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“Employers can make the office environment more appealing — and in the process foment innovation — through better workspace design and by allowing greater latitude in where work takes place.”

**-Building Design & Construction<sup>3</sup>**

**-Building Design & Construction<sup>3</sup>**

3 Caulfield, John, "Latest Gensler survey links innovation with workplace flexibility," *Building Design & Construction*, July 2016

# How to keep the innovation wheels spinning

When you look at companies like Tesla, Google, Netflix, Softbank, Lego and Amazon, you can see that one thing they have in common is an innovative business leader at the helm. These leaders have built a culture of innovation and creativity within their organizations. They value teamwork. They understand the importance of employee engagement and work tirelessly to earn it.

Innovation advisor Phil McKinney said, “A key part of creating a culture of innovation is treating employees well and acting with integrity.”<sup>4</sup> When employees feel valued, they give you their best. That’s why many companies are retooling their physical and virtual office spaces to give employees more freedom and flexibility.

For example, Gensler’s US Workplace Survey 2016<sup>5</sup> found that “optimal workplace design” is a key driver of innovation. High-performing workplaces were those that supported both individual and group work and had high scores for functionality.


These companies shared the following elements:

1. High-quality design
2. Time away from desk
3. Flexibility
4. Balance
5. Amenities
6. Trust



## Work habits of top innovators

In a survey of more than 4,000 workers across 11 industries, employees who worked at the most innovative companies reported that they:



Spend only 74% of the work week at the office, compared to less innovative employees, who spend 86% of their time onsite.

Have access to and work in a variety of spaces that meet their needs, including individual, team and social space.

Have twice as much choice in when and where to work.

Source: Gensler

<sup>4</sup> McKinney, Phil, “Leaders in Innovation: How They’re Creating Cultures of Creativity,” Phil McKinney Blog Ideas to Innovation,

<sup>5</sup> The Gensler 2016 US Workplace Survey, July 2016

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# #1 Focus on building your culture

## Google/Alphabet, Inc.

This tech giant believes that company culture and innovation can't be separated. "You have to have the culture," says Chairman Eric Schmidt, "and you need to get it right." Their culture of innovation is built around mission, transparency, "voice" and space. Some of the company's values include keeping an open door between employees and management and embracing differences.

Even Google's campus supports its culture by encouraging employees to be creative. Their physical space is designed to be a "happy place," where employees can feel free to work wherever they want, enjoy free food and even take a nap.<sup>6</sup>



To keep the company on the leading edge, Google applies these and other principles of innovation in their organization:<sup>7</sup>

- Share and collaborate. Google strives for transparency with its employees and believes information sharing is vital to innovation. For example, the founders still host a weekly "all-hands" TGIF meeting. Googlers can attend in person or watch via livestream to learn about upcoming products, industry changes and more.
- Use data, not opinions. The company tests and measures everything it does in order to have powerful decision-making data at its fingertips. An employee survey is sent out annually to solicit opinions regarding well-being, work-life balance and much more, so that managers can ensure that their teams' needs are met.
- Balance. Google uses the 70/20/10 model to allocate time to core business initiatives, as well as to other projects. Seventy percent of projects are dedicated to the core business, 20% are related to the core business and 10% are unrelated. The goal here is to offer opportunities for out-of-the box thinking and new ideas.

<sup>6</sup> Salazar, Marlet, "Google's culture of innovation," Inquirer.net, November 2016

<sup>7</sup> "Creating a Culture of Innovation: Eight ideas that work at Google," GSuite by Google Cloud, Insights and inspirations for the digital workplace.



# How you can build a culture that drives innovation

- ✓ Provide a variety of tools to support employees as they work in physical or virtual workspaces.
- ✓ Nurture your team dynamic by sharing information across the organization.
- ✓ Champion regular interaction between all levels of management.



## #2 Add movement to your meetings and your day

### Facebook

Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. Part of what makes the company tick is its open culture that keeps everyone informed and gives employees flexibility. To develop new products quickly, Facebook works in small teams and values continuous improvement.

Instead of traditional meetings, Chairman and CEO Mark Zuckerberg is a big fan of the “walk and talk.” In fact, Facebook installed a half-mile loop on the roof of its Menlo Park headquarters where employees can participate in walking meetings. Stanford University research has found that walking leads to more creative thinking.<sup>8</sup> Other positive findings for the benefits include:<sup>9</sup>

- Standing more often keeps meetings energized and productive.
- When people stand, they appear more excited, act less territorial and interact better as a team.
- Walking limits traditional meeting distractions, such as phone and email.

In addition to walking meetings, Facebook also provides standing desks to many of its employees to help them keep their energy levels high.



<sup>8</sup> Peck, Emily, “Why Walking Meetings Can Be Better than Sitting Meetings,” Huffington Post, April 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Rushton, Emma, “15 Secrets to Running Meetings Like the World’s Top Innovative Companies,” Lifehack.org



# Think on your feet



Experiment with other options that encourage brainstorming and creativity. For example, try doodling on interactive walls to jump start the brainstorming process. Research has shown that people who doodle retain **29% more information**.<sup>10</sup>

### #3 Create overlap zones

## Samsung

A recent article notes, “Samsung recognizes that creativity doesn’t come from sitting in front of computer monitors.” That’s why the company built office space that combined large outdoor areas in between floors. Employees are encouraged to hang out in the shared spaces so they can “bump into” and interact with people from different areas of the company.<sup>11</sup>

According to Scott Birnbaum, a VP of Samsung Semiconductor, the space is “designed to spark not just collaboration, but that innovation when you see people collide.”<sup>12</sup> Researchers at the University of Michigan found that “zonal overlap” areas like these also improve performance.



<sup>11</sup> Dean, Clayton, “Foster an Innovative Company Culture for a Positive Workplace,” Business.com, October 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Kolowich, Lindsay, “The Future of the Office: 7 Innovative Ways Companies Are Changing the Workplace,” Hubspot Blog, March 2016

## Encourage social time



- Strategically positioned to encourage the “water-cooler effect.”

- Create social opportunities for remote employees. Organize working hours so that each person overlaps a few hours with at least one other teammate.

Offer flexible workspaces so that employees can move as needed to meet individual or group work needs.

## #4 Ban on PowerPoint

### Amazon

In 2016, Amazon became the fastest company ever to reach \$100 billion in sales. The company has successfully reinvented the way the world shops and has become a trailblazing force with other recent inventions.

One tactic that Amazon employs to keep employees thinking at a high level is the company's ban on PowerPoint. "PowerPoint presentations somehow give permission to gloss over ideas, flatten out any sense of relative importance, and ignore the interconnectedness of ideas," wrote CEO Jeff Bezos to his employees in 2004.<sup>13</sup>

To ensure employee pitches are fully developed and include an understanding of how things are related, Amazon employees deliver four-to-six page memos called "narratives." The first part of the meeting is spent reading the memo; the second part is a question and answer session.<sup>14</sup>

Though unconventional, this strategy works for Amazon. Bezos has a found a way to get employees to transform superficial ideas into in-depth analysis.<sup>15</sup>



<sup>13</sup> Ward, Marguerite, "Why Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos Hates Meetings with Tight Agendas," CNBC.com, June 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Stone, Madeline, "A 2004 Email from Jeff Bezos explains why PowerPoint Presentations Aren't Allowed at Amazon," Business Insider, July 2015.

<sup>15</sup> "Jeff Bezos probably hates your staff meetings," CEO.com, August 2013.

# Encourage thinking outside the box

- ✓ Ensure that employees are working at their best and open to new ideas.
- ✓ Encourage deeper thought and understanding by disrupting “business as usual.” For example, consider alternates to typical presentation tools.
- ✓ Try new things. What works for Amazon may not work for your company. Find out what fits in with your organizational culture.



# What you can do to drive innovation

Want to be a disruptor? It doesn't happen overnight. Innovation and creativity need the right culture to support it. We can learn some valuable lessons from innovators like Google, Facebook, Samsung and Amazon. But one size does not fit all. Don't be afraid to try a different combination of innovation principles and experiment with tools to find what works best for your business.

## The business case for a visual workplace

The common denominator across these disruptive realities is that the nature of work is in the midst of a revolution. Collaboration is the critical driver of problem solving, creativity and innovation. The workplace itself has become a platform for exchange.

The world is racing toward digital transformation. It's time to create a 21st-century culture that gives your company an edge in the war for talent and supports innovation. Prysm helps businesses of all sizes work smarter together with digital canvases for individuals and teams to share content and drive decisions. We take on the toughest challenges of collaboration, mobility and security and enable a new way of work. Prysm brings the workplace to life with its shared, always-on, accessible-anywhere workspaces, so you can:

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- Accelerate productivity.
- Engage employees and customers.
- Drive decisions.

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