

# WORKX

DESIGNING HYBRID WORK  
FOR THE NOW & THE NEXT:

# The Realities of Building a Future-Ready Workplace



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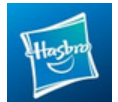
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Director of Real  
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Workplace  
Metropolis  
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Senior Director of  
Global Workplace  
Experience  
HashiCorp



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+ GAIN INSIGHTS FROM WORKX 2025 SPEAKERS

## INTRODUCTION

*“There is no return to normal.  
The future is agile.”*

As the dust settles on years of workplace upheaval, one thing has become clear: There is no “return to normal.” Instead, organizations are designing toward a future in which agility, purpose, and real-time responsiveness define the way we use space and the way we work. Across real estate portfolios, workplace experience programs, and cultural engagement strategies, leaders are no longer asking if work will be hybrid. The question is how to make it work: at scale, at speed, and with intention.



Source: WorkX February 2025 Conference | Dallas, TX



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Recent conversations at WorkX in February drew out the throughlines that define this new era: a necessary shift from fixed models to flexible thinking, the strategic use of workplace technology, and a reinvention of how we foster culture when teams are dispersed. While each speaker’s context varied, one thing united them: a deep belief that **designing for agility isn’t just a choice, it’s a competitive advantage.**

# Rewriting the Rules of Space Optimization

## What is agile space?

For many organizations, space is the second-highest cost after labor and in this climate, underutilization is no longer acceptable. But cost-savings alone don't tell the full story. Leaders from Dotdash Meredith, Hasbro, and WeWork unpacked what it means to enable agility through smarter, more dynamic use of space.

*"We went from super high-density, optimizing every inch of square footage... to COVID where no one could sit next to each other... and now we're redensifying again,"*

– **Kenneth Carney**, Senior Director of Real Estate & Office Operations, **Dotdash Meredith**

*"But collaboration needs are different in every office – if it's all engineers, collaboration space doesn't matter. If it's sales, it really does."*

**Ethan Colaiace**, VP of Real Estate and Facilities, **Hasbro**, described the tough but necessary transition from a legacy portfolio.

*"We had a lot of fallow real estate... We just needed to figure out how to get rid of it. That meant moving away from ownership and leaning heavily into lease models and flex solutions. We need to be more agile."*



At **WeWork**, **Kali Cardoza**, Vice President, Head of Sales and Leasing, Central + West, highlighted a striking shift in mindset:

*“Fifty-nine percent of companies planning to grow their workplace footprint in the next two years are doing it through flex. Even Fortune 100 companies that would have never used coworking are now some of our highest-growth clients.”*

The push for flexibility, however, must be paired with real insight. *“The data tells a story,”* Carney noted.

*“If you want people back in the office, and you’re providing all these perks and building up space again, there’s a cost. You need to show leadership what it really means to make that shift and what you’re getting for it.”*



## What is agile space?

### Lease vs. Own



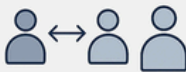
Leaning toward leasing and flex solutions

### Flex Space Growth



of companies expanding footprint through flex

### Redensification Realities



Shifting between density phases

### Cost vs. Value



Insight must justify investment

# Designing with Intent: Flexible, Inclusive, Tech- Enabled

If space is the shell, design is the soul. Today's work environments must do more than simply house employees. They must support a wide spectrum of neurotypes, working styles, and collaboration rhythms, all while being flexible enough to evolve over time.

**Francis Aquino**, Director of Real Estate & Workplace at **Metropolis Technologies**, pulled from decades of workplace strategy work — from Netflix and Uber to startups like Headspace — to explain what truly flexible design entails.

*"It's not just about moveable furniture. It's about modularity with intent. Use-case driven design. From library-quiet spaces to rooftop cafes, the goal is optionality."*

Hypersensitive Spaces	Hyposensitive Spaces
Quiet, Minimal Stimulation	Energetic, Social Zones

Aquino emphasized the need to design for both hypersensitive and hyposensitive individuals. *"Controlled environments for some, overstimulated café zones for others and a neurotypical baseline for everyone in between."*



Technology plays a pivotal role. *“We’ve developed spaces where employees don’t have to bring anything to a meeting room, not even a charger,”* Aquino said.

*“But tech integration isn’t just about convenience. It’s about connection, making sure hybrid meetings actually feel equitable. If someone’s calling in from home, they should feel like they’re in the room.”*

One of the most overlooked components, Aquino stressed, is **training and change management.**

*“We designed a beautiful landing pad for transient workers, but no one used it until we trained them. The design is only half the equation. You need to onboard people into how to use the space.”*



## Culture Has No Walls: Building Belonging from Anywhere

Perhaps the greatest challenge in the hybrid era isn’t real estate. It’s culture. When your teams are spread across time zones and coworking hubs, how do you maintain identity, loyalty, and engagement?



**Emily Day**, Senior Director of Global Workplace Experience at **HashiCorp**, offered one of the most compelling answers: you build virtual-first, not as a compromise, but as a foundation.

*“We want employees to feel supported, connected, and included, no matter where they work. That means starting with a remote-first mindset, even when we do have physical offices.”*

Day described how HashiCorp’s programs – from “Hello, My Name Is” leader videos to microversations and monthly global meetups are engineered for human connection.

*“You can have the best programming in the world, but nothing substitutes in-person connection. So, we also host watch parties, coworking days, and pop-ups globally to meet people where they are.”*



Slack has effectively become their virtual headquarters.

*“We treat it like our office, it’s where culture lives,”* Day said.

*“From executive visibility to employee-driven stories, it’s our way of keeping everyone in the loop and feeling seen.”*

Crucially, Day emphasized **intentionality over volume.**

*“People don’t need more programming. They need meaningful connection. We’ve had to become curators of culture, not just planners of events.”*

***“We want employees to feel supported, connected, and included, matter where they work.”***

**– Emily Day, Senior Director of Global Workplace Experience, HashiCorp,**

## CONCLUSION

# THE HYBRID WORKPLACE IS A LIVING SYSTEM

The modern workplace is no longer just a physical place. It's a system of people, platforms, processes, and physical assets, all working in concert. And systems require agility, not rigidity. As Ethan Colaiace put it, *"Real estate shouldn't lead business strategy. It should be the co-pilot."* But to co-pilot effectively, leaders must see their space as a dynamic tool one that can evolve in response to shifting talent needs, business priorities, and employee expectations.

From space optimization to inclusive design to remote-first culture building, one truth emerges: **a future-ready workplace isn't a destination, it's a commitment.**

## Key Takeaway:

Agility, flexibility, and human-centered design are no longer nice-to-haves – they are the foundation of a future-ready workplace.



# Why WorkX This August Matters More Than Ever

As these conversations show, there's no one-size-fits-all playbook. But there are shared insights, tested ideas, and lessons learned from those navigating the same terrain. That's why **WorkX** this **August 13 – 15** in **Boston** is designed not just as a conference, but as a **collaborative lab for hybrid work and the future of work as a whole**.

You'll hear from those who've rebuilt portfolios, reimagined workplace experiences, and redefined what culture looks like from anywhere. You'll walk away with strategies, peer connections, and fresh thinking to help you build a **future-ready workplace rooted in purpose** – whether you're leading real estate, facilities, or workplace experience. If the future of work is being written in real time, then WorkX is where it's being drafted.

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## Expert Speakers:



**James Duenas**  
Head of Global  
Workspaces  
& Facilities

**Intermountain Health**



**Emily Wadman**  
Director, Workplace  
Experience and  
Facilities

**Toast Tab**



**Matthew Gabree**  
VP, Real Estate &  
Workplace  
Experience

**TripAdvisor**



**Alejandro Rivero**  
Global Head of  
Corporate Real  
Estate

**Samsung**

## Related Sessions:

1. Building Future-Ready Workplaces in 2025 for the Modern Worker
2. Proven Metrics to Measure Employee Experience and Satisfaction
3. Rethinking Office Transformation Through Experience
4. Hybrid Workplace & Culture Enhancement for Engagement Track: Using Technology to Bridge the Gap Between Remote and in Office Workers

