

Hybrid workplaces: there is no one-size-fits-all approach

Hybrid workforces and workplaces have been a hot topic of debate in boardrooms and Zoom meetings across South Africa, ever since the enforced lockdowns of the pandemic began to lift.



Image source: CoWomen from [Pexels](#)

As organisations, business leaders and employees grapple with new norms, processes and ways of collaborating, Maggie Weber, design director at Tétris Design and Build South Africa, says it's time to move beyond the hype of hybrid to sustainable workplace strategies and design principles that help companies nurture and keep the talent and skilled people they need to perform.

“We are talking to clients about what their options are, how best to refurbish or retrofit their premises to make them healthier and more welcoming to employees, and also how to make workplaces more sustainable and ESG compliant,” notes Weber. She says conversations now centre on creating spaces that accommodate different needs and different work styles thanks to fluid occupancy levels as people work from home for parts of the week.

Fit the needs

“There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but what is constant is the need to understand the needs of employees and what they require to be happier and more productive. Once you have that understanding in place, designing, and building a workspace that positively contributes to creating the desired company culture sidesteps any hype. What becomes more important is; does it work for the needs of that particular organisation and its employees, irrespective of whether their work cycle supports four-day weeks, full-day weeks or two-day weeks?”



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Sonia Tshabalala 23 May 2022



Weber says some real estate sectors are now starting to see signs of a demand recovery, which comes with its own set of risks and opportunities. Pandemic restrictions continue to ease while current economic headwinds are becoming the catalyst for a push to pre-pandemic levels of activity. “Leading South African organisations have begun to understand that their transformation to hybrid will be a longer-term journey in the continued evolution of the future of work. The office isn’t going anywhere, but it does have to adapt so that employee experience and well-being is at the forefront.”

According to research conducted by JLL, the internationally renowned holding company of Tétris South Africa, 73% of employees aspire to work at organisations that promote a healthy lifestyle, safety, and well-being. “Talented, skilled employees expect more from their workplaces than they did two years ago. High-performing workers are looking for ways to connect, collaborate and network in meaningful ways when they are at work. How companies respond to this has long-term implications for organisational competitiveness and success. The challenge of creating the right hybrid workspace and culture is a challenge worth engaging in,” Weber explains.

She says workplaces, the employer/employee relationship, and workplace design are all being redefined before our eyes. “A hybrid model, whatever unique shape that takes for individual businesses can be a win-win situation for organisations who stand to benefit from a more productive workforce, and for employees who are inspired to perform at their best through a healthier, more fulfilling working life.”

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