



10 Ways to make all your employees WANT to return to the office.

For many employers, the return to in-person work is a chance to revive the unmatched benefits of on-site collaboration, seamless communication, and a culture that simply cannot thrive from home. But what about those who find traditional office settings challenging? An inclusive approach means designing magnetic offices that meet diverse needs, ensuring everyone can benefit from and contribute to a vibrant, connected company culture.

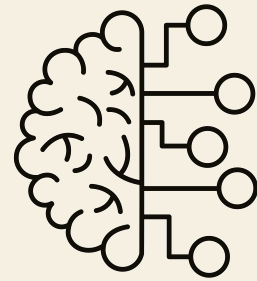
Recent studies reveal a shift away from the once-widespread support for remote work. According to the CBRE New Zealand Office Occupier Survey (2024), 42% of employers are “re-evaluating” hybrid models as they consider the long-term impacts on productivity and team cohesion. Several government departments have already mandated office attendance, in the US, Amazon has done the same - raising the question: Will private sector businesses in New Zealand continue to follow suit?

The balancing act.

Striking the right balance between organisational productivity and employee well-being is crucial (and challenging). The Gensler Workplace Survey (2023) found that only 12% of employees feel their current office setup is optimised for productivity.

Employees want an environment that supports focused work, fosters collaboration, and crucially, offers flexibility. The onus is on employers to create spaces that address the diverse neurological needs of their workforce, accommodating everyone from extroverts who thrive on social interaction, introverts who need quieter focussed spaces and individuals with neurodiverse needs such as those with ADHD, autism, or sensory sensitivities. Finding this balance can be complex, but it's doable - and essential.

Are today's workplaces inclusive enough?

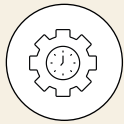


It's time to question how we define "productive" and "comfortable" in the workplace. Traditional office designs often prioritise efficiency over inclusivity, overlooking the reality that different brains function and respond to environments in varied ways. For neurodivergent employees, open-plan spaces can be overwhelming, with noise, unpredictable interactions, and bright lighting creating barriers to focus. This isn't about prioritising neurodiverse needs over neurotypical ones; it's about recognising that everyone's brain functions differently and that should be celebrated.

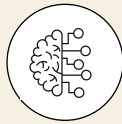
Diverse ways of thinking bring unique perspectives that drive innovation, creativity, and adaptability within a business. In fact, studies show that companies with high diversity are 36% more likely to outperform their less diverse competitors, as varied thinking fuels problem-solving and helps teams approach challenges from fresh angles. When workplaces embrace neurodiversity, they're not just helping some employees thrive; they're unlocking the potential of diverse minds and building a more resilient, innovative culture that benefits all.

10 steps to a Magnetic Office for all.

This guide will outline 10 actionable strategies—ranging from physical space enhancements to minor tweaks to operational adjustments—to create a workplace that draws people back in and benefits everyone. Through these steps, companies can foster a stronger, more connected, and adaptable culture, driving the success of both the organisation and its people.



Productivity



Neurodiversity



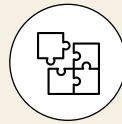
Well Being



Collaboration



Connection



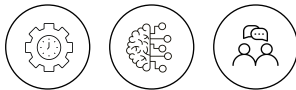
Belonging



Culture

1. Flexible Workstations

Offer diverse workstations - quiet zones, standing desks, and collaborative areas - allowing employees to choose what best suits their task and mood each day. This flexibility boosts productivity by catering to individual work styles and preferences, helping everyone perform at their best.



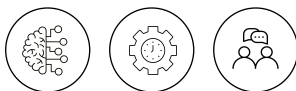
2. Sensory Spaces / Quiet Rooms / Library

Noise disrupts 55% of employees' productivity (Leesman Index, 2024). Create quiet, spaces for focus and recharging, free from interruptions (phone and meeting free), to enhance concentration and productivity.



3. Bookable Desks

Implement an easy booking system for workspaces, giving employees control over their setup and reducing the stress of securing a spot, so they can ease into their day smoothly.



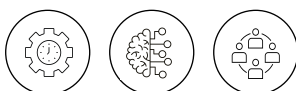
4. Home Comforts

Creating a comfortable, welcoming environment helps employees feel more at home and supports overall well-being. These might include premium coffee machines, snack bars, wellness rooms, and cosy relaxation areas. Is the air fryer the new sandwich press??



5. Seamless Technology

Invest in high-quality tech, from smart screens to noise-cancelling headphones and soundproof booths, making hybrid meetings and remote connections smooth and frustration-free.



6. Health & Wellness Initiatives

Provide meditation rooms, mental health resources, ergonomic support, wellness workshops, and end-of-trip facilities. Small perks like free fruit or sleep pods can also boost well-being.



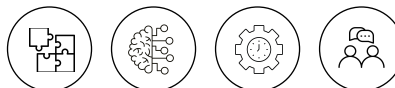
7. Social Spaces and Initiatives

Design inviting lounge areas and café-style seating to encourage casual interactions, allowing employees to connect naturally. Regular social events or lunch-and-learn sessions can further build community, foster collaboration, and create a more cohesive workplace.



8. Team 'Neighbourhoods'

Designate specific areas for each team, giving employees a predictable, dedicated space to work alongside colleagues. This stability can be particularly comforting for neurodiverse employees, and it encourages team bonding, collaboration, and a sense of belonging.



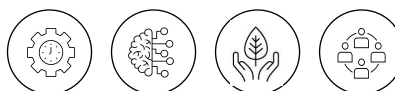
9. Biophilic & Sustainable Elements

Incorporate natural elements like greenery, natural light, and sustainably sourced materials. These biophilic designs not only improve comfort and air quality but also enhance employee mood, supporting well-being and aligning with environmental values.

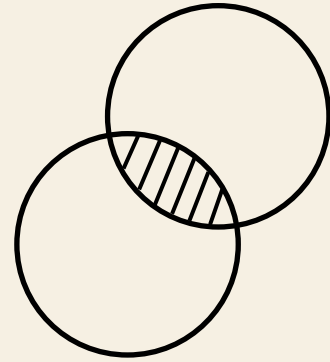


10. Clear Hybrid Work Policies

If hybrid work is going to remain part of your strategy, clear policies are essential. Transparency and structure not only reduce confusion but also build trust and accountability, ensuring hybrid work is productive and seamless for the whole team.



Finding the sweet spot.



At the end of the day, every business must remain productive to be successful. Work is called “work” for a reason, and while it’s not an employer’s responsibility to make it fun, creating a supportive, engaging environment can elevate productivity. Studies show that a happy, engaged workforce is more likely to perform at its best. According to the Leesman Index, employees who rate their workplace highly are nearly 20% more likely to feel positively about company culture - a factor directly tied to productivity and loyalty.

Achieving this balance, considering productivity alongside employee well-being and inclusivity, isn’t just idealistic; it’s practical and essential.

Getting it right for your business.

Every company has unique needs, and there’s no one-size-fits-all approach to building a productive, engaging workplace. Crafting a “magnetic” office means listening to employees and making intentional design choices that align with the team’s roles, personalities, and work styles. Sometimes, small adjustments—like converting an underused meeting room into a quiet library space—can have a significant impact. This isn’t about making work “cosy and fun”; it’s about creating an environment that supports productivity, fosters genuine connection, and respects diverse work preferences. When employees feel understood and empowered to work at their best, the office becomes a place they want to be—a resilient, adaptable space that drives both satisfaction and business success. You can have both.

Let’s start the conversation.

At Spaceworks, we understand that no two minds—or workplaces—are the same. For over two decades, we’ve partnered with businesses across New Zealand to create bespoke spaces that not only look stunning but also foster productivity, inclusivity, and well-being. Our expertise in designing for diverse needs, including neurodiversity, has earned us the trust of leading organisations who value spaces that inspire their teams and drive success. Let us show you how thoughtful design can unlock the potential of your people and your business.

Contact: Jana Stringer, Commercial Manager, today to discuss how we can help your business create a magnetic workplace that works for everyone.
Phone: 021 1533408 or email: jana@spaceworks.co.nz



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