Change Your Space, Change Your Culture

Research by Rex Miller, Mabel Casey, and Mark Konchar

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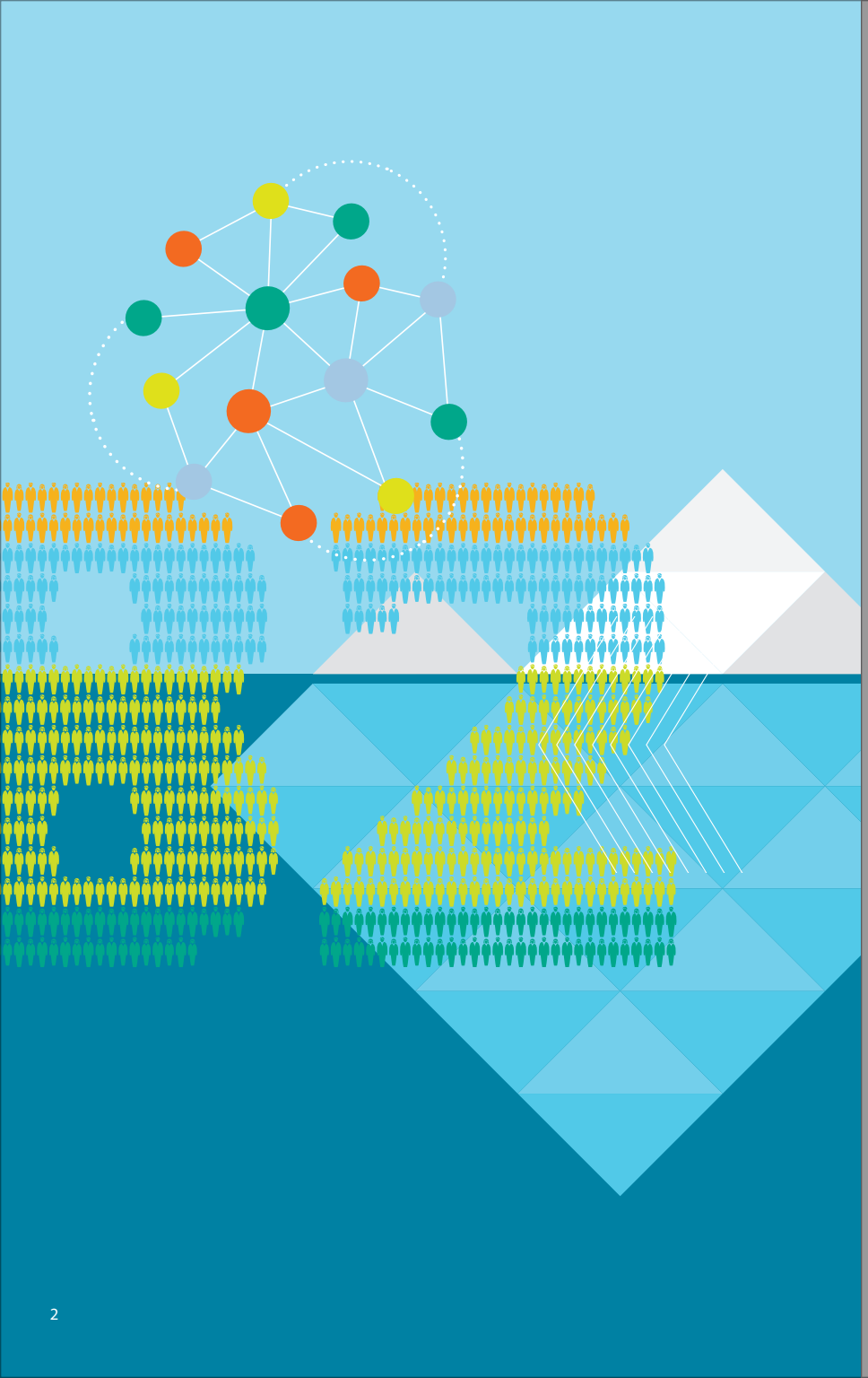


We all know that space design has a powerful effect on the human psyche. Our homes, museums, sports arenas, places of worship, and even airport terminals reveal that. The work environment can evoke enthusiasm or dread, focus or distraction, collaboration or isolation.

That's why we need to design workspaces that inspire the culture and workflow our organizations desire. If they're not properly designed, no program, training, or rules will be effective over time.

Many people believe that changing space automatically results in culture change, which isn't necessarily true. But there is benefit in designing a new space or redesigning a current space to reflect your preferred culture—making sure that the physical attributes of the space enable the behaviors of that culture. A new space alone won't guarantee success; change management is an important part of that process.

Change Your Space, Change Your Culture is the output from more than a year of workplace research. Written by a team of forward-thinking leaders, this book reveals the secrets of companies that discovered the power of culture and space. It's a guide to transforming business by rethinking the workplace.

At Haworth, we believe inspiring spaces can enrich lives and businesses around the world.

By itself, the workplace is not the only thing that influences engagement among workers. When work is connected, purposeful, and social, people are more engaged.

When our environments are designed to support these human needs, meaningful work happens.

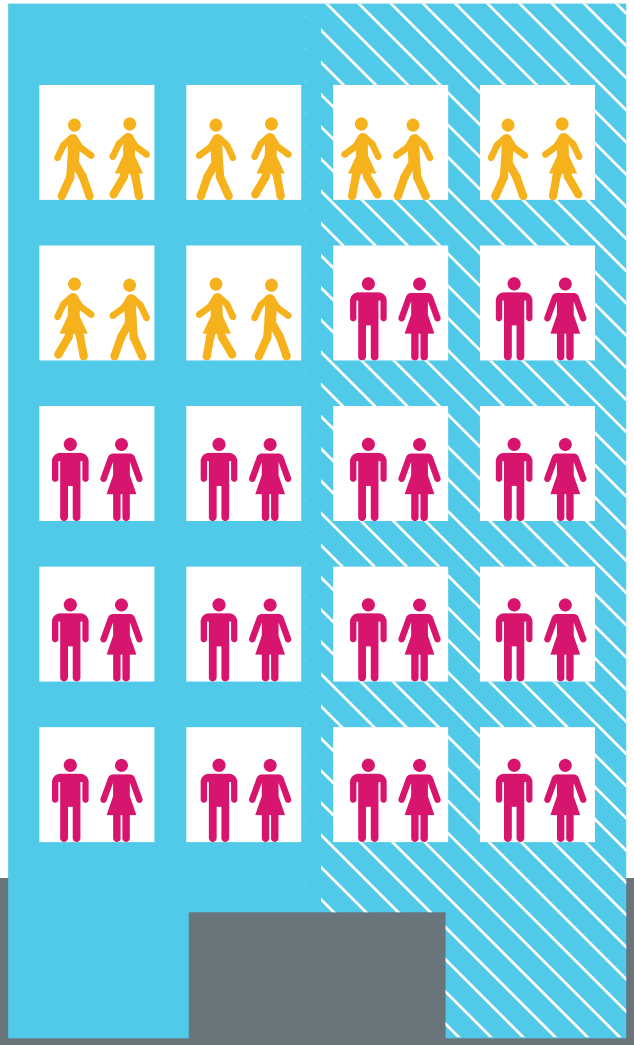
IBM asked more than 1,600 CEOs:
What keeps you up at night?

The answer:

INNOVATION

People wonder how they can keep recreating innovation, year after year.

In a fast changing business environment like ours, innovation seems nearly impossible.



Inside organizations:

50% of all workspace is wasted space.*

70% of all employees are disengaged in their work.**

We're not going to slow down the forces of change on the outside of our facilities.

But we can change what's going on inside.

Bottom line? Disengagement adds up to an estimated cost of one trillion dollars a year.**

People can't continue working this way. There has to be a better way.

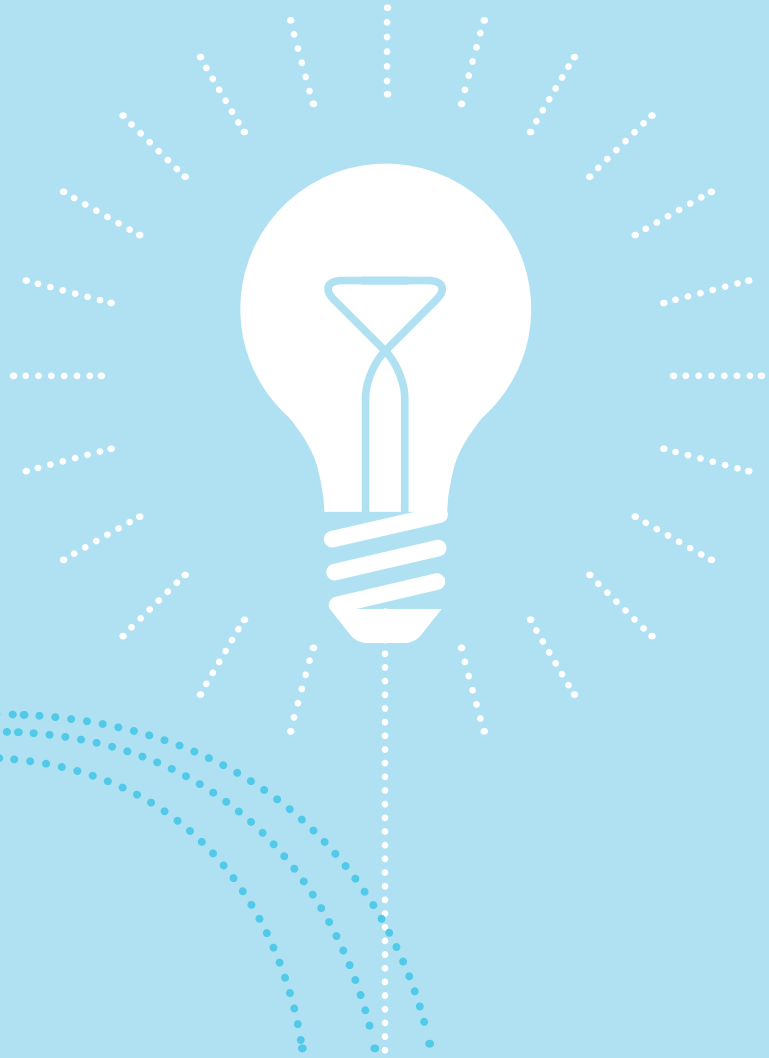
*CoreNet
**Gallup

This is not a checklist; it's social dynamics.

- A quality culture at work leads to engagement.
- Engaged workers find solutions together.
- When smart teams collaborate they discover breakthrough ideas.

We know that innovation is a product of work cultures that make collaboration a priority.

And people only collaborate when they're truly engaged.



One step leads to another. If we're not in the culture business, then we're not in the innovation business either.

"MODERN" OFFICE

- **Average age of a building = 60 years old**
- **The private office has existed more than 80 years.**
- **The cubicle is 50+ years old.**

The problem is: Organizations operate from old business models.

Old structures and old designs contribute to disengagement among the workforce.

People simply don't want to come to work in these places.

Old models focus on:

Lighting

Acoustics

Budgets

Standards

Ergonomics

As an industry, we're using ideas more than a half-century old to design buildings.

Many of us who design workplaces have seen this problem coming for a long time.

And yet, here we are, still playing with old structures and older ideas.

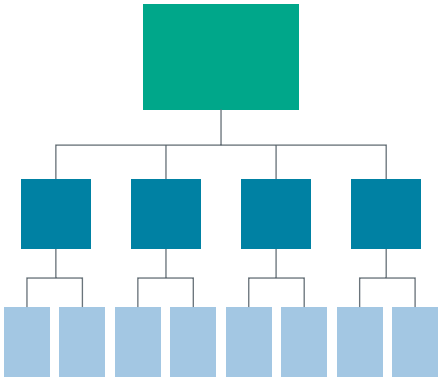
For the most part, our industry has been living in a bubble, and we've only been talking to ourselves.

It's time to change the conversation. One-size-fits-all solutions aren't fitting anyone anymore.

But changing the conversation has its challenges. For one thing, designers and accountants speak completely different languages. And decision makers want to understand their ROI before they spend.

Paradigm Shift

Complicated



Roles and Responsibilities

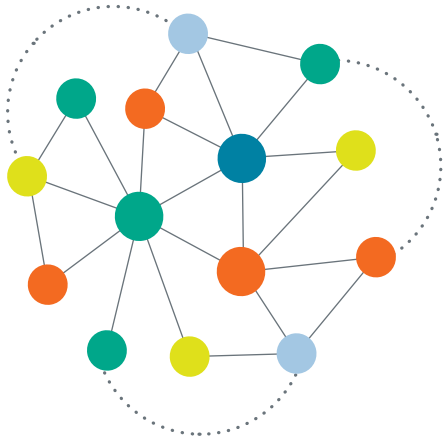
Linear

Predictable

Can Calculate Cause and Effect

We are leaving behind a world that operates like a machine, where commodities are valued.

Complex



A Network of Commitments

Iterative

Adaptable

Cause and Effect are Unpredictable

We are entering a world that functions like an ecosystem, and requires adaptability.

Instead of focusing on just the products organizations need in their workspace, we should consider the workplace issues that affect space design.

Focus on:

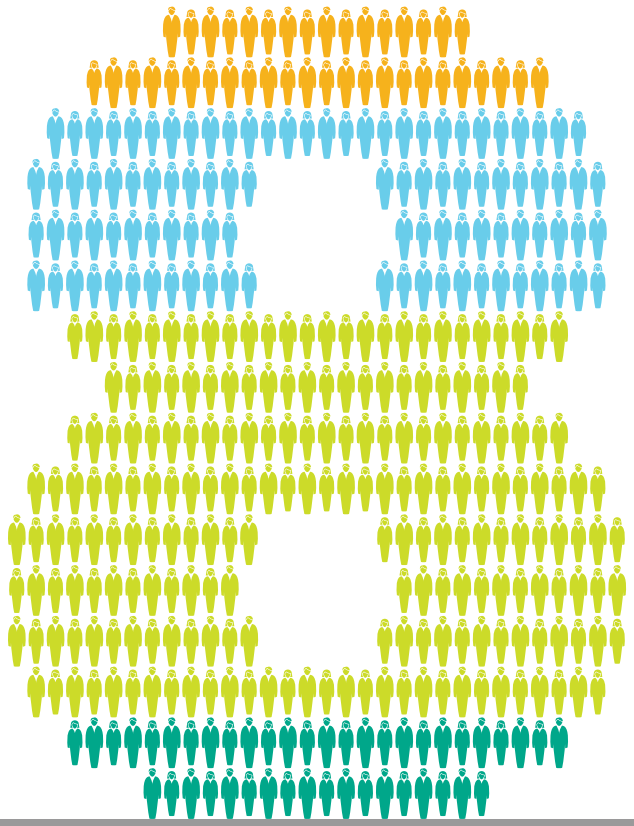
- Agility
- Culture
- Innovation
- Engagement
- Collaboration
- Resilience

Most space decisions are financially driven. The average cost of a building:

[Source: Disproving Widespread Myths about Workplace Design – BOSTI, 2001]

By far, the biggest costs are those hidden under the surface.

Yet, when we create buildings, the costs that get squeezed the most are design and facilities, accounting for a total of five percent. That's because they must be paid all at once, and at the beginning.



%

Engaged

Kind of Engaged

Disengaged

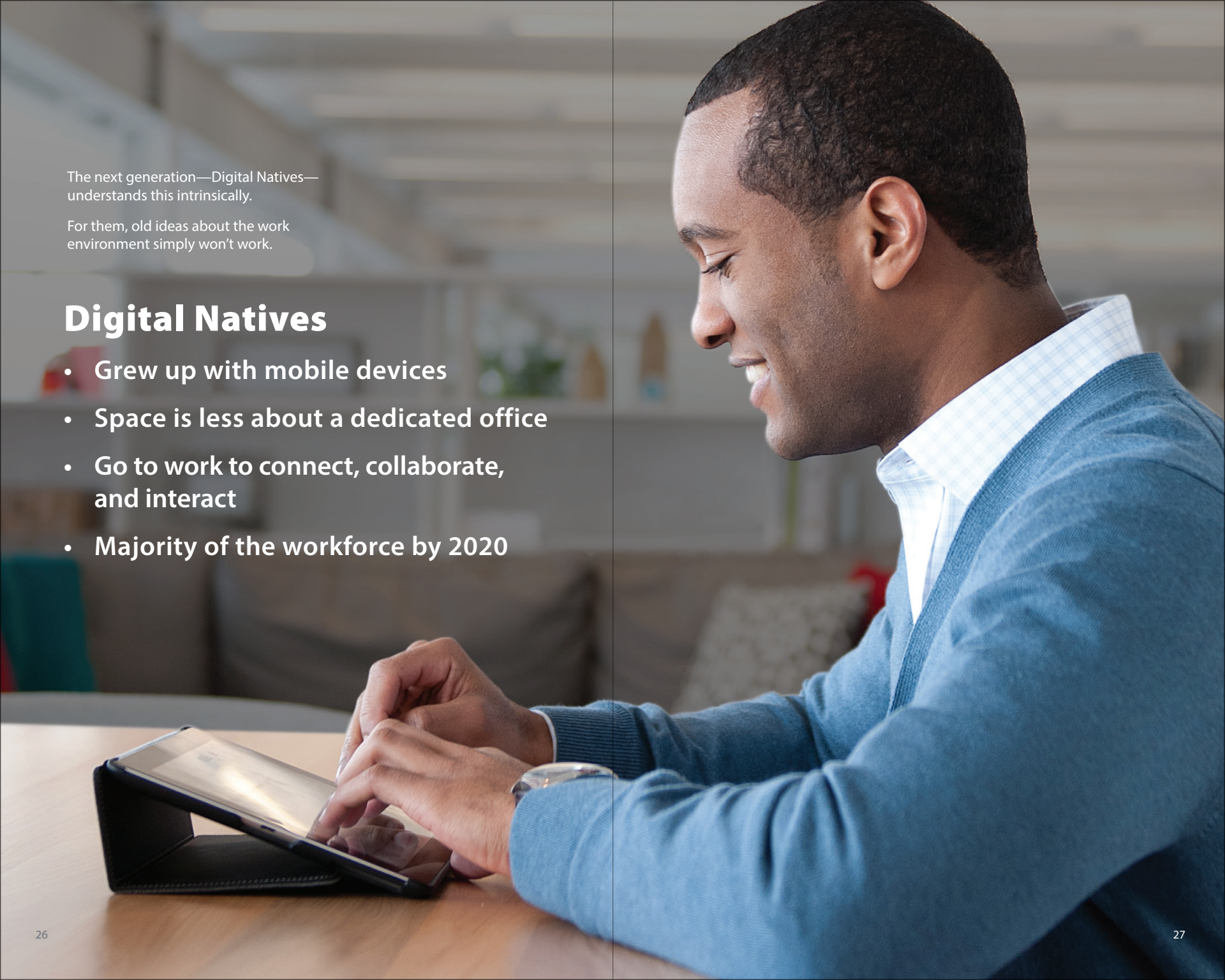
Toxic

Eighty percent of your costs are people. And the majority (70 percent) of people are disengaged.

Gallup finds that while most disengaged workers simply hide from their work, a full 20 percent are actively "toxic." You'd actually be better off paying them to stay home than to have them disrupting your workplace.

If 82 percent of your building is dedicated to people, and the majority of them are disengaged or toxic, that's a big problem.

We may have been able to hide it in an inefficient past based on commodities, but it won't work in the new paradigm for space design.



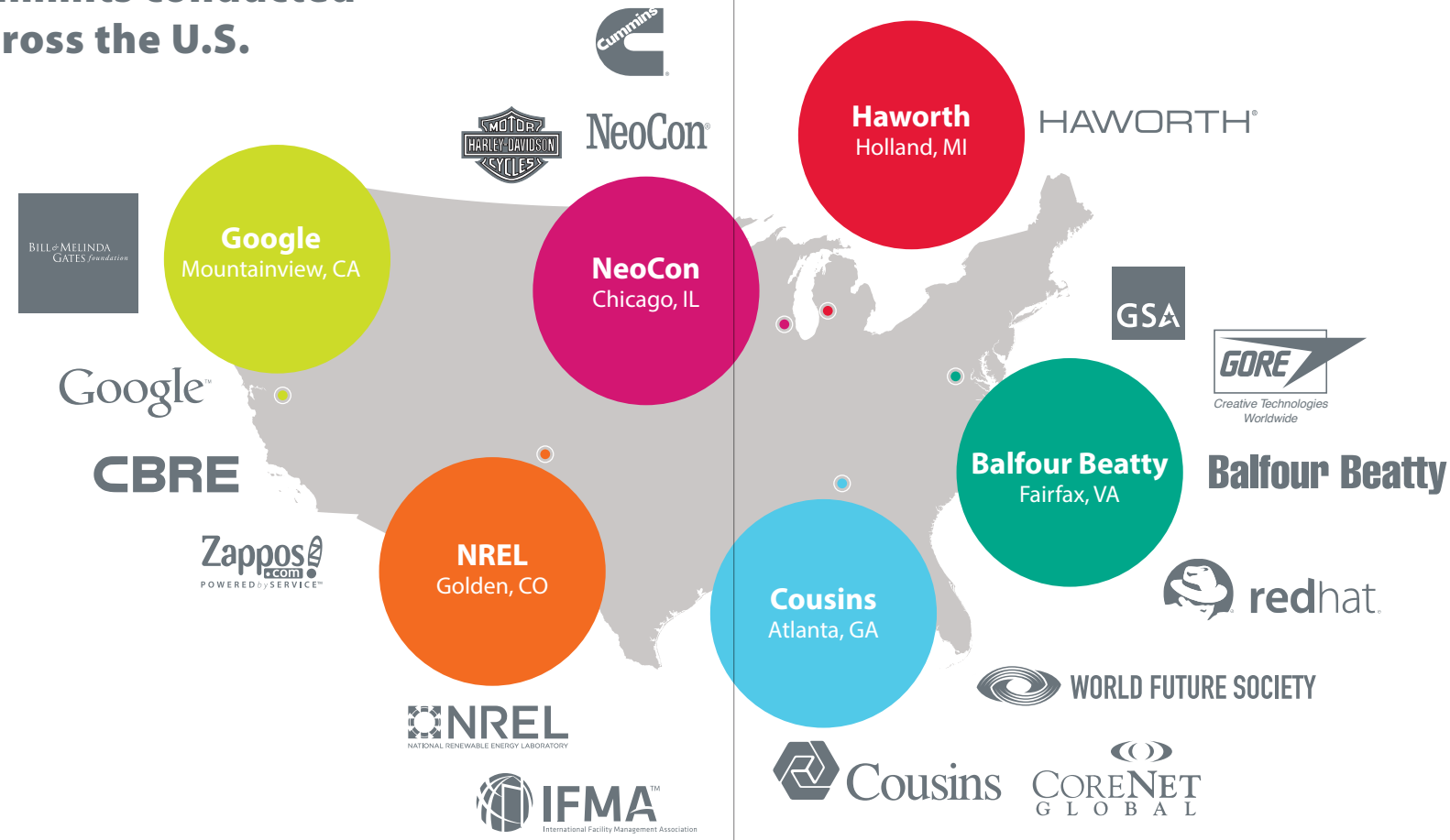
The next generation—Digital Natives—understands this intrinsically.

For them, old ideas about the work environment simply won't work.

Digital Natives

- Grew up with mobile devices
- Space is less about a dedicated office
- Go to work to connect, collaborate, and interact
- Majority of the workforce by 2020

Summits conducted across the U.S.



Researcher Rex Miller and his team tackled this challenge. He organized a group of thought leaders from several disciplines and organizations.

Using the Mindshift process developed for the book, *The Commercial Real Estate Revolution*, his team conducted a series of summits across the United States.

The team researched and visited organizations that believed space was a key factor in creating great cultures. They attended conferences to see where future thinking was headed regarding work and the workplace.

The participants engaged in workshops and brainstorming activities, listened to expert speakers, generated ideas, and problem solved.

The environments these organizations worked in were inspiring. The team met the people who were behind the space designs. They saw new technologies and researched the work being done about the nature of work.

And the result of this year and a half of study is the book, *Change Your Space, Change Your Culture*.

Culture

is the catalyst for engagement, collaboration, and innovation.

No one is suggesting that space can solve the engagement problem all by itself. There are many factors that will need to be addressed.

Work at its best is social and engaging. As space planners, we create the environments where work happens. Space affects culture, and culture is the catalyst for engagement, collaboration, and innovation.

We're in a unique position to affect change.

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