

Foot-Activated Doors, Avatars and Campus Style Learning Zones: What the Future Office will Look Like

As companies plan for a post-lockdown world, flexible working is no longer in dispute, but the point and purpose of the office is.

ATLANTA, GEORGIA, UNITED STATES, April 8, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Generations Expert, [Dr Eliza Filby](#) and Group CEO of [Moneypenny](#), Joanna Swash, spent three months researching what the office and working practices will look like in the future:

Coming in to work

Workers will come in to the office on certain days of the week. Their alarms will go off slightly earlier than usual on their office days and they will dress with more than just sweatpants or pajama bottoms. The commute will not be the daily draining slog it once was, but a novelty to enjoy - a time to listen to that podcast, or to browse a news feed. On entering the office there will be no tapping of lanyards with plastic corporate medallions. Instead, staff will use virtual sign-ins. Security will carry out a temperature check-in too. The elevator will respond to vocal requests and every door will be foot-activated or motion sensed. Robotic cleaners will patrol all areas to maintain stringent hygiene standards.



Dr Eliza Filby, writer and speaker on generations & contemporary values



Joanna Swash Group CEO of Moneypenny

These are predictions, but Money Penny, a company providing virtual receptionists to hundreds of businesses across the US and the UK, has already seen a huge shift in thinking and resources around the office. A recent survey the company conducted revealed that 53% of companies have accelerated their use of tech by a year and 22% said they have accelerated by more than five years.

Offices as campus style learning zones

Open-plan sealed glass-dome offices with no privacy or fresh air will be gone, as will the Californian-start-up style sleep-pods and slides. The office will no longer be a play-zone designed to keep you there for as long as possible, instead it will be a cross between a private members' club and university campus, geared for interaction, learning and concentration. It will be available as a hub for however many days a week staff want it.

Learning and development will soon become the most important department in the company, the key method of attracting the learning-driven young talent, for keeping older colleagues up to date and the main reason for having an HQ. Everyone knows how uninspiring online learning can be; just ask current undergrads.

Offices as well-being hubs

Well-being of staff will be prioritized, with offices offering a doctor, therapist and gym on-site. Eating at the desk will be banned with lunches deemed crucial nourishing time for staff to meet with colleagues and clients. The buffet breakfast and lunch bar will therefore be transformed into a formal restaurant with table cloths and real cutlery.

Mind enrichment

Offices will include a lecture theatre where staff attend talks by their esteemed leader through hologram. There will also be an expansive Reading Room for private focused productivity, which has the feel of a university library, with a desk reservation system, printing and coffee delivered. Collaboration is the main point of coming in to the office; ideas, conversations and projects that take an exhausting number of fixed hours over Zoom but when done face-to-face take on a momentum of their own. Workers will appreciate the free-flowing conversation and soak up the unscheduled interjections, whispered comments, banter and impromptu jokes (however bad) with their colleagues. They will re-learn how to read body language. Interaction will feel creative and real once more. But not everyone in a meeting will be in the office: staff will put on a VR headset and welcome their colleague's avatar like an old friend.

Office Inclusion

Representation doesn't work remotely, so companies will need to ensure that remote workers are not penalized. Women reportedly want hybrid working more than men, so it will be important to make sure that the office doesn't become male-dominated as in the past. So much of the diversity and inclusion agenda is about visibility and nurturing and mentoring and supportive networks and this will be difficult if a large number of women are not physically

present. Younger employees are more likely to want to return to the office, but there is a danger with this imbalance that the office ends up feeling like a youth club part of the week until the grown-ups show up.

Joanna Swash, Group CEO of Money Penny, comments: 'The changes we are seeing have been supercharged by Covid19 and studies have shown that women in particular have been adversely affected by the pandemic. However, businesses need to think how to create a working environment where no matter the gender, people feel able to speak up for flexible working. I think many men want flexibility too, having had a taste of being with their families more and felt the benefit of a more flexible working style. Some people work to pay bills, some people work to progress their career; some have cherished the time multi-tasking at home while looking after children and working, whereas for some it's been a nightmare come true. These issues affect both men and women and generalising is not acceptable.'

Dr Eliza Filby comments: 'Collaboration will be the central pull of the office but this will not be easy to generate with a fluid workforce divided. While flexible working may be the concept, the reality will be a preference for working from home Monday and Friday and being in the office mid-week. Let's be clear, this is not flexible working, this is a significant tampering with the rhythm of business and a re-scripting of the working week and indeed the entire year, especially pronounced during the summer months and school holidays. Managing a multi-generational team will be an increasing challenge and the office building will have a critical function in bridging the gap through greater interaction and mentoring.'

To find out more about [what the future office will look like](#), join Julia Hobsbawm, Jeff Haden, Dr Eliza Filby, Money Penny Group CEO Joanna Swash, and CEO North America at VoiceNation and Money Penny Eric Schurke on April 22 at noon US ET (5 pm UK) for the live virtual event, The Future of the Office.

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_gT71PF_VTZmALAX7N-BHng

MJ Greenhalgh

Money Penny

+1 843-501-2090

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