store and share content
- Access to company networks
- Mobile tables that can be quickly reconfigured as the work changes
- Task chairs that support workers in long team sessions
- Lounge chairs for casual conversation
- Storage for team materials and tools

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Larger “WE” spaces are typically scheduled spaces: conference rooms, project spaces, multipurpose rooms. Sometimes workers are colocated in “war rooms” with individual workstations and a team area located in a single room for a period of weeks or months. A study by CoreNet, supported by Steelcase, showed that such rooms doubled teams’ productivity by, among other things, providing the team members with easy access to each other for coordinating work, problem solving, and learning, and keeping the team’s work visible to everyone in the space.

However, these lessons can be applied to “WE” spaces without colocating workers. Larger group spaces require easy technology access, presentation equipment, plenty of worksurface and some storage, but one key element is often overlooked: the large blocks of vertical display space that large groups need.

“Our research clearly shows the importance of information persistence in the group innovation process—wall space to display information, ideas, and opinions that everyone can see, react to, add to and then share it with others. Groups need space to display their thinking and show work in progress,” says Greiner.

As a rule of thumb, he suggests 1 sq. ft. of wall display space for every 4 sq. ft. of floor space, with 25% to 40% of wall display devoted to digital means. “I personally love the tactility of paper and other analog media for sketches, photos, sticky notes. But digital media give you the ability to capture and alter content and retrieve it later.”

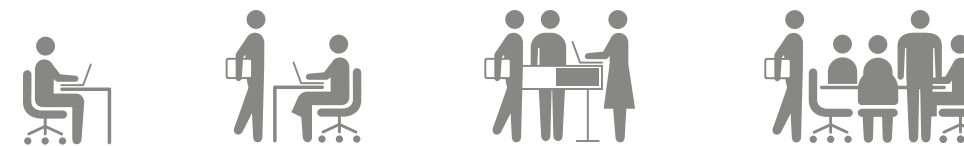
Even outside the WE space, the group’s work continues. Groups break into smaller groups, team members work individually and with others, and sometimes join other informal teams and collaborate further. Increasing the number of smaller “we” spaces increases

quality collaborations, which spreads insights and ideas deeper into the organization and in turn helps boost organizational innovation. While a more culturally diverse workforce uses group spaces in different ways, the benefits of “WE” spaces remain the same, says Gall. “In Germany, school starts very early there. People lived close to work, they drop off their kids at school and then come to the office and have breakfast with their coworkers.

“We had a kitchen on the ground floor, and we were very comfortable using it. When workers would come over from England and join us, they were used to having breakfast at home and starting work later, and at first they didn’t understand the whole breakfast-with-your-coworkers idea. Before long they realized the benefits. The morning ritual, the conversation, exchanging ideas: it all combined to help us start each day as an energized team.”

Collaboration isn’t just the name of the game today, it is the game. The challenge is to create not only more varied and better equipped collaborative spaces for small and large groups, but also plan individual workstations to support both individual “I” and “you + me” work.

Meanwhile, mobile workers can do more than move outside to a coffee shop—they can move on. “Managers understand that to retain employees, you have to give them more than just a desk,” says Kassir-Garcia. Providing workspaces that can support how people work alone and in collaboration helps retain the best and brightest.



PLANNING FOR IDEAS

If the workplace is going to be the location of choice for knowledge workers, it must support the four distinct ways they work. Some ideas for dealing with each type of work:

	“I” space	“you + me” space	“we” space	“WE” space
What Goes on in the Space?	Individual task work of knowledge creation: reading, writing, editing, etc.	Collaboration by pairs: knowledge sharing, idea generation, problem solving, learning, etc.	Small group (3 to 5 people) work: project meetings, presentation prep, info sharing, etc.	Large group (6 or more) work: project team meetings, presentations, consensus building, etc.
Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller workspaces • Smaller technology • User-adjustable privacy <p>People often decamp to cafés for head-down work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksurfaces to support side-by-side collaboration • Adjustable arms to hold 1–2 flat screens so two can view the display • Side seating for visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group rooms • Semi-private enclaves in open areas • Booths in cyber cafés • Low tables, lounge chairs tucked into hallway niches and by stairways (passersby can see the activity, easily join the team) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project rooms, team areas off larger spaces • Mobile tables and chairs • Intelligent whiteboards • Interactive visual displays • Mobile storage
Application Ideas	<p>Flexible furniture to make up for smaller footprints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile tables and peds that also nest • Panel-mounted work tools • Adjustable monitor arms • Panels that expand and contract (workers adjust privacy as needed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower panels (encourage communication yet give some privacy) • Stand-up counters or banks of files between workstations for more frequent collaborations, and a place to spread out materials • Cafés with wireless access, plasma screens, dense seating (attractive spaces draw people) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group spaces—team tables or small private rooms—near workstation clusters • Easy moving tables and chairs encourage groups to gather around and share technology and displayed content • Wireless access, power outlets, display stuff: whiteboards, etc. • Elevate café seating so passing colleagues are at same eye level as seated people, encouraging collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t enclose all large group spaces: consider partial walls, wood slats, glass, perforated metal: define the space yet retain the informality that groups prefer • Mandatories: wireless access (people in groups are always moving around), plenty of power outlets, versatile, comfortable seating, and plenty of display space (1 sq. ft. per 4 sq. ft. of floor) • Projectors for presentation rehearsals • Cool cafés often become gathering places before and after typical business hours, and often draw clients too
Design Strategy	Interruptions do NOT equal collaboration. Individuals have to be able to tune out and focus.	Collaborators need individual workstations that flex for them, and nearby spaces that support pairs at work.	Users should view these spaces as “destinations,” attractive for their comfortable environments and exceptional tech support.	Seamless integration of technology access and facilities, so the space doesn’t get in the way of the group’s work.