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New ways of working

What does it actually look like when an organisation reimagines every aspect of its behaviours, working style and operations for its clients? PwC is finding out.



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“I genuinely feel as though our space is our home,” says Helen Fazzino, Head of People, Partnership and Culture at PwC, “and we’re inviting our clients into our home.”

Meaningful change can be slow and incremental.

Or it’s imposed and comes in a rush. And then sometimes, just sometimes, an industry embraces an uncommon chance to refashion the bedrock – to shape a profound physical and cultural shift, to change the game.

That’s the approach PwC is taking as we unveil a radical transformation aimed at enshrining the client experience at our philosophical core and transforming our workplaces into destinations.

The goal? Taking professional services into the client-centric domain of premium airline lounges, tech firms and boutique hotels. It presents a reimagined corporate landscape by changing perceptions and triggering different expectations with a fresh emphasis on the value of genuine collaboration and co-creation, rather than dealing out advice.

We have opened our state-of-the-art new building, Riverside Quay at Melbourne’s Southbank. In February 2017, we also took possession of new premises in Tower One of the much-vaunted Barangaroo development on the western edge of Sydney’s CBD. Meanwhile, PwC Brisbane took up residence in its own new building at 480 Queen Street on the banks of the Brisbane River in 2016. And the new approach is being rolled out in Perth, Newcastle, Adelaide and Canberra.

Tech companies might have infamously reinvented the new workspace as a means to attract and keep the best staff (think slippery dips in foyers, bring-your-dog-along policies,

sleep pods, massage chairs and Nerf gun shootouts across desktops).

But now PwC has reimagined the potential of the modern office, by showing a more mature, sustainable way ahead for cutting-edge commercial interiors with a values-based, client-centric approach. “These are seismic changes,” says Luke Sayers, PwC Australia’s CEO.

The emphasis has been on creating spaces that are conducive to co-creation and collaboration away from “a transactional mindset,” says Peter Konidaris, Market Managing Partner, Melbourne, “to a far more relational approach to how we engage with our clients. Here we can sit with our clients and have a bite to eat, introduce them to other clients and other people in the firm,” he says. “And we can do that in a way that is far more relaxed and casual than sitting behind four closed walls with a white-linen service.”

“There’s nothing else like this in Australia,” says Angela Ferguson, Director at Futurespace, the company tasked with delivering a set of innovative client-collaboration floors to PwC’s comprehensively researched client-experience brief. “And I don’t think there will be for a long time because it has set a new bar for how organisations interact with their clients.”

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“I didn’t expect PwC to look and feel like this - this new building is amazing.”



*Making the
workplace a
destination*



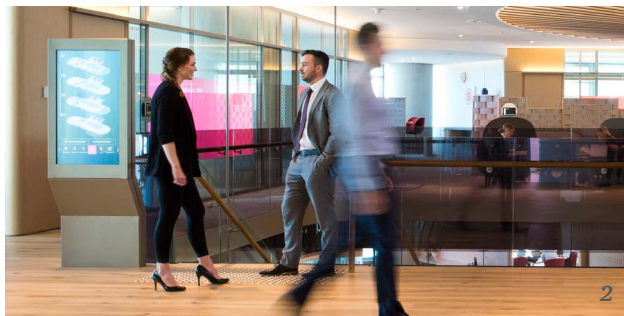
“It’s clearly a working space, no question, but there are also echoes here of the very latest in hotel, retail, restaurant, tech company and airport lounge design.”

- 1 The welcome area of PwC’s new Sydney premises.
- 2 The interactive and motion sensitive welcome wall at PwC Sydney can recognise clients when they arrive and help them link up with their PwC hosts.
- 3 In the welcome area, welcome pods are designed to remove barriers between clients and PwC hosts.
- 4 The welcome area on the 19th floor of PwC’s new Melbourne premises.



Go deeper

Click above to find out more about the technology powering the new spaces, and how it is being harnessed by new work practices.



1 As well as being a striking visual feature, these three semi translucent boxes serve as casual meeting rooms at PwC Melbourne.

2 The internal staircase linking floors in Sydney has been designed to encourage as many serendipitous meetings as possible.

3 The Melbourne welcome lounge includes a cafe serving the quality of coffee the city expects.

Exit the lifts into our new Melbourne welcome area and your first impression is of immersion in rich colour, movement and openness – possibly not what you were expecting from the new offices of a professional services firm.

Gleaming white welcome pods (goodbye oversized and imposing reception desks) are visual anchor points in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

In Brisbane and Sydney, step up to the welcome wall of motion-sensitive, interactive screens and – if you're armed with the app (launching in 2017) – they'll recognise who you are and where you're headed (for those clients who want to "do it yourself").

In Melbourne, hanging from the stairs in front of you is a series of boxes in lustrous red, yellow and orange; and digital artwork 'The Flame Tree' by Bruce Ramus flows down past these through the four-storey open stairwell. 'The Flame Tree' displays abstract impressions of Australia's six Indigenous seasons and the weather outside.

It's clearly a working space, no question, but there are also echoes of the very latest in hotel, retail, restaurant, tech company and airport lounge design.

And that's because, as Futurespace's Angela Ferguson explains, PwC's new workplaces in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney are fundamentally all about delivering "a new, exceptional level of client service".

“The old PwC offices were fit for purpose in their time. Now clients are looking for something else.”

That’s something that has been arrived at, she explains, by a canny blending of ideas from the “very best hotels with the latest technology with forward-thinking workplace design. It’s not a straightforward office layout. It’s a hospitality project, it’s a major hotel project, it’s a major technology project and it’s a major workplace project. It’s all these things combined into one.” While there is consistency of experience between all the offices, it was also important each location showcased the nuances from the community in which PwC lives.

Clients will notice that although the aesthetics of the various locations and floors change (from open to more intimate, vibrant to subdued, relaxed to formal, hi-tech to hi-touch), the driving forces are the same: to put the client first in a way the client wants to work.

Embedded in the new physical space is the latest in technology – both the more obvious and the unseen – all calculated to ensure the client’s experience is as simple, barrier-free and accessible as possible.

The driving vision is to create a destination: to create a range of spaces, settings and environments that meet the complex needs of a very disparate range of clientele, while also containing and inspiring a diverse range of collaborations and interactions. “It’s about giving our clients choice, continuing to work alongside our clients



1 In Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, well equipped cafes give clients the option of fresh food prepared on site.

2 Public working spaces have been designed to offer a wide range of openness or privacy, and help clients link up with their PwC hosts.



at their premises but also ensuring PwC is top of mind as the destination for their next meeting with us,” explains Manuela Schmid, Clients & Strategy Director.

“The people we work with,” says Joseph Carrozzi, Market Managing Partner, Sydney, “cover the full spectrum from the largest businesses to innovative new start-ups. We have to be relevant to all that spectrum. Whether it’s our private clients (private businesses, families and individuals) team, our digital technology team or our audit and risk team, we have to make sure that their client’s experience and expectations are catered for in the new building.”



“The physical design is all about reimagining the possible for our community and for our clients.”

In Sydney, the new offices range across 12 levels of Barangaroo's Tower One. Four of the floors are devoted to working with clients. In Melbourne, PwC takes up 12 floors of our new Southbank building, with five floors devoted to client collaboration. Unique to Melbourne is The Terrace, allowing clients to work and socialise in outdoor areas overlooking the Yarra River and the CBD.

In Brisbane, two of the four floors are devoted to the client experience. This more than doubles the space previously available to work with clients and the broader community.

“The physical design is all about reimagining the possible for our community and our clients,” adds Sammy Kumar, Head of Strategy, Innovation and Ventures. Previously, he says, PwC's offices were “fit for purpose in their time, but there was a real formality. Now clients are looking for something else. They're looking for a more creative, sleeves-rolled-up, problem-solving attitude that creates new value. To that end, the space and technology is really important.”

For Debbie Smith, Market Managing Partner, Brisbane, one of the biggest strengths is being able to cater for the whole spectrum of client needs. “There will always be a time when we have to have a serious session in a formal setting, and there will be a time when you just want to get into a more relaxed collaborative session,” she said.

There are places for high focus, for casual get-togethers, for formal meetings, events, seminars, brainstorming, technical briefings and for chilling out. There are low-tech environments (the whiteboard still has its place) as well as hi-tech surrounds, such as the interactive audio-visual spaces in the round.

There are barista-piloted cafes (Melbourne's is called the Yarra Café; in Sydney, it's Allawah). There are places you can grab a quick bite to eat or share an a la carte meal. And we're not just talking toasted sandwiches, salads and pastries (unless that's what you're after). The client floors feature fully functioning restaurant kitchens, with chefs blanching, searing and reducing behind picture windows (in Melbourne and Sydney) that lend a greater sense of the theatrical than most have ever experienced in a corporate environment. Openness was again not forgotten, with glass windows opening into kitchens and open cafes front and centre of the food and beverage experience.

“It's going to be a more relaxed, informal sort of environment,” says CEO Luke Sayers, “where you've got more dynamism, more laughter and more warmth.”

Learn more

Every business talks about putting their clients at the centre of their work. But what does it look like when client needs inform every business process?



The Hub

*Ripping down the
invisible curtain*



“Private meeting rooms cater to clients who need more focused spaces.”

In the weeks and months leading up to the shift from the old offices in Melbourne’s Southbank to the brand new bespoke building just across the road, Helen Fazzino had a vivid image in her mind of how things would be.

As Head of the People, Partnership and Culture team at PwC, Fazzino has been deeply invested in planning and imagining how the new environments in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney will unfold as both canvas and container for an invigorated work culture, for new ways of interacting, for what has been dubbed PwC’s new ways of working.

“In the new building,” she reveals, “I have this vision in my head of looking down at conversations and not being able to tell the difference between a PwC person and a client.”

Fazzino says that, prior to moving to the new buildings, “nine times out of 10, we invited clients to have a meeting in here and on one side of the table is PwC and on the other side is the client.”

“My image in our new space is that we’ve picked the space that works for whatever the problem is, we’ve got the right people in the room and this barrier between who is PwC and who is the client – that invisible curtain – just disappears.”

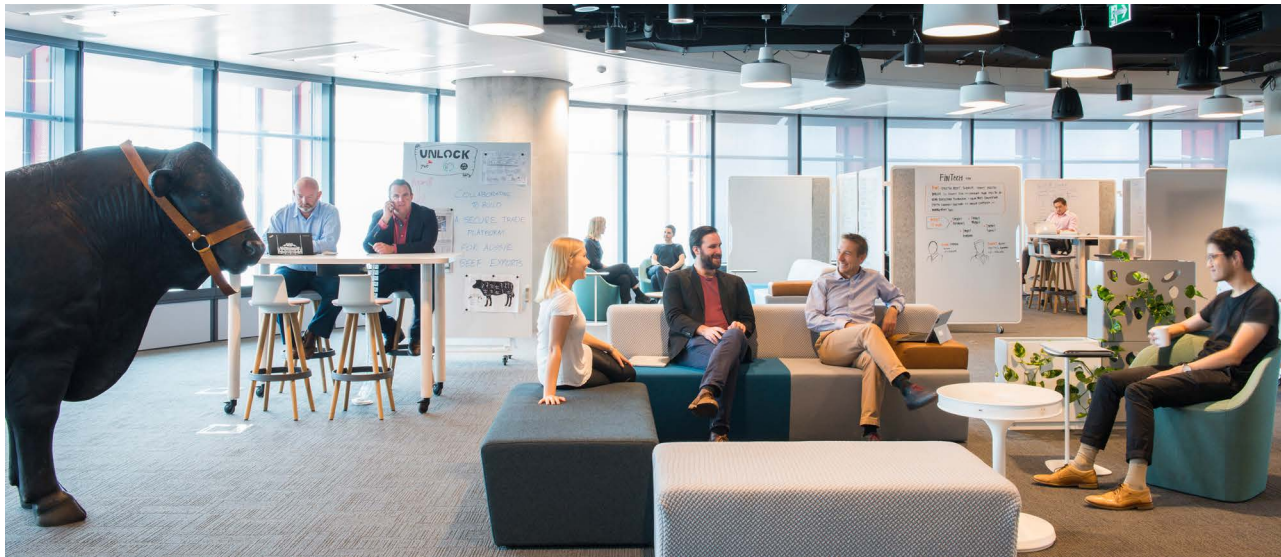
There’s been a determination to shatter any barriers - both physical and metaphorical – that might hinder interactions, obstruct cross-fertilisation or stymie collaborative solutions.

In fact, talk to anyone involved in these new workplaces and you hear the word “bump” a lot.

Debra Eckersley, New Ways of Working Partner, states: “In our Melbourne and Sydney offices, the four-storey staircases are the centrepiece of our commitment to a new openness, and a real willingness to seed spontaneous encounters. Plenty of serendipitous encounters will inevitably happen here, much as they do in any thriving community.”

But if the stairs are the most tangible element of what you can call an “engineered happenstance” in the new workplace, then the real challenge is to make sure this same spirit can spread throughout our entire organisation.

“Plenty of serendipitous encounters will inevitably happen here, much as they do in any thriving community.”



One of the big ways of ensuring this in any organisation, maintains Joseph Carrozzi, Market Managing Partner, Sydney, is being able to tap into diversity. And by that he means both plugging into the diversity of the client base and having that “matched equally by the diversity of your people.”

A key principle with any new building and workspace, be it a people floor or client-collaboration floor, is that if you encourage everyone to mix more, you can take the latent power of specialisation and supercharge it with a dose of diversity and engagement. To this end, the new workplaces must be characterised by “a lack of domain,” Carrozzi says.

On the people floors, PwC is entering our fifth iteration of Activity Based Working (ABW). In this latest incarnation, a new custom app called Switch enables people to find a workpoint for their activity on their laptop, smart device or screen (whether it’s a quiet, focused spot or collaborative spot). All PwC people are encouraged to use the client collaboration floors as they see fit – no matter if they’re engaging with others coming from outside the organisation or not.

“There won’t be a place where the financial services team sits or where the technology team sits,” Carrozzi says. “Those days are behind us. Our greatest strength is when

“Function spaces are contained on-site, offering clients the options of holding a wide range of events, from casual to more formal.”



our technical specialists work well together, but they work even better as a diverse group. It's our brand promise, rather than a collection of individual specialisations. It's that hybrid of skills and mixing them together with the client that I think gives us a really big opportunity.”

Boil everything down even further, adds Sammy Kumar, Head of Strategy, Innovation and Ventures, and the broad opportunity that a flexible, open, agile, deconstructed physical environment offers is its unconstrained potential to “lift a set of values and underpin behaviours”.

“You can talk about ‘reimagine the possible’,” he says, “but is that just a nice thing to put on a Powerpoint? How are you doing it?” Kumar says. A new space can be “a massive help, but it also exposes when we're not living those behaviours. If we still act the same way as we did before the physical environment will show us up and the experience will be jarring for our clients.”

There'll be no invisible curtain to hide behind. “Then again, if we live to the behaviours,” he says, “then [the new workplace] will be a massive enabler in helping to solve our clients' most complex problems.”

Deep spaces

Click above to watch the designers and thinkers behind the transformation discuss how the new spaces will shift PwC's working practices.



*Sky-high
thinking*

Ask just about anyone which industry does client service best and you'll hear the same answer again and again.

The airlines. That's because (beyond economy class at least), they've turned the business of travel into an art form, making the journey from home, to check-in, to the club lounge – to the flight itself – as smooth and enjoyable as it possibly can be.

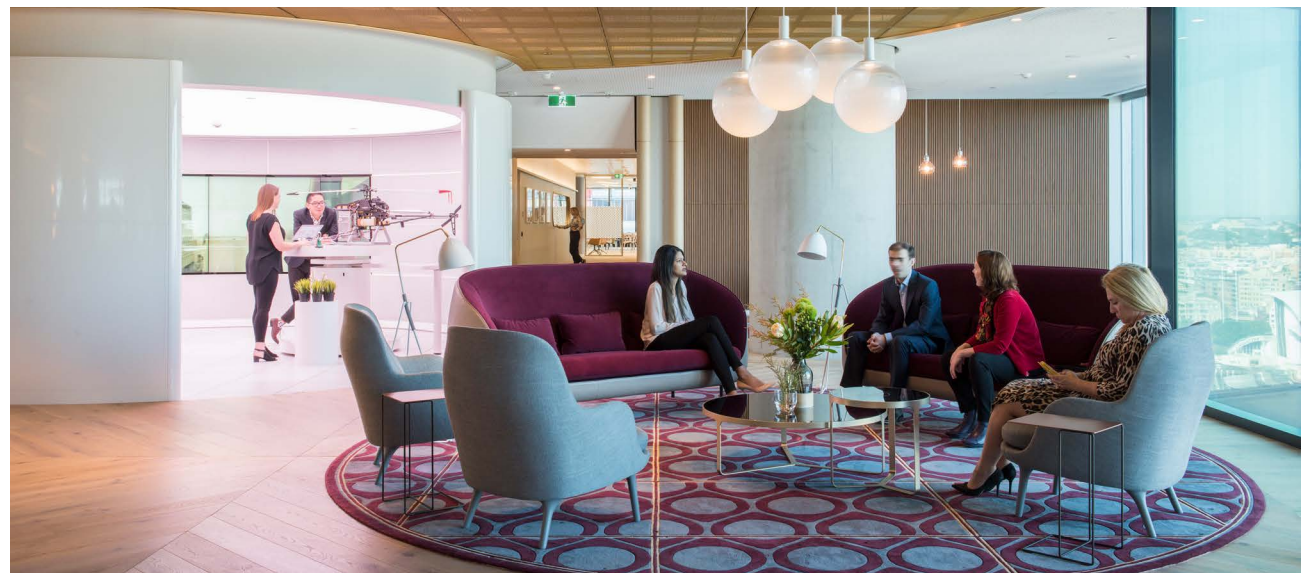
And considering that air travel's basic offering (once you peel away all the layers of extras) consists of negotiating a range of barriers – check-in, bag drop, security, customs – waiting in a hangar and then sitting for hours with hundreds of others in a metal tube hurtling through the air 10,000 metres above the ground, that's quite an achievement.

And there are some key lessons other industries can learn from the way airline companies' approach how they treat their customers.

Which is why when PwC conducted extensive client experience research – a years-long process that has culminated in the creation of our new offices in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne – the airline industry was one of a range of places we looked to for inspiration.

“It was all about making sure that we design something that supports the variety and diversity of the clients that we have by looking outside of our industry to create a new benchmark in experience,” says Debra Eckersley about a process run in parallel with, and cross-fertilised by, a cultural transformation program.

The aims of both are one: to put our clients at the heart of our offering.





Many workspaces have been designed to give users the option of either sitting or standing.

PwC's in-house design agency has been set up in the midst of the hubbub, to help prompt creativity and strong connections with visiting clients.

“It’s much, much more than a lift and shift,” says CEO Luke Sayers, “It’s about mindset and behaviours in a dynamic new space.”

“The mindset we must have as leaders across the firm, and for all our people is that this is a cultural, values-based, behavioural-led change with our clients. And the client experience is right at the middle of what we’re aspiring to do.”

To ensure the client experience was based on facts and not assumptions, the research process leading up to the change has taken in observational research and organisational visits (in Australia and overseas). There were in-depth interviews with clients, floor usage and room style data assessments, and research was conducted into the best that retail, tech, hotel and hospitality had to offer.

“We researched the obvious places like Google and Facebook and spent time to understand the space and how they work people through the space,” says Schmid. “Then we looked at many other organisations such as telecommunications stores, boutique hotels, restaurants and a range of airlines.”

PwC looked at how a client’s journey through a space could be made as seamless and as rewarding as possible – from pre-meeting, arrival, to the welcome, to the meeting itself, and then departure and post-meeting.

What ultimately resulted was a client experience-led brief for interior designers Futurespace, with a commitment to creating a welcoming, barrier-free environment at its heart.

What was also clear from the brief was that technology would need to play a pivotal role, allowing clients, as Hilda Clune, PwC’s CIO and technology leader, explains, to “suddenly and physically have no barriers that you need to walk through.”

Previously, like with so many corporate towers, a security pass/glass screen arrangement on the ground floor negated creating any sense of openness and transparency as a first impression. It’s light-years from our new approach. “We were quite deliberate in making sure we weren’t creating unnecessary challenges in accessing our offices,” Clune says.

“The experience of the technology has been very, very important in its construction and its delivery.”

It was crucial that this technology be “simple and accessible,” she adds. “Simplicity is important for people to be able to navigate and to get the most out of the technology.”

From 2017, PwC Open, a custom app, will be used by both clients and PwC people, and alert PwC hosts that their client has arrived in the building. The app helps clients explore, find and connect to insights, ideas, people and events. The app will also guide clients to the appropriate floor and allow them to register themselves if they so choose.

Clients keen on a more personal touch will be able to be guided to their meeting space by either their PwC host or the welcome crew.

There’s nothing “gimmicky” in the approach, Clune says. “In order for us to truly differentiate the technology, it needed to be embedded as part of the journey and to be thought of as a part of the experience,” she says. “The technology is probably one of the most complex parts of the program because it’s embedded in the core building. It’s embedded in the way we work and it’s embedded in the way we work with clients.”





All together now

There is no shortage of recent examples in the business world of companies that have shaken their industries through new approaches that put customers and their needs at the heart of operations.

However, these moves to reimagine legacy processes have been

concentrated in the retail and consumer space. PwC's new way of working is a move to bring the same transformation to professional services, and offices in general.

Whereas offices are traditionally designed with staff needs in mind, PwC's vision recognises that the value of the work our people produce

is entirely dependent upon how well it serves our clients' needs and preferences. This means the strongest, most effective collaboration possible is needed.

With our new ways of working, that mindset is now built into our very foundations.

Like to learn more? Visit www.pwc.com.au/newdirection

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