Dissolution of the Traditional Workplace
FOR MOST, 76% OF WORK PERFORMED ON A TYPICAL DAY IS SOLO WORK OR VIRTUAL COLLABORATION. WORK THAT CAN BE DONE ANYWHERE. EXECUTIVES REPORTED THAT 46% OF THEIR TIME IS COLLABORATIVE, WITH THE BALANCE A COMBINATION OF 20% TRANSACTIONAL AND 12% FOCUSED WORK.
Introduction

The average worker in the US spends more time working than in any other economically evolved country, but the lines between work and personal time have begun to blur due to the increased use of contract workers by employers, the proliferation of technology, and the need for speed to stay competitive. While for many that may mean more time working off hours and remotely, much of that time is still spent in the office.

For most of the four generations currently in the workplace (six if you count early and late Boomers and Gen Ys as separate generations), the office landscape has largely remained the same since the mid-twentieth century. Yet, within a short ten years, the workforce will be comprised almost entirely of Millennials, who have tolerated the traditional workplace (largely due to a sluggish economy), followed by the very entrepreneurial Generation Z, who will not. This means the workplace is in for a sea change.

Operating from the hypothesis that the dissolution of the traditional nine-to-five workweek is emergent, The Center for Workplace Innovation at Mancini•Duffy focused its annual research on the non-physical aspects of work and deployed its Coordinate Survey to learn what times of the day workers felt most productive, their sources of inspiration, and if they worked while on vacation—most do!

The purpose of the study was to gain evidence that providing workers more variety in work settings and making the office a more inspiring and nurturing place could also increase real estate’s flexibility. Offered here are suggested ways we can start bending (or breaking) traditional rules around time and space to make that happen.
Mobility is Not Going Anywhere

Let’s start by looking at mobility as a means of offering both employees and occupancy planners more flexibility. In recent years, mobile work—defined as working from someplace other than one’s main office, such as home, client, or other office locations—has been perceived as both a solution and a problem. It’s a solution for many portfolio managers seeking to reduce real estate and environmentalists looking to reduce carbon footprint; and, it’s a problem when both workers and managers are ill-equipped—organizationally, technically, or emotionally—to work in a virtual environment. Indeed we’ve heard stories of less than satisfactory results from remote work programs, as a result of things like poor connectivity or an inability to focus; from a lack of direction to downright disengagement. Those who believed remote work had been taken to extremes must have considered Marissa Mayer’s calling everyone at Yahoo! back to the office a tipping point for mobility. Still, with business leaders constantly challenged by changing business models to stay agile and portfolio managers under continuous pressure to reduce operational costs, mobility can still be a solution provided it is not a choice of “either / or” but of “both / and.”

“Both / and” means offering workers some choice about whether or not they work remotely and, at the same time, providing space for them in the office. Double dipping? No. The trade-off significantly reduces the percentage of space per employee (assigned or not) to free up space that can be reallocated to more flexible settings that can serve dual or multiple purposes. The net gain isn’t necessarily an even exchange, but having less space dedicated to specific uses creates efficiencies that better accommodate future growth without increasing the overall footprint.

What we already know is 30% to 40% of workers telecommute,[3] via formal program or tacit agreements, motivated by the need to seek talent outside a geographic area and / or the priority younger generations place on work / life balance. Furthermore, industry research from multiple sources shows that when employees are in the office, they are in their assigned location only—interestingly similar numbers—35% to 45% of the time. Yet we are still designing the offices as if everyone was in their assigned seats Monday through Friday between 9:00am and 5:00pm, a practice that neither meets the need for business leaders to stay agile nor that of the portfolio managers to contain costs. For all these reasons, mobility is not the answer, agility is, and mobility is only one part of the agility solution.
FIGURE 1
The average workday looks like this:
Agility Defined in Different Terms

What do we mean by agility? Historically, companies have increased agility through various work methods, including telecommuting, hoteling, free address, demountable partitions, and moveable furniture. All good solutions, but still ones largely dealing with physical space through traditional programming methods. The Coordinate’s findings suggest another way of creating agility—through timing. When asked which hours of the day were most productive, respondents reported that their peak hours were at the beginning (8:00am to 10:00am) and the end (4:00pm to 6:00pm) of the day (see Figure 1).

The activities performed during those peak hours are also revealing. Asked to indicate what tasks were being performed during the hours when people felt most productive, solo work (described as email and heads down, concentrated work) and virtual collaboration (phone calls, phone and video conferencing) were cited most often—all tasks that, with the right technology and an accepting company culture, could be performed anywhere (see Figure 2).

Clear distinctions also emerged in the work performed on certain days of the week. Emails are constant, but more solo work is being performed at the beginning and end of the week. In other words, Mondays are for planning, Fridays are for cleanup, and most meetings occur mid-week (see Figure 3).
FIGURE 3
The average work week looks like this:

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<th>MON</th>
<th>TUE</th>
<th>WED</th>
<th>THU</th>
<th>FRI</th>
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<td>VIRTUAL COLLABORATION</td>
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COLLABORATIVE SPACES WOULD BECOME AN INTEGRAL AND ESSENTIAL PART OF THE OFFICE LANDSCAPE—NOT SOMETHING TO BE DISPOSED OF TO INCREASE HEADCOUNT.
Taking a Few Ideas for a Walk

These findings not only have the potential to positively impact decisions about space, but influence organizational policies, cultural attributes, and employee perks in ways that attract and retain talent. Here are some thought starters for applying these findings to the planning process.

**FUZZY MATH**
Taking the average percentage of time people are actually in their assigned workspaces and the average percentage of telecommuters into account, does everyone—in every department—need an assigned space? If you think so, try walking the floors during different periods of the day and see what percentage of seats are filled at any given time.

**QUIET HOURS**
If telecommuting is not an option, and people can’t concentrate in open plan and quiet rooms are always booked, how about trying a combination of flex time—allowing employees the option to work from home during times of heads down solo work or virtual collaboration—and quiet hours during a designated time of the day. The combination just might make the open plan less congested and free up some of those quiet rooms.

**IN-ADJACENCIES**
Departmental adjacencies are often the most challenging part of the planning puzzle. Based on the Coordinate findings that the majority of workers (76%) perform heads down or virtual tasks during most of the day, do departments really have to sit together? Or could there be common areas large enough for teams to gather when needed, like a café, lounge, or arena-type space that does double duty?

How can we make the office a more inspiring and nurturing place to be?
What Would that Kind of Office Look Like?

What would the office look like if we planned not only for peak times but to support the most commonly performed activities? It would likely be more open-plan (albeit with quiet rooms and even quiet hours) and an increase in multi-functional collaborative spaces like:

• cafés doubling as meeting areas;
• private offices doubling as quiet rooms;
• self-configurable conference rooms doubling as team rooms; and
• reception areas doubling as lounges and town hall spaces.

The biggest changes would be: a) the increased percentage of square feet allotted to these various space types; and b) the fact that these spaces would become an integral and essential part of the office landscape—not something to be disposed of to increase headcount. Working with a kit of parts, business leads might make their own decisions on how they want to apply the kit so floors or departments might also look different. A nightmare for facilities managers? Not so if the kit is finite but pliable enough to accommodate multiple applications.

This emphasis on open, collaborative settings does not preclude the need for private spaces in general and private offices in particular. On the contrary, as collaborative areas increase, so does the need for private spaces. However, the Coordinate findings do support the continuation of the trend toward fewer private offices. In a separate sampling of the Coordinate—conducted in December 2014 by the McMorrow Reports and surveying executives only—the majority reported 10:00am to 2:00pm as their most productive hours, with more than 60% reporting being engaged in collaborative activities such as scheduled meetings, phone calls, and impromptu meetings during that time. Additionally, in looking at the overall mix of activities performed during regular working hours, executives responded that almost half of their time (46%) was spent on collaborative activities, 20% on transactional tasks such as emails, and only 12% on focused individual work.

These findings beg two questions:

1. Is the private office the right environment for executives or would a suite of different work settings that enable various kinds of collaboration be more supportive of their activities?
2. If most employees are spending the majority of their workday (76%) performing solo or virtual work, and executives are spending almost half of their day (46%) collaborating, why are we still so hung up on adjacencies and assigned seating?
When asked how long McDonald’s slogan, “You deserve a break today” would last, Keith Reinhard, the slogan’s creator, said “You should stop running this campaign when people no longer deserve a break.” Forty-three years later, it has come to pass. McDonald’s abandoned the campaign in 2013.

In terms of the workplace, people may deserve a break but are just not getting one. The Coordinate’s findings show that while for Baby Boomers this just may be part of the job, Generations X and Y are not so satisfied with the status quo. Generations X and Y place more emphasis on being able to manage one’s own time at work—they show considerable dissatisfaction with the demands that work places upon them, citing an inability to take breaks during the workday, a desire for a bit of downtime between projects, and the freedom to choose which days to work (see Figure 4).

According to the majority of our respondents, the expectation from employers is still pretty much not only 9:00am to 5:00pm, but 24/7. But, if companies were to take this desire for a more flexible schedule into consideration—along with the implications that can be drawn from a typical workday comprised largely of solo or virtual tasks and a work week with equally clear patterns—a lot of expensive real estate might be shed or, in some part, redeployed to create spaces people really want.
As it stands, employees are not getting all of the breaks from the workplace to which they are entitled. A survey conducted by Harris Interactive for career website Glassdoor found that of the 2,300 American workers surveyed, only 51% of the paid vacation time and paid time off for which the workers were eligible were used. Our Coordinate findings take that even further, indicating that when people do take a break, more than half the workforce holds tight to their smartphones, checking and responding to email and taking phone calls, all or most of the time they are away (see Figure 5).[4]

“You should stop running this campaign when people no longer deserve a break.”

**FIGURE 5**
What we’re doing on vacation

As of respondents perform work-related activities either all or most of the time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>60%</th>
<th>70%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>90%</th>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>Answer calls</td>
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<td>Initiate calls</td>
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<td>Respond to email</td>
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<td>Check email</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Never | Occasionally | Most of the time | All of the time
What about incorporating more sources of inspiration and relaxation into our office landscape?

With little or no ability to disconnect from work while on vacation, sick, or even during lunch, we need to start thinking about incorporating more non-work-related sources of inspiration and relaxation into our office landscape. Ironically, when employees were asked about what inspires their work, our Coordinate respondents largely cited work-related characteristics such as access to colleagues and clients, and challenging assignments. However, many of the sources of inspiration cited are elements that could indeed be incorporated into the design of a highly engaging (and engaged) workplace. Examples include:
VIEWS & NATURE
Like the old saying, “a change is a rest.” Access to views and nature are elements that divert without distracting—a great way to restore focus and foster creativity.

ART & COLOR
The same things that make art and color matters of individual taste can make them unifying factors. Not only can they be conversation starters, but also elements that say something about your team, your company, and your culture.

PERSONAL RECOGNITION
Coordinate respondents place this high on the list of inspirations. We’ve seen great examples of this—both high-tech and low-tech—as easy ways to promote not only individual employees, but your brand.

OUTDOOR SPACE
Rare in many office settings, but—with most people already working on vacation—who says business has to stay in the office? Change it up a little and take a walking meeting or a conference in the park.

GAMING AREAS
Not everyone can afford the cost (or space) of video rooms and rock climbing walls, but incorporating more modest versions of gaming into the workplace is a great way to build relationships that lead to effective collaboration and teamwork.

MEDITATION SPACES
Quiet Rooms 2.0—not just for introverts, but for anyone needing space to put their feet up and regenerate with impunity. According to a 2009 Ohio State University study, “meditation in the workplace can lower a company’s healthcare costs by reducing chronic stress, a major risk factor for illness.”

EXERCISE AREAS
Insurance giant, Aon, says employers can expect a $3 to $6 return for every $1 spent on wellness programs. At the same time, “time to exercise” ranked highest importance/lowest performance by Coordinate respondents who we asked about work claiming time from personal priorities.

LOUNGES & LIBRARIES
“The people that I liked and had not met went to the big cafes... and no one noticed them and they could be alone in them and be together,” (Ernest Hemingway, A Moveable Feast). Spaces like these are the perfect convergence of stimulation and contemplation.
A “STIMULATING ATMOSPHERE” AND ONE THAT SUPPORTS THE “ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE” ARE DISTINCT YET COMPLEMENTARY ELEMENTS AS ESSENTIAL (TO EACH OTHER) AS YIN AND YANG.
Creating an effective and supportive workplace is about imagining new ways of providing time and places to work. People want flexibility and they want choice. It’s no longer a case of “either/or” but a case of “both/and.” If we don’t solve this, real estate costs won’t matter. We can build it but they will not come.

Finally, when asked about workplace priorities, Coordinate respondents cited two seemingly disparate yet essential elements—a stimulating atmosphere and ability to concentrate—as the two biggest gaps in workplace performance. What’s appealing about the aforementioned spaces is that in their ability to nurture and invigorate employees and, at the same time, offer employees choice, they provide real estate a bit of wiggle room and thereby address both priorities. As densification of the office continues—and it will (CoreNet Global reports that the average square footage allocated per employee has dropped from 225 square feet to 176 square feet in just five years)—push will come to shove. In the past, this has mostly meant that something has to give. But going forward, why couldn’t we look at “stimulating atmosphere” and “ability to concentrate” as distinct yet complementary elements? Like yin and yang, they are essential to each other and, at the same time, constantly transforming.
Who We Are

THE CENTER FOR WORKPLACE INNOVATION
People are a company’s most valuable asset and in today’s business environment it is people who make the difference. Our mission is to combine real estate, technology, and business processes to create exceptional work spaces that empower people to do their best work. We align design solutions with actual business drivers and create performance metrics to establish a feedback loop that continues to inform. This builds agility into the workplace to support the way people work today while enabling its evolution to support the way they will work in the future.

MANCINI•DUFFY
We are architects, planners, and interior designers, and we believe that great design tells an unforgettable story. A leading architectural and design firm for 100 years, we create environments powered by innovative design to positively impact the lives and businesses of our clients. We deliver award-winning design excellence across multiple industry sectors, including retail, hospitality, law, media and technology, publishing, insurance, education, and government—to name a few.
Fran leads the research and workplace strategy at the Center for Workplace Innovation and regularly contributes to industry periodicals on timely workplace topics. She has built high-performance workplace management services teams, and has worked with Fortune 500 companies both in the US and abroad.

Priyanka is a workplace strategist who balances visioning with micro-planning, detailed modeling, and data computation to help clients make well-informed decisions. Her broad background provides her a unique understanding of the dynamics of organizational culture, ethnographic studies, work patterns, and real estate/facilities management.

The findings discussed herein were also published as part of a two-part series in the McMorrow Reports, titled “Coordinate 2015: Dissolution of the Traditional Workplace Parts I and II,” on February 10, 2015, and March 9, 2015, respectively.