

January 2024: Workspaces – for community and social purpose

Thursday 25 January 2024 Sedus showroom

Core Team:

Harsha Kotak, WOD; Joanna Knight, WOD; Ella Fathi, Oktra;

Collective Members:

Rebecca Poll, Grimshaw; Laura Wardrope, JLL; Asif Din, Perkins & Will;
Rhiannon Laurie, Gensler; May Fawzy, MF Studio / BIID;
Dicky Lewis, White Red Architects; Lucy Bagshaw, TP Bennett; Emily King, BDP;
Gurvinder Khurana, M Moser; Sameeha Joshi, Peldon Rose;
Ana Rita Martins, Woodalls Design; Nigel Tresise, Align; Deepak Parmar, MCM;
Jennie GreenWalker, MAA Architects; Dom Pegram, Salt & Pegram;
Jennifer Russell, Bureau Group; Matt Davies, Phil Towle, Alex Webb, The Furniture Practice;
Anja Schellenbauer, John Robertson Architects; Fiona Edwards, JPA Workspaces;
Sarah Audsley, Knight Frank; Alison Grant: HLW; Simah Aslam, Abrdn;
Claire Owens / Ruth Marsh, Sheppard Robson; Lydia Randall, BDG A+D; Sam Allen, M Moser;
Deborah Allen, DouglasJane Studio; Jenna Monteith / Ilaria Baldini, Unispace;
Mathew Freeman, Freeman Studio; Joe Croft, Overbury; Valerio D'Angelantonio, Make Architects;
Roseanna Hart, Cast Interiors.

Supporters: Lavoro; AllSfär; Shaw Contract; Steelcase; Sedus UK; Solus Ceramics; Milliken;
Orluna LED; Teknion; Workplace Insight; Works Magazine; Design Insider.

Purpose:

A 'think tank' group committed to acting as a collective within the workplace design community to identify developments and 'best practice' relating to sustainability.

This report highlights some of the points raised during the discussion.

Discussion Topic:

Should we stop running urban offices as corporate islands and open them up as public space for charitable & civic use? There are significant potential benefits - longer operational hours, increased brand awareness, consistent occupancy, employee benefits ...

There are also additional positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes for local people. There are, however, cost implications – who should pay?



Does blending hospitality spaces within office developments also help support this approach?
Can this lead to more flexible reuse and extend the life of existing buildings?
A building owner might see the benefit but what about the tenant?



All agree that there is increasing interest in maximising usage, particularly where hybrid working is common practice but many clients are challenged by the practical issues, such as facilities management, security, timings with 'business as usual'.

"We do have clients who want to provide space for charities to offer a public facility."

"A law firm, for example, has an extensive art collection so is also create an art gallery for under-represented artist."

"There are physical security issues but more and more corporates are open to the idea."

"We do need to consider existing facilities in the local area. It would be wrong to take footfall away from these providers."

"Another opportunity might be for companies to share a lease – 'hot desking plus'. As an example, companies that primarily work with others in different time zones could use the 'night shift'."

"Lobby spaces are often large, open areas. They offer great opportunities for collaboration spaces without the same security issues."

"Increasingly, offices are blending with hospitality to create a more inclusive, holistic experience."

"The Francis Crick Institute, in Kings Cross, includes exhibition space as well as a café. The organisation is an independent charity established to be a UK flagship for discovery research in biomedicine. Being situated in an area of deprivation, the opportunity for outreach through offering public facility offers mutual benefit."

"Organisations do have to recognise that if they are inviting communities into their space, they must be mindful of their needs and consider 'inclusivity'. Spaces can potentially be intimidating."



Page 3

Discussion Topic:

A supplier/manufacture's commitment to social responsibility has commercial as well as ethical benefits. It can support a company's image and its brand as well as boost employee morale and potentially productivity.

Social factors are difficult to assess and evaluate. How should manufacturers communicate their commitments without being perceived as PR? Are there tangible measurement tools?

Should these factors be included within database information enabling greater alignment with a client's own priorities?

Generally, carbon and wellbeing factors are the current priorities. Should we be escalating social responsibility?

"There are a number of measurement and assessment systems being used – TOMS / Social Value Portal, UK Social Value Bank - as well as evaluating local spend."

"The WELL framework also offers the opportunity to assess local impact."

"Local isn't necessarily a worthwhile metric – if, for example, the project is based in an affluent area."

"There can't be a 'blanket' approach as there are consequences for actions."

"Some companies are demanding certain social value criteria, yet their payment terms are poor."

"The social value element in a tender response can be difficult. Expectations may be raised within charities or community groups, for example, but the opportunity may not be realised should you not be successful with the tender submission."

"We will often allocate a specific area within a project to allow the addition of smaller suppliers who do not necessarily have the necessary certifications but research has shown their value."

"Truly understanding supply chains is a vital consideration."

"European legislation, CSRD, has requirements which impact social value."

UPDATE FROM SEDUS:

Sedus is majority owned by its two charity foundations. These foundations, whose purpose is to maintain the entrepreneurial independence of Sedus Stoll AG, pursue non-commercial, philanthropic goals.

In accordance with the wishes of the founders, the Stoll VITA Foundation is dedicated to the promotion of scientific research, public health, education, animal husbandry, plant breeding, protection of the environment and nature, and preservation of the countryside.

Page 4

The Karl Bröcker Foundation primarily supports educational projects as well as medical and therapeutic projects/institutions for children living in Germany and abroad.

Sedus works to GRI reporting standards. The GRI Standards are a set of guidelines that provide a framework for sustainability reporting. These standards cover a wide range of economic, environmental, and social topics and are used by organizations around the world to report their sustainability performance and impacts.

The GRI Report can be found at: <https://www.sedus.com/en/company/sustainability/gri-report>



OTHER ACTIVITIES:

SD Magazine:

As part of its mission is to work collaboratively to share knowledge and 'best practice' to inspire and influence the workplace design sector, SDC has launched a digital publication. The ambition is to provide a platform for views, opinions, and projects within the office workplace sector.

SD Academy:

SDC is launching the first of a series of online courses specifically designed for designers working within the workplace environment.

SDC Forum and Awards:

The next forum and awards was held on 25th April 2024. It is designed as an interactive event for workplace designers, manufacturers, and suppliers to share knowledge and learn about efforts towards greater sustainability.

FOOTNOTE:

The Sustainable Design Collective meets every two months. Each meeting addresses different initiatives designed to tackle the impact on our environment. A summary document will be published after each meeting which is hosted on the Sustainable Design Collective's web site – an example of knowledge sharing.

We welcome comment and contributions from the office design sector.