The 2024 Work Trends Report

- ✓ Key takeaways from 2023
- ✓ Predictions for 2024

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Framery's annual work trends & design report

An analysis of the work trends we predicted in 2023, and a discussion of what we foresee in 2024.
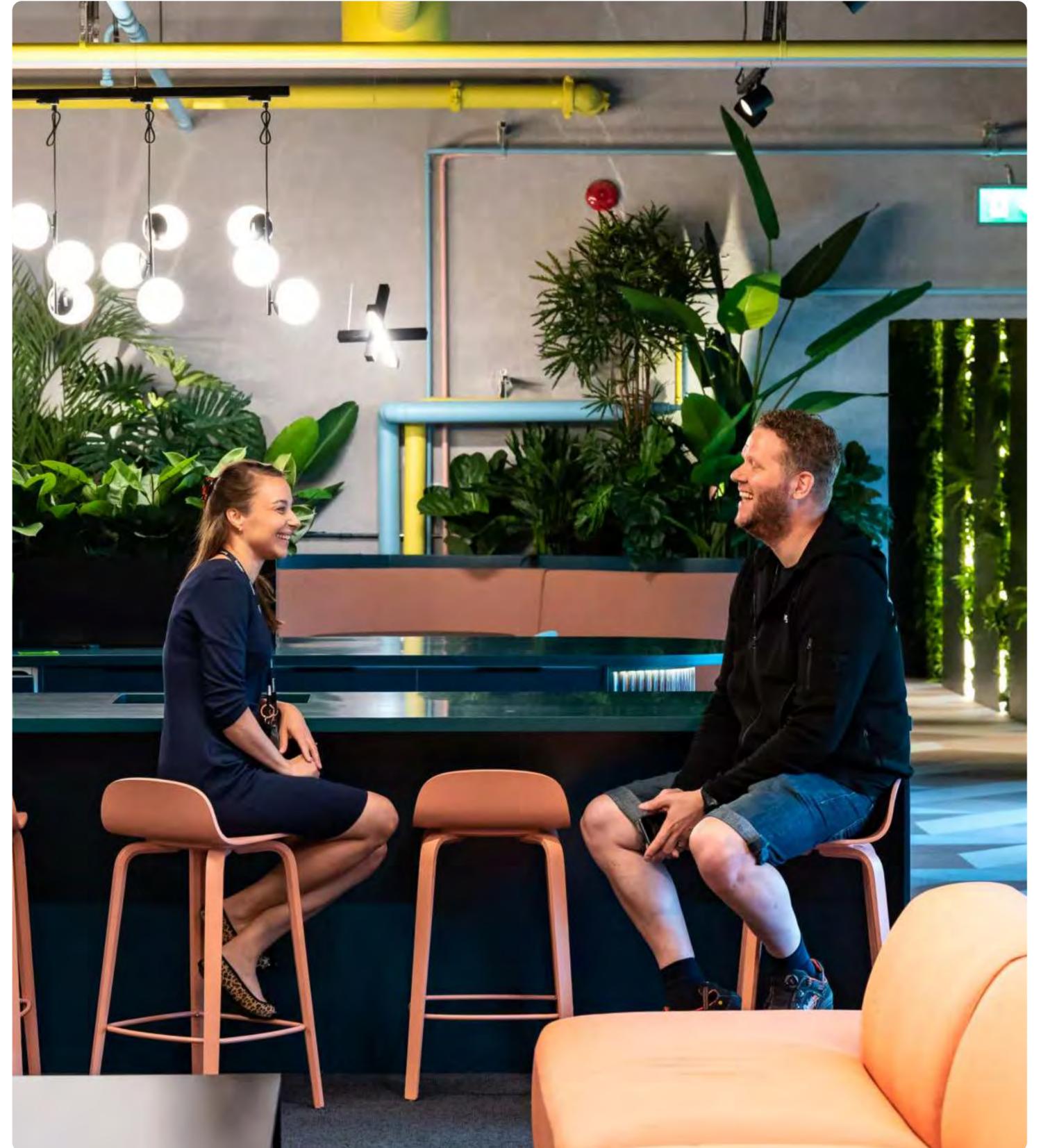
Key takeaways from 2023

1   The office needs to make an impact

2   The "worth it" equation will come into play

3   People have power - and offices provide people

4   People still need offices - and offices still need people

5   Companies expect to see evidence that changes work

Predictions for 2024

1   The office needs to provide the core basics for modern work

2   Offices will have a distraction epidemic

3   RTO mandates will become a thing of the past

4   Office design will include more flexibility

5   Focus spaces will be the number one office design trend

About this report

At the end of last year, we shared our thoughts about [office working trends to expect in 2023](). Now we're looking back on our predictions from the past year, examining how the ever-evolving nature of work has unfolded. Building on these insights, we'll unveil our fresh predictions for 2024, offering a glimpse into the future of work and the dynamics that will shape the ways offices work in the coming year.

What we said about offices in 2023

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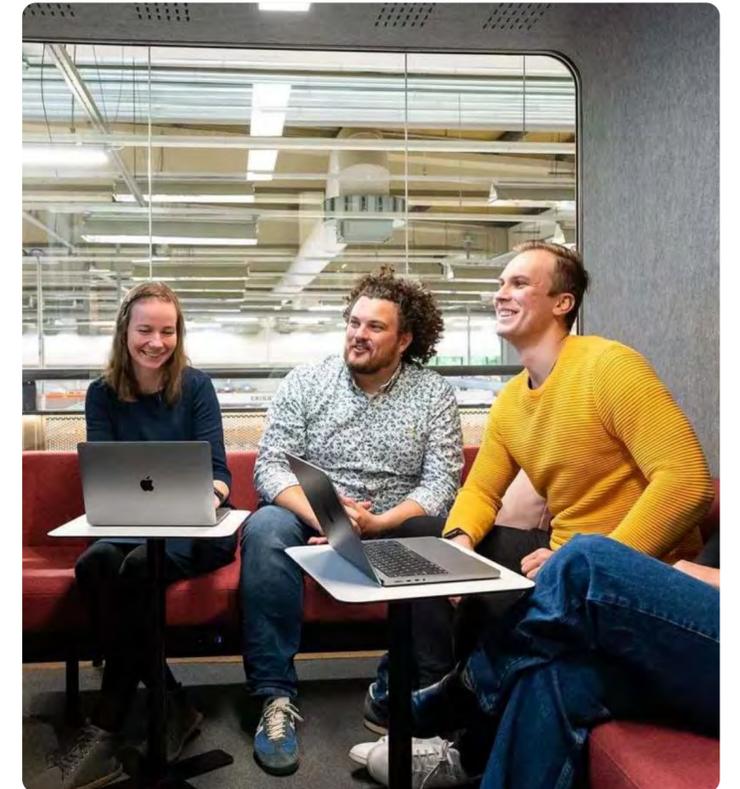
What we said about offices in 2023

1 The office needs to make an impact

WE SAID that in order to make the biggest impact, offices need to understand what employees find valuable, and improve workplaces so that they empower and support employees in hybrid work.

WE SAW that if we want people to willingly return to the office, offices should compete with homes. But the bottleneck of this return seems to be the boring stuff: homes support the basic work activities, such as focused working and private conversations, better than offices.

2 The "worth it" equation will come into play

3 People have power - and offices provide people

4 People still need offices - and offices still need people

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Our key takeaways

✓ **THE "RETURN TO THE OFFICE" DISCUSSION IS STILL ONGOING.** According to some estimates, "90% of companies plan to implement return-to-office policies by the end of 2024, according to an <u>August report from Resume Builder</u>, which surveyed 1,000 company leaders. Nearly 30% say their company will threaten to fire employees who don't comply with in-office requirements.

✓ **WE DON'T SEE THIS FORCING AS A SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY IN THE LONG TERM.** Many employees have expressed a desire to maintain some level of remote work because it allows for a better work-life balance. Mandating a strict five-day office week might result in dissatisfaction among the workforce and could lead to higher turnover rates. In a competitive job market, offering flexibility can be a key differentiator to attract and retain top talent.

✓ **NOT ALL TASKS REQUIRE IN-PERSON COLLABORATION.** For tasks that require deep concentration, working from a quiet home environment might be more productive than an office setting with potential distractions. Moreover, eliminating daily commutes can reduce stress and improve employee well-being, leading to higher overall productivity.

What we said about offices in 2023

1. The office needs to make an impact

2 The "worth it" equation will come into play

WE SAID that the expectation for offices has risen.
And employers have to figure out how to maximize their value in certain areas, and deliver an impact to their employees.

WE SAW that the office is not the default place anymore - and the "worth it" equation is extremely topical. According to Leesman, "the office workplace will now need a clear purpose and employees will need a clear reason to go there. Gone are the days when one would get up in the morning, shower, have breakfast and then head to the office almost as by default. Instead, every day will involve a decision of not only what are my priorities today, but also where do I do them."

3. People have power - and offices provide people

4. People still need offices - and offices still need people

5. Companies expect to see evidence that changes work

Our key takeaways

✓ **THE AVERAGE HOME STILL SUPPORTS KNOWLEDGE WORKERS BETTER THAN THE AVERAGE OFFICE.** Now more than ever, employees find themselves juggling between the comfort of their home offices and the structured environment of corporate workspaces. This daily decision-making process encapsulates the myriad of considerations employees weigh when determining their optimal work location for the day.

✓ **FACTORS IN THE "WORTH IT EQUATION".** The pandemic seems to have shaken our routines. Before the pandemic, commuting to the office was a routine. Post-pandemic, employees are considering which place is best for the day's activities. And personal life logistics, such as family commitments, errands, or proximity-based engagements, further add layers to this equation.

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What we said about offices in 2023

1 The office needs to make an impact

2 The "worth it" equation will come into play

3 People have power - and offices provide people

WE SAID that the team will be the unit of decision making. To accommodate this, it is going to be more important than ever that offices create spaces where creative work can be done alone or together.

WE SAW that the people-have-the-power idea is still quite spot on. We should accept that the majority of employees know best where to work on a certain day. If there's mistrust from the employer's side that people don't actually work remotely, this isn't fixed by forcing employees to the office and working under supervision.

4 People still need offices - and offices still need people

5 Companies expect to see evidence that changes work

Our key takeaways

✓ **THE TEAM IS STILL THE MOST IMPORTANT LEVEL OF DECISION.** Mandatory office days should be accepted at the team level - not the organizational level. The team knows what works best. And the team is the most important part of generating a feeling of belonging.

✓ **WORK SHOULD STILL BE THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE OFFICE.** For some, the only reason to come to the corporate office is a social reason. And it's a valid reason. But the office is failing to do its job if people don't also come in order to get things done. The social aspect shouldn't be the only reason people come to the office.

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What we said about offices in 2023

(1) The office needs to make an impact

(2) The "worth it" equation will come into play

(3) People have power - and offices provide people

(4) People still need offices - and offices still need people

WE SAID that the office needs to do the work. Employers need to recognize the shifting trends in work, and make adjustments to the office in areas where they excel.

WE SAW that office spaces still need to produce more feelings of connection. Many offices turn to gimmicks in an effort to provide a "purpose" for coming to the office. But enhanced bistros, communal events, and ping pong tables aren't the only way to provide connection for people.

(5) Companies expect to see evidence that changes work

Our key takeaways

✓ **PEOPLE NEED SPACES TO FOCUS AND CONNECT.** If an office space is designed solely for individual work, something essential goes missing. Offices need open, flexible spaces designed for collaborative, social, and interactive activities. These spaces are more conducive to group work, discussions, meetings, and casual interactions among employees.

✓ **THE OFFICE'S MAIN PURPOSE CAN'T BE SOCIALIZING.** The feeling of connection and work relationships are the essence of organizational culture. But even when an office is set up for socializing, it still needs to be a place where work can get done. And offices need to provide spaces for both.

What we said about offices in 2023

① The office needs to make an impact

② The "worth it" equation will come into play

③ People have power - and offices provide people

④ People still need offices - and offices still need people

⑤ **Companies expect to see evidence that changes work**

WE SAID that office space is a costly investment. Running an office is a business – and businesses need to know why they're paying their leases. That's why they need hard proof that their people work better with the right support from the office.

WE SAW the evidence question is still highly relevant - and metrics still haven't been established. Leading with an output measure such as the occupancy rate is short sighted, and might lead to the wrong conclusions - and drastic results.

Our key takeaways

✓ **OCCUPANCY RATE ALONE ISN'T ENOUGH.** Evaluating workspace performance based solely on the occupancy rate might create a negative cycle. If the occupancy rate indicates that usage is low, decision makers might be tempted to turn to more aggressive desk-sharing ratios. But aggressive desk sharing ratios might actually be one reason why people are choosing to work from home.

✓ **IT'S A COMPLICATED EQUATION.** You cannot shrink your way to greatness - there's only so much you can cut from the workplace. And there is very real pressure to make office spaces smaller. But even with hybrid work, sustainability factors, and the cost of office space, these decisions should be made wisely.

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Push and pull factors for home vs. office

Key factors for staying home

✓ A focused environment with no distractions and a possibility for a deep concentration

✓ Zero commute means saving money on travel costs

✓ Flexible schedules make life easier

✓ A tailored workspace based on your needs and preferences

Key factors for leaving the home office

⊗ The home office is isolated and lacks social interaction

⊗ Blurred work-life boundaries makes switching off from work more difficult

⊗ Household dynamics may make it tricky to be productive or find space to work

Key factors for coming to the office

✓ The office is a hub of collaboration where spontaneous conversations can lead to real ideas and solutions.

✓ Many offices provide a variety of workspaces and resources to choose from, making focus and inspiration easier.

✓ Coming to the office can create a clearer separation between working and personal life.

Key factors for staying away from the office

⊗ An ill-equipped office is often not a pleasant or convenient place to work.

⊗ Long commutes are costly and time consuming.

⊗ Co-workers cause distractions.

⊗ Rigid structure causes a lack of autonomy

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The office of the future **must be an ally** in the war against distractions - not a battleground.

Our predictions for 2024

Office design trends
to expect in 2024

1   The office needs to provide the core basics for modern work

2   Offices will have a distraction epidemic

3   RTO mandates will become a thing of the past

4   Office design will include more flexibility

5   Focus spaces will be the number one office design trend

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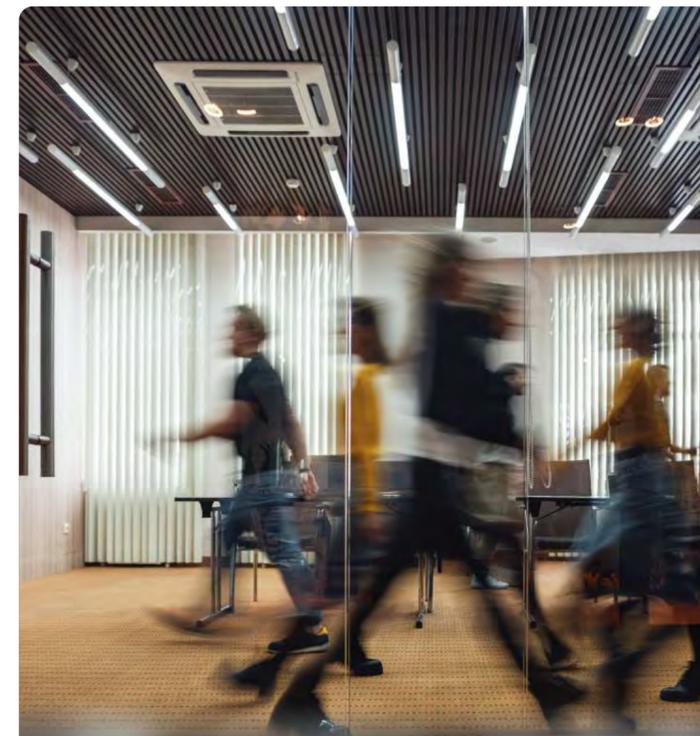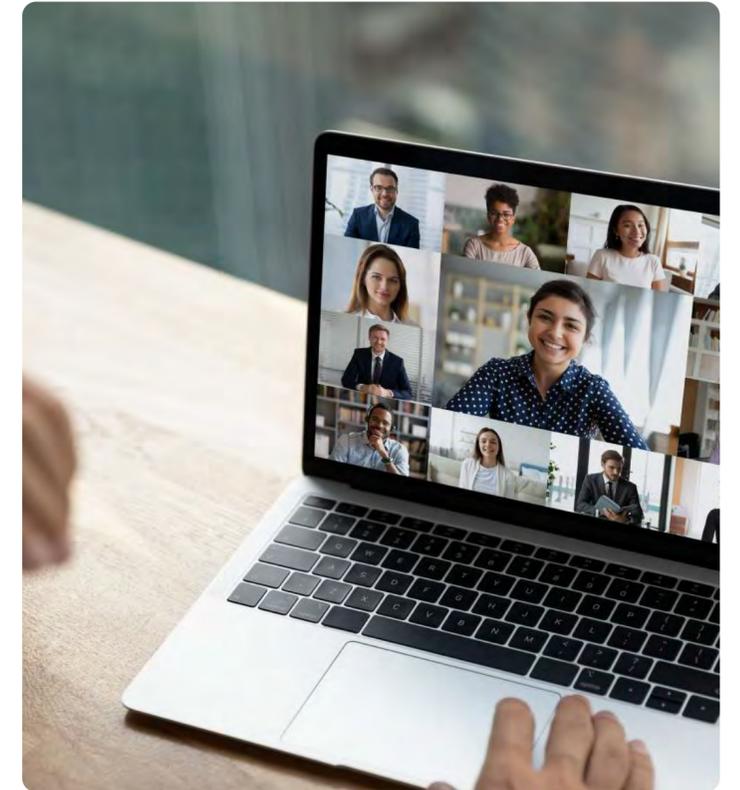
The office needs to provide the core basics for modern work

OFFICE DESIGN WILL SHIFT TOWARDS FUNDAMENTALS THAT FACILITATE EFFECTIVE WORK. The idea of a supportive office will shift towards the core needs of the workers. Offices are not people containers. They should be places that work for the people in them. And investing in the basic elements has the most impact.

AMENITIES WILL BE RE-DEFINED. Employees are clear about their needs - They demand well-thought-out spaces that cater to concentrated work, an adequate mix of meeting rooms suitable for both in-person and virtual collaboration, controlled noise levels, ergonomic setups, efficient space reservation systems, and superior indoor environment quality. These are not mere amenities – they are essential tools that enable productivity and well-being. Fail these and you'll end up having a workspace that doesn't support work.

HOME WORKSPACES EVOLVE FASTER THAN OFFICES. The average home better supports work activities than the average office. Home workspaces easily evolve to suit personal needs, equipped with technology tailored to individual tasks, preferred furniture, and an aesthetically pleasing design that supports productivity. This is a telling indication that offices have much to learn from home office design. Privacy, comfort, and aesthetic appeal are not luxuries but basic requirements for effective and productive work.

What we expect in 2024

1 **Offices will start to catch on**

The future of office design is about adopting a personalized and pragmatic approach to amenities. It's about creating spaces that echo the comfort and functionality of home offices - spaces that employees actually want to return to. It's about getting the basics right before diving into the decorative.

Private spaces ensure undisturbed focus. Ergonomics prevent physical strain. The right atmosphere fosters mental well-being. And natural light has been shown to boost mood and alertness. When individuals invest in their own spaces, they prioritize these core elements over trendy or flashy extras.

2 Infrastructure will shift to better accommodate workers

3 The office needs to provide a better working experience

4 Flexible spaces will draw people in

5 Offices must be designed to help tackle distractions
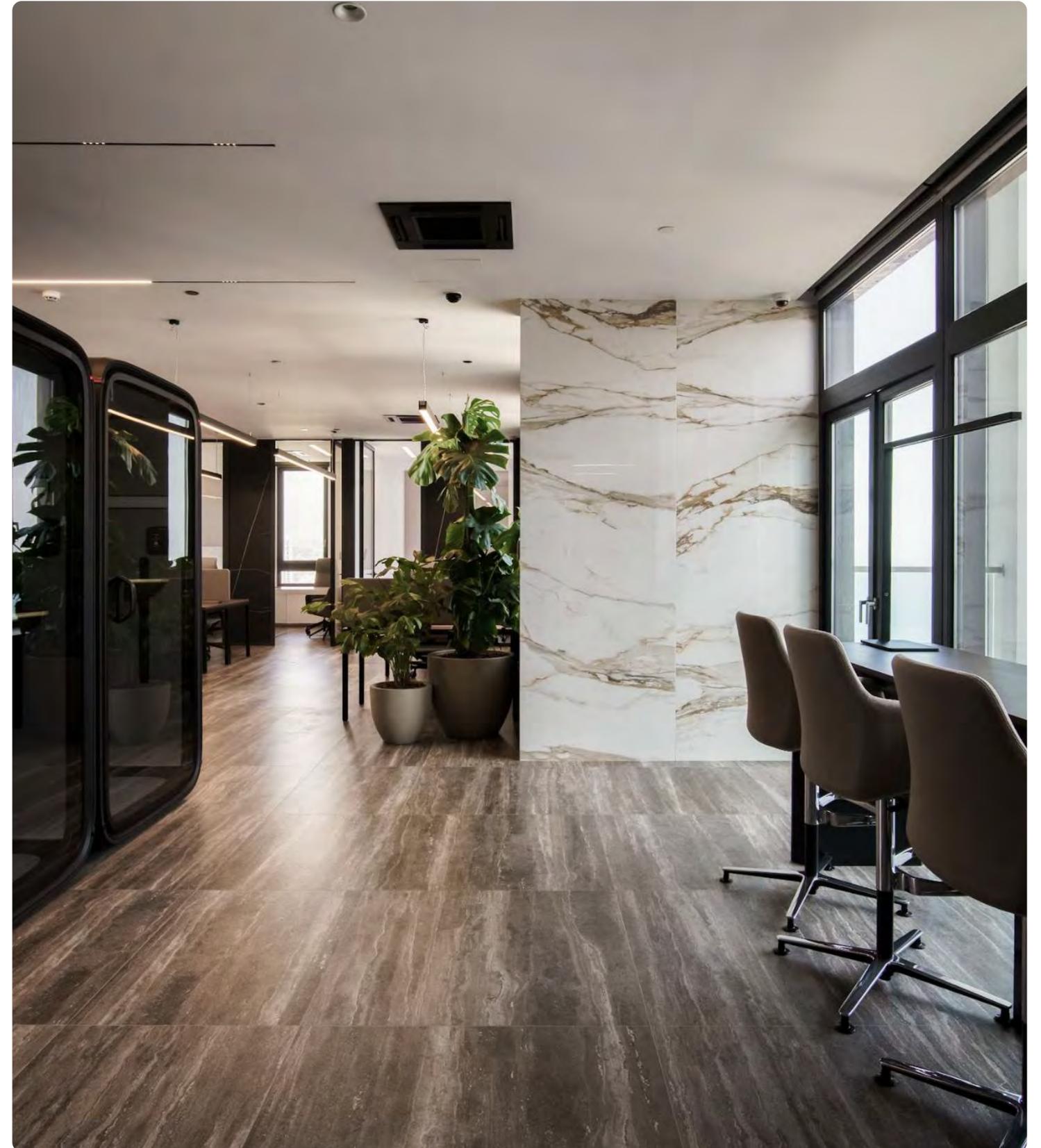
Offices will have a distraction epidemic

DISTRACTIONS WILL BECOME MORE BURDENSOME THAN EVER. Modern work contains a striking paradox - People are fighting to stay focused, collapsing under the pressures of work. At the same time, people have the nagging feeling that they are not doing enough. Most organizations state that the health and wellness of their employees is their top priority. But what tangible measures are being taken to combat the onslaught of distractions that compromise well-being?

OFFICE DAYS ARE ALREADY CHAOTIC. Working from the office means competing with others for time, space, and peace of mind. And distractions are everywhere. Internal distractions, like our own ideas that pop into our heads, seem urgent, pulling us away from the task at hand. And external distractions, like colleagues talking nearby, someone walking past your desk, and Slack notifications, are just as troubling.

EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN SOLVING THEIR OWN PROBLEMS. Offices leave it to the employees to solve their privacy problems. Employees are offered tips and tricks on time management techniques, but still treated as the primary responsible for making a change. However, the distraction epidemic is something that requires more than offering advice to the employees. In reality, the problem is structural, requiring a systemic approach to figure out how we communicate, collaborate, and occupy our workspaces.

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What we expect in 2024

1 — Offices will start to catch on

2 — **Infrastructure will shift to better accommodate workers**

The design of office spaces is crucial in the war against distractions. To affect change, offices must shift the focus from the individual to the infrastructures within which they operate. This includes the physical structures of the workspace. Without altering these foundational elements, we risk placing an unfair and ineffective burden on employees.

The goal is to create spaces that support concentration rather than disrupt it. This is especially important for neurodivergent individuals who may face more challenges with attention management. Sensory-accessible spaces are not just a niche requirement for some but a universal design principle that benefits all.

3 — The office needs to provide a better working experience

4 — Flexible spaces will draw people in

5 — Offices must be designed to help tackle distractions

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RTO mandates will become a thing of the past

OFFICES WILL BE DESIGNED AND OUTFITTED TO BRING PEOPLE BACK. The preference for remote working tells a revealing story about the current state of office spaces. Bringing people back to the office has been a constant struggle - and office design will play a role in solving that issue.

RTO MANDATES DON'T FAVOR EMPLOYEES. There are many return to office mandates seen in the media, as some companies are forcing their employees to work a certain number of days in the corporate office. The RTO mandate is a signal of disregard for an employee's sense of autonomy and appreciation.

OFFICES ARE UNSUPPORTIVE. Forcing everyone back to an unsupportive office ignores the reality that many people work just as well, if not better, from other places. It's like throwing a party nobody wants to attend and then locking the doors to keep guests inside.

What we expect in 2024

1   Offices will start to catch on

2   Infrastructure will shift to better accommodate workers

3   **The office needs to provide a better working experience**

The design of the office space and the experiences it provides that should inspire attendance, not the compulsion of policy. If the office design doesn't naturally attract employees, then even the strictest mandate is not going to do the trick.

Offices need to provide private spaces where people can join virtual meetings, take phone calls, and work together in-person without bothering those around them. And most offices don't have the capacity for that just yet.

4   Flexible spaces will draw people in

5   Offices must be designed to help tackle distractions

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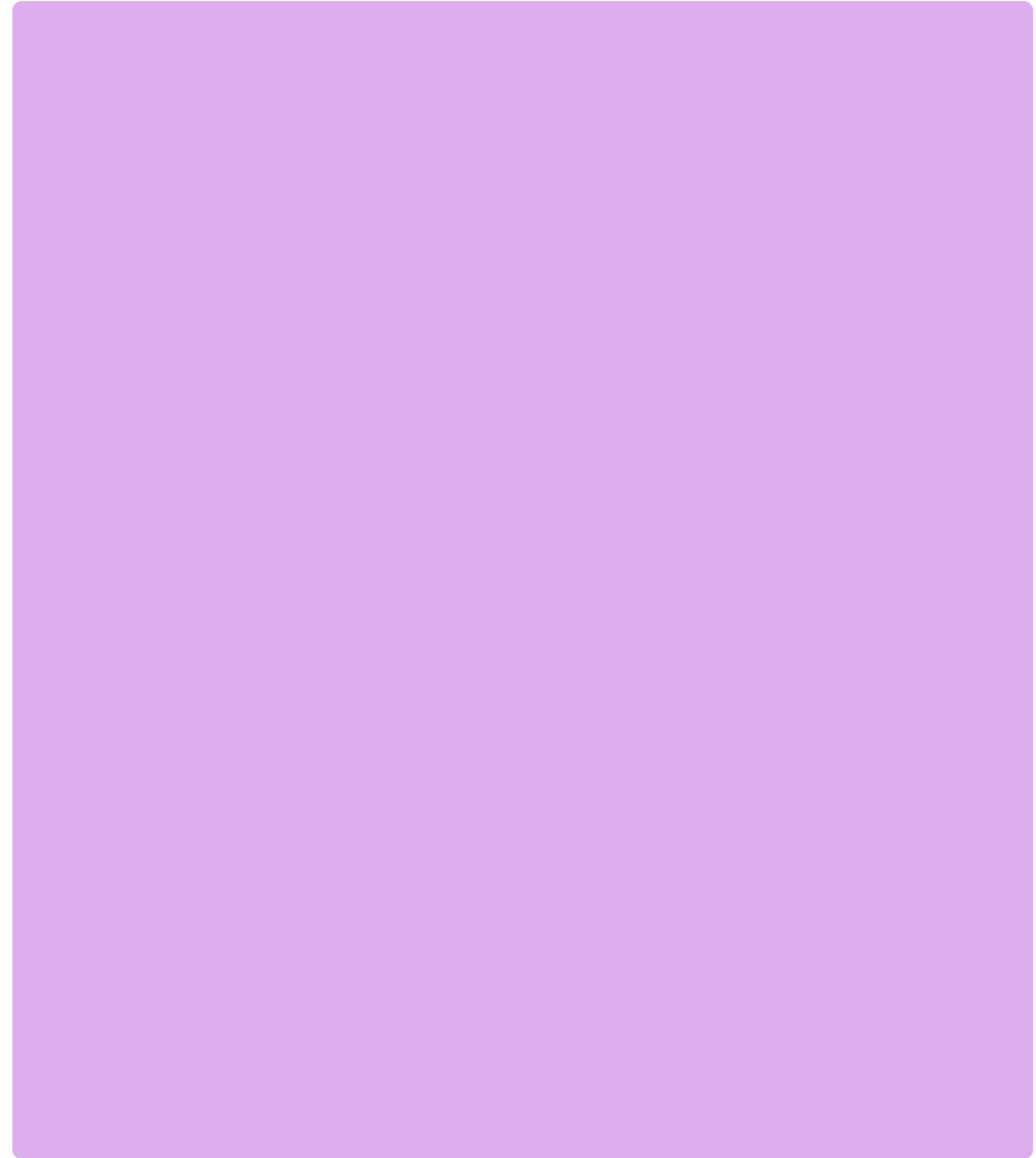
Office design will include more flexibility

FLEXIBILITY WILL BECOME A NON-NEGOTIABLE RIGHT. Organizations need to evaluate what the purpose of their office is - and how the design is delivering this purpose. If basic working needs are not being met for the people, then those people will continue to be pushed towards remote working.

FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS PROMOTE PRODUCTIVITY. The argument for flexible workspaces is not an argument against offices per se, but an argument for choice and adaptability. If a job benefits from being in an office, great. Yes, there's a strong case for team members meeting face-to-face. But the bigger work-life picture benefits from flexible work arrangements.

OFFICES DON'T SUPPORT HYBRID WORKING. In addition to hybrid work models, flexibility includes spaces that support hybrid working from the office. Low usage ratios is a hint that something in the office experience is not there yet. People might come to the office to meet with others, but if you can't get your work done in the corporate office, why bother with the commute?

What we expect in 2024

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To survive, offices need to become destination offices - or office magnets. Places that employees are drawn to not out of obligation, but out of a genuine desire to work and meet their colleagues. A destination that is worth the commute and the convenience of the home office.

This means that offices need versatile work areas that can accommodate all types of work. They require spaces that are able to adapt to the needs of in-person work - as well as sessions with remote colleagues or clients. And they must address the need for both privacy and social connection.

5　Offices must be designed to help tackle distractions

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Focus spaces will be the number one office design trend

5

OFFICES WILL BEGIN PROVIDING MORE SPACES FOR FOCUSED WORK. There is a growing necessity for spaces designed for focused work. As tasks become increasingly complex, the need for environments that cater to high concentration and minimization of distractions becomes evident.

COLLABORATIVE SPACES AREN'T ENOUGH. Employees value spaces for focused working beyond collaborative spaces. Offices continue to underperform when it comes to supporting focused work activities. Although the office has adapted well to support interactive activities, its efficacy in facilitating focused, high-concentration tasks has not kept pace.

WE NEED MORE PRIVATE SPACES. The majority of office workers spend at least one third of their working time working alone. It is problematic that a large portion of an employee's day is still spent working individually at their desks, frequently in virtual meetings, in spaces that were designed for other purposes.

What we expect in 2024

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3. The office needs to provide a better working experience

4. Flexible spaces will draw people in

5. **Offices must be designed to help tackle distractions**

The ability to concentrate is essential to performance. And distractions are innately disruptive to brain function. So it is a must that office design includes areas that mitigate these distractions. The reluctance to commute to the office might be explained by the office's poor ability to support focused activities.

Spaces where distractions are minimized and people get work done are a key factor for the office - not just a nice bonus. According to Leesman research, a workspace that does not support focused work, is an "obstructor" workspace. If a workspace doesn't support focused working, it won't matter how brilliant the other spaces are.

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Make them an office they can't refuse

WE FORESEE A FOCUS ON THE CORE BASICS THAT FACILITATE EFFECTIVE WORK. Anticipating a transformation in office design, we expect there will be a paradigm shift in addressing the distraction epidemic, and the gradual phasing out of Return to Office (RTO) mandates in favor of a more appealing working experience. And an increased insistence on flexibility as a non-negotiable right, with a heightened emphasis on providing spaces dedicated to focused work.
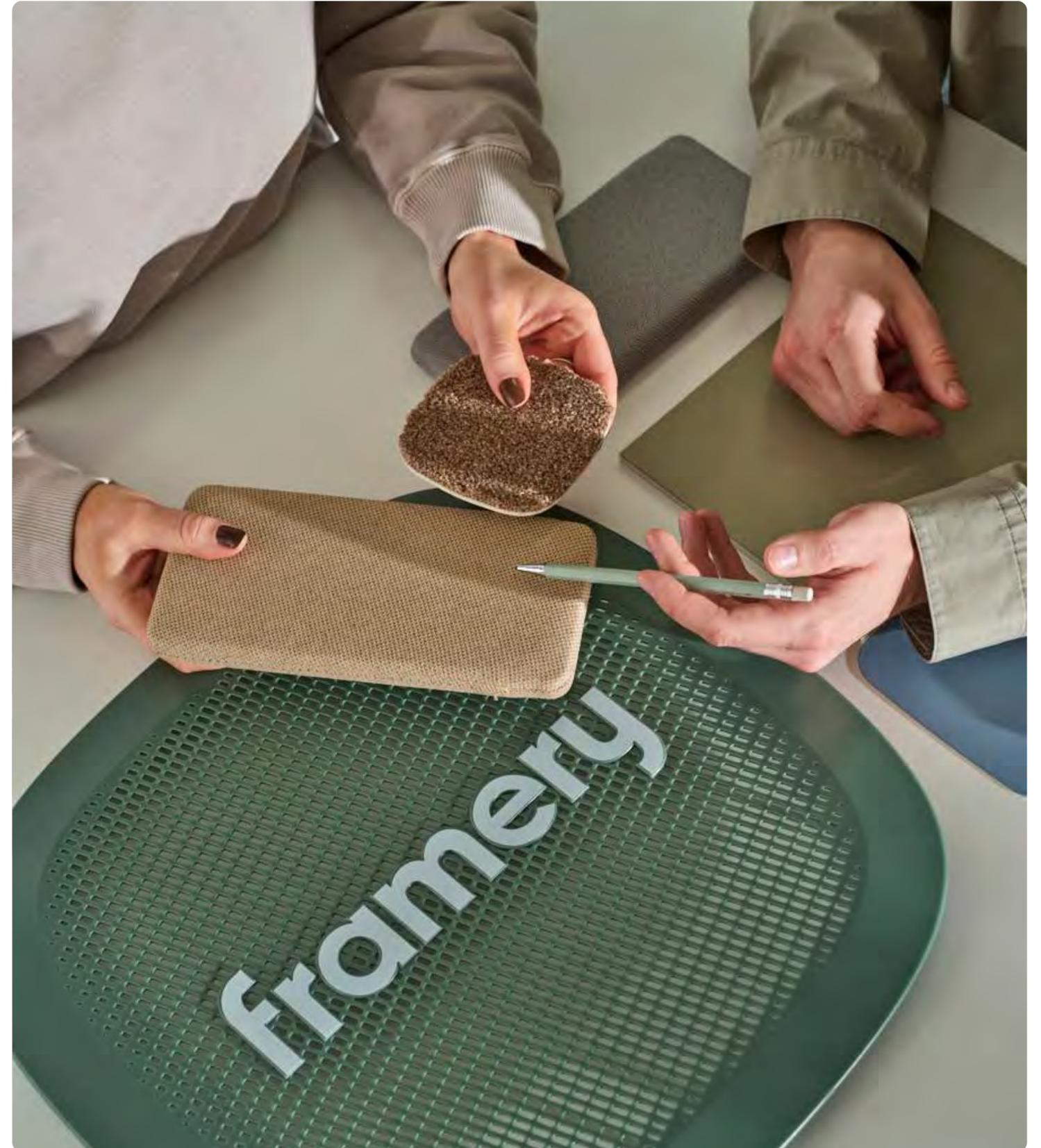
The office is not merely a physical place - it's a constantly evolving ecosystem. And offices need to begin to be seen as an equal part of the team. That means flexible, available spaces where people can focus on the things that actually matter. And turn the office into a place for people to get things done.

Office design is at the crossroads of change.

- Offices will start to catch on

- Infrastructure will shift to better accommodate workers

- The office needs to provide a better working experience

- Flexible spaces will draw people in

- Offices must be designed to help tackle distractions

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