

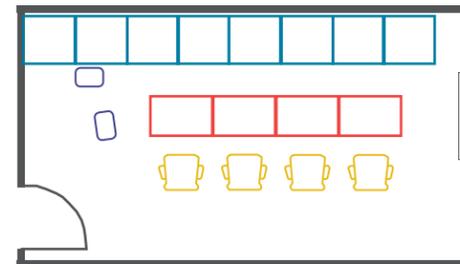
Young Tech: Flexibility

Work looks different today. The abundance of more affordable technology and high speed networking capabilities has allowed knowledge workers the ability to be productive on laptops, smartphones, tablets, wearables, etc. On these devices, people can research, create presentations, manage correspondence, and conduct data analysis. As Wi-Fi is developing into a standard utility, like water and electricity, people are becoming increasingly mobile.

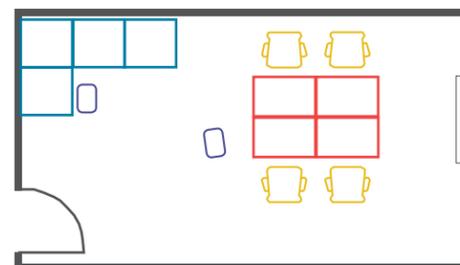
When laptops and VPNs first became available, many companies offered employees the flexibility to work remotely, reducing commuting and encouraging a positive work-life balance. As the trend strengthened, an unanticipated decline in productivity was experienced. Employees work-life balance improved, however, and people now expect to have the same freedom of choice and mobility at work.

In 2013, Marissa Mayer, the CEO of Yahoo!, famously issued a “back to the office” policy, demanding that employees either return to the office for work or leave the company. Following her lead, many tech companies now design their workplaces to accommodate work-life balance while at work, offering free food, laundry service, gyms, yoga studios, and even daycare. With more employees at the office, the company will allow for more opportunities to collaborate and innovate.

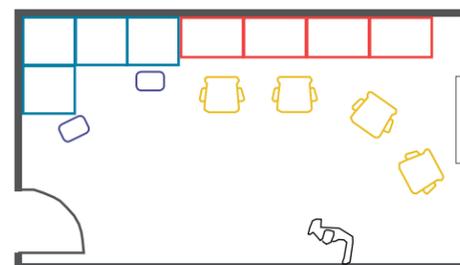
As offices allow for a greater variety of activities at work, it is inefficient to design a space for each function. Workplace designers must now design for the flexibility to accommodate many functions in each space. Furniture is developed as a tool to enable different behavior - whether it is team gather, ideation, or individual focus. A change in needs can now compel a small furniture change rather than a full renovation.



Conference Scenario



Team Table/Individual Scenario



Ideation Scenario



Policy implementation and playing on the strengths of cultural ‘place’ behavior allow companies to implement behavioral change without forceful policy reform. The name “library” connotes the cultural expectation of a quiet, heads-down environment and a policy of silence is not needed for hushed voices and muted cellphones in the space. Town halls, cozies, nooks, forums, mingle zones and their respective design layouts implicate behavior and actualize intended policy. In this way, employees can move around within the office to optimize the environment best suited to their work priorities.

As businesses aim to offer productive, task-appropriate workspace, interior architecture has developed into a series of open, semi-enclosed, and closed zones. The workplace develops and responds to its inhabitants as quickly as their behavior evolves. The workplace is constantly interacting.

Flexibility empowers employees and employers to optimize efficiency and productivity. Also, it may just lead to greater health and wellbeing. Please look for this discussion in the next edition of Young Tech, Health and Wellbeing.