

**RED**PAPER

# The future of the workplace in a hybrid society

Issue 3/2022





# **PANDEMIC TRENDS RESHAPING WORKPLACES**

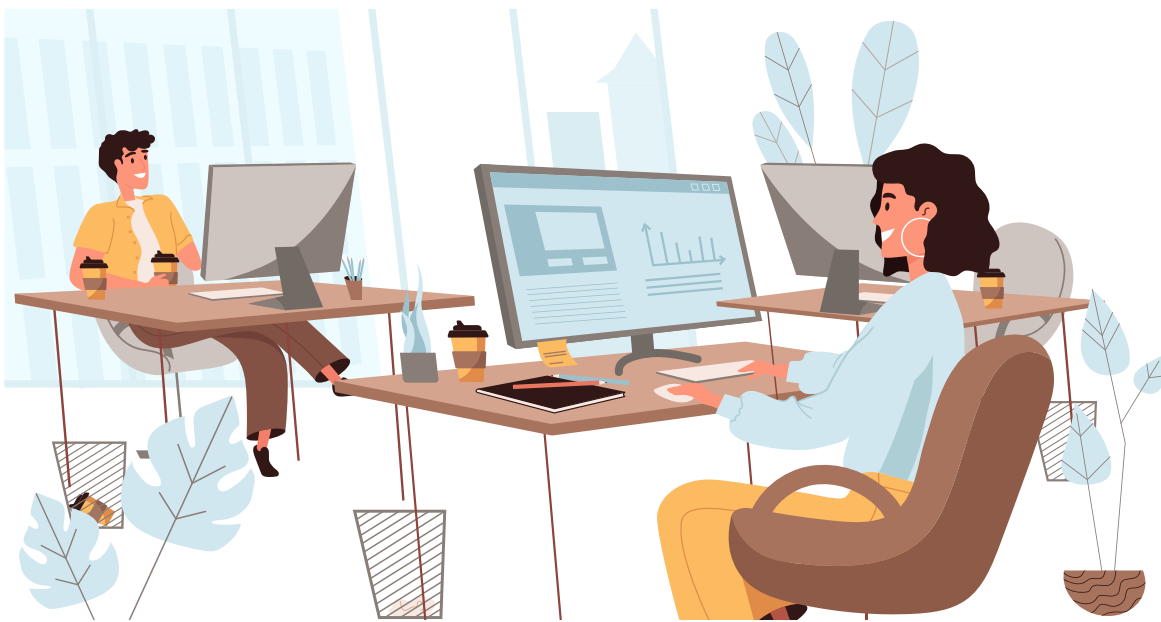
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# PANDEMIC TRENDS RESHAPING WORKPLACES



The COVID-19 pandemic has shown strong signs of improvement as restrictions are lifted, borders are reopened, and people gradually go back to their normal lifestyles, while almost 100% of employers now require their staff to return to the office. However, over the last two years, office workers have become accustomed to working from home (WFH). Returning to work, therefore, requires some lifestyle changes.

The freedom of WFH without any fixed scheduling or restrictions, the time saved from commuting to and from offices, together with the increased family time and pleasant WFH moments has come to an end. Some may find ways to cope with this transition, or discover what really matters to them and decide to leave their jobs. At the same time, others may enjoy being back in an office environment, the camaraderie of the workplace and the 8 AM to 5 PM routine. The important thing to address is will their performance be as effective as in the pre-COVID period and can they readjust to the office routine? And why are large companies experiencing a high turnover rate and losing their competitive employees?

Some big changes have set in, whether it's office relocations to ensure easy and convenient access, or improvements to the work environment to attract more potential applicants.



**REDPAPER**, a report on real estate information and trends sponsored by Frasers Property (Thailand) Co. Ltd., together with Number 10 Research, Co. Ltd., surveyed 300 male and female workers between the ages of 20-55 in the central business district covering Silom, Sathorn, Surasak, Surawongse, Rama 4, Samyan, Chidlom, Ploenchit, Witthayu, and Asoke in July 2022. The REDPAPER analyzed the emerging trends and designs of office buildings that resonate with employees by meeting their needs as they become accustomed to living and working post-COVID, although some are finding it difficult to return to the same routine.

The change in working styles affects how office and retail spaces are being used, resulting in impacts to commercial real estate which must alter both the office layout and landscape, as well as the retail mix, in particular, the range of shops which are largely driven by the needs of office employees. How can organizations and companies improve the look and feel of their offices and develop their surroundings making them more cutting-edge catering to new office styles that respond to each organization's needs in the new normal era?

It's no surprise that we experience heavy traffic jams and BTS or MRT lines packed with commuters. Research has found that over 71% of working groups have returned

to regular office mode, from 8 AM to 5 PM, as in the pre-pandemic period. However, not everyone wants to go back to the office. Most salaried workers prefer having flexible work options and trying something different. The past two years have proven that onsite work is not a necessity. Employees can work from anywhere in the world. Some may want to work in a fixed schedule environment while others are more comfortable and have gotten used to "hybrid" work which allows them to work from anywhere with no rigid schedules or needing to show up every day at the office. These attitudes from workers greatly affect how they choose a workplace. So, how can companies change to win over these people?

# Take a closer look at six trends from salaried workers

# 68%

## 1 Non-stressful Work

In recent years, we have faced many changes in the modern work environment against a shifting backdrop worldwide. This is an important and necessary thing to consider, as an organization can survive amid drastic and rapid changes only when it has the support and cooperation of its employees, and by making tasks less stressful as a result. Organizations and companies can start by adjusting their office landscapes to reduce work stresses by dedicating some space to plants and office greenery which enhance the atmosphere and provide a corner to relax while at work.



# 53%

## 2 Career Advancement

To keep up in an era where you can be interrupted by any event at any time, employees feel they need to improve and change the way they work to be more productive, upgrading and developing their skills to ensure they are “valued” amid shifting trends. An important consideration for salaried workers is their path to career advancement and a work environment that equips and drives them with technological capabilities helping promote new ideas and bringing about positive changes and success. A company should focus on personnel development covering knowledge, skills, and tools that achieves productive work and the desired outcomes and business results according to the goals of the respective employee. It should also enrich the organizational environment by reinforcing creativity and teamwork further promoting the success of both the business and existing employees.





## 49%

### 3 Work-life Balance

Balancing one's work and personal life from the effects of overwork is important, especially for the new generation, whether full-time workers or freelancers, so they can properly manage their time getting the most out of it without having to be at their desk or workstation at all times. It is important to have spaces for employees to relax and indulge in feel-at-home moments with facilities that support a pleasant atmosphere. Areas, both inside and outside the building, should be well-allocated creating a welcoming environment that inspires staff to enjoy working in a sustainable manner. A modern office, therefore, needs to provide a space which can be everyone's third place to hang out after work.



## 41%

### 4 Upskill/Reskill

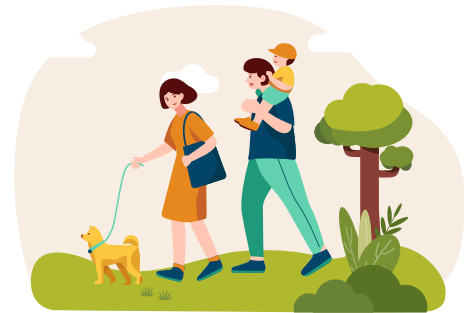
Many workers realized that their knowledge and abilities were insufficiently suited to their jobs which changed with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. To further drive businesses, a crucial factor will be increased support for human resources. Employees, in turn, need to adjust and improve so they have the requisite skills and capabilities to deal with new forms of work while remaining competitive in the job market and business landscape. Key competency developments can take place through a range of learning support tools, including trainings and workshops. Offices need to offer facilities for personnel training, workshop sessions, and spaces for brainstorming.



## 40%

### 5 Convenient Accessibility and Complete Facilities

The days of 2-3 hour commutes may be gone for good. Life should not be spent on the road, going to the office early and returning home late. Employees can now make their own choices by choosing which workplace location suits them the best - with proximity to a BTS/MRT station being a key consideration.

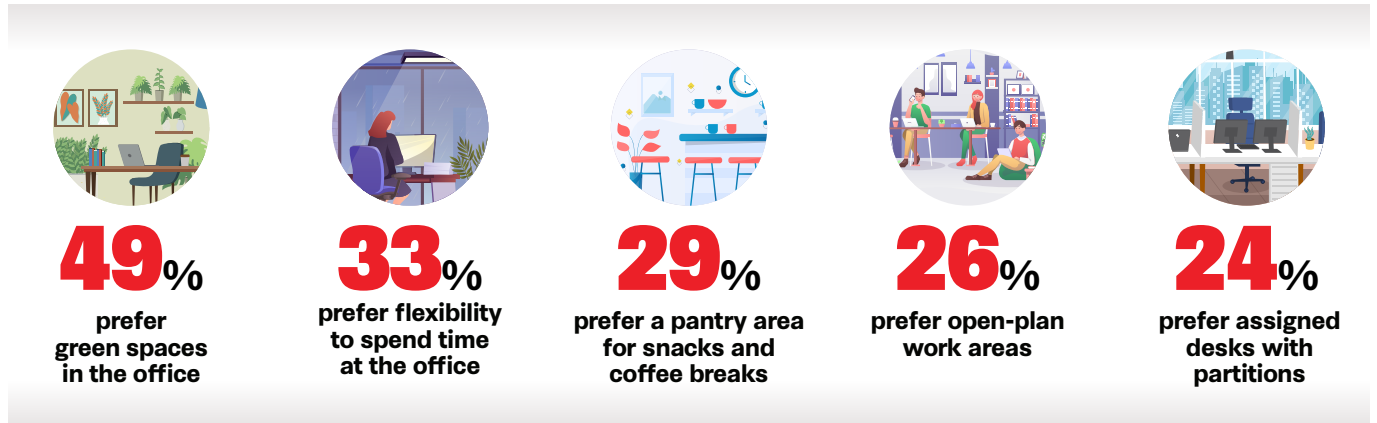


## 38%

### 6 Family Time

In order to spend more time with families, 84% of employees want freedom in terms of work, where they can decide their schedule and being at the office with flexibility to WFH from time to time. Some may ask for ten hours of work per week to get more days off, or to WFH four days a week. Only 16% continue to prefer a conventional style of working, with strict schedules and an eight hour workday. The option of flexible work hours influences workplace patterns.

# Ideal workplace



	Total % N = 300	Gen Z % 100	Gen Y % 100	Gen X % 100
1. Green spaces, e.g., trees, to enhance the atmosphere, ensuring that the office is visually and mentally comfortable, and to purify the air	49	49	49	49
2. Flexibility to spend time at the office with no limitations	33	30	31	39
3. A pantry space for snacks and coffee breaks	29	27	30	31
4. Open-plan workspaces	26	27	26	26
5. Assigned desks with partitions	24	24	21	28
6. Green spaces, scenery and views to enhance the atmosphere and provide inspiration	23	33	21	16
7. Coworking space	21	21	28	14
8. Not being forced to work in a dull and boring room	18	25	13	17
9. Multifunctional furniture and office supplies available, e.g., adjustable sofas with storage space; adjustable standing desks; or 3-in-1 printers	17	14	21	17
10. Located in a mixed-use building with complete facilities	13	10	16	12
11. Soft drink vending machines available at no charge	12	14	12	10
12. Healthy drink options available at no charge	11	11	10	12
13. Controllable air-conditioning and electronic office supplies	8	3	8	12
14. A shower room and bedding available for late night/overnight work	8	8	12	5
15. Meeting rooms available in different sizes	6	4	2	12

Surveyed from 300 male and female workers aged 20-55 in the central business district covering Silom, Sathorn, Surasak, Surawongse, Rama 4, Samyan, Chidlom, Ploenchit, Witthayu, and Asoke.

When exploring Generation Z, the so-called “new blood” of the organization who are now entering working age, the report found that this group prioritizes workplace locations. It should be noted that during the WFH period, Gen Z sought out inspiration by working at various locations, including coffee shops, cafés, or staycations at hotels, believing that where they work influences the quality of their work. Gen Z prefer spacious offices or a coworking space where they can choose to sit wherever they want having the freedom to do their work without being confined to the same space. They would like to have a workplace garden to take walks to get some exercise and see greenery and nice views drawing inspiration from the inviting atmosphere. In addition, as they are largely new graduates and working age, travel convenience is important to Gen Z, whether it be footpaths or covered walkways for those who use public transport such as buses or the BTS/MRT, as well as access to commercial retail zones with food options that are open 24 hours.

These six trends from salaried workers should not be overlooked by organizations and companies. Although the past two and a half years have shown that they are able to work from anywhere without having to endure traffic jams or packed trains to get to work first thing in the morning, when it’s time to return to the workplace, a company has to look at options to elevate the quality of work life that benefits all sides. This is a preferred option to being stuck in the same office loop which creates an unnecessary financial burden on companies, while employees lose their enthusiasm and drive in a mundane environment which they are no longer used to.

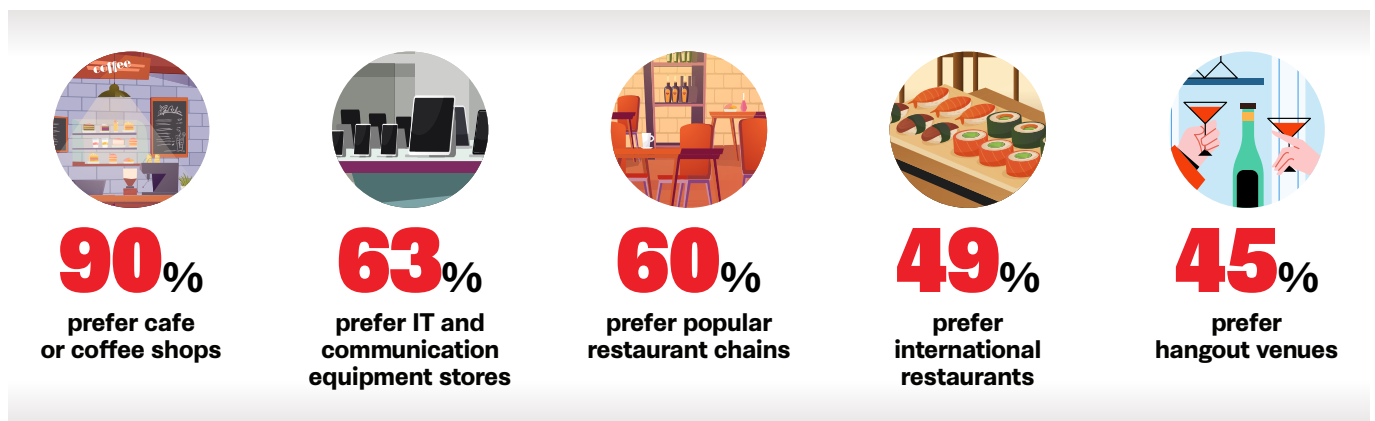
Even though it may be known as and called a workplace, employers and offices have many options to create and enhance the atmosphere. A convenient location, which is easily accessible, is already half the battle, though it would be even better if the office could become another important space that provides a sense of satisfaction - and even happiness - to its employees. No matter how much the



body needs to recharge after work, the thought of having to travel from the workplace to another destination can be discouraging, and the worker may simply end up heading straight home instead. Thus, the combination of a coworking space that offers restaurants, cafés, and shops that cater to all of their needs, such as IT equipment stores, supermarkets, mail and parcel delivery services, etc., together with an enhanced atmosphere with office greenery, can help relax

the mind and body after work. It can also be a place where salaried workers meet up after working hours, combining their work and social lives with just the right mix. These factors will meet the needs of the new generation of workers seeking work-life balance. Apart from creating an interesting and practical workplace to help improve productivity, retail shops within an office building can be supported with the growth of their regular customer base.

## Dream retail space in office buildings



	Total % N = 300	Gen Z % 100	Gen Y % 100	Gen X % 100
1. Cafe or coffee shops	90	93	81	95
2. IT and communication equipment stores	63	62	61	67
3. Popular restaurant chains	60	60	49	72
4. International food venues	49	46	49	52
5. Places to hangout	45	52	52	30
6. Healthy restaurants	42	38	32	56
7. Cashless shopping	38	48	37	29
8. Massage and spa	38	37	41	35
9. 24-hour online supermarket with delivery services	37	30	40	42
10. Attractive indoor design with Instagrammable and must-visit spots	35	44	29	31
11. Parcel or document delivery services	30	32	25	32
12. Beauty salons, e.g., hair cut, nail salon	28	38	21	25
13. A gym equipment shop, e.g., for workouts, running, cycling, etc., in a compact size but with a wide range of options and online channel	27	27	25	28
14. Physical stores for popular online food merchants	27	31	25	25
15. Places for reskilling and upskilling, e.g., language centers, art studio, creative studio, bouquet arrangements, embroidery, mini cooking studio, etc.	23	27	20	22
16. Shops to pay electricity and water bills	20	14	18	27
17. Transportation or airfare reservations	18	14	15	24
18. Restaurants, clothing, accessories for pets	18	22	20	11
19. Exhibition halls	17	19	14	17
20. Clothing alteration and delivery	16	16	13	19
21. Ticket service point	15	20	12	12
22. Currency exchange	15	13	14	19
23. Pick-up point for online stores	15	17	13	14
24. Stationary to inspire creativity in work life	15	17	10	17
25. Physical stores for popular online merchants	14	8	18	17

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**If companies, agencies, and commercial establishments do not adapt to satisfy their workers so that they can commit their futures to the organization, they risk losing them. After all, “people” are the drivers of an organization, and cannot be replaced despite the increased role being played by machines and AI. The priority should, therefore, be to offer flexible workplaces that accommodate a mix of needs and styles for the present - and future.**



## About US

**REDPAPER**, Frasers Property Thailand's insight report, provides a series of articles which address trends, gaps, and analysis of the real estate industry in Thailand, particularly in the residential, industrial and commercial sectors, in addition to reporting useful facts and commentary from market leaders to readers.

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