

A photograph of a modern lounge area. In the center is a mustard yellow sofa with two matching armchairs. They are placed on a large, green, shaggy rug. A low, round, dark coffee table sits in front of the sofa. The background features large windows with brown and blue curtains. A fire extinguisher is visible on the wall. A sign on the right says "THE ROMANS".

Does this
spark *joy*?

A guide to workplace
strategy



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Introduction

By now, we've probably all heard the mantra, "Does this spark joy?" Made famous by the celebrated declutterer Marie Kondo. And many of us have probably asked ourselves this question in our homes, but have you ever applied it to your workspace? Considering how much time we spend in offices and workspaces, it is vital that they are places that encourage joyful moments creative outbursts and embed a positive culture.

While some designers may prioritize current trends or aesthetics, it's essential to remember the deeper aspects of design. Workplace strategy goes beyond furniture arrangement and colour palettes; it's a harmonious combination of architecture, psychology, and technology, marrying together to create the perfect environment for productivity, collaboration, and wellbeing.

The design of an office should not lead or replace a business' strategy; the strategy and vision of the

company should inform the design.

In this guide, we'll be exploring exactly what workplace strategy is, why it's so important and how to make it a part of your next design venture.



PHONE BOOTH 1

The average
person will spend
roughly 90,000
hours at work over
their lifetime —
almost one-third of
our lives

So, what is workplace strategy?

At its core, workplace strategy is a careful and considered art that unites data with humanness to align a physical workspace with an organisation's vision, goals and needs. This isn't just rearranging desks and chairs; it's about intentionally crafting an environment that acts as a living, breathing embodiment of a company's culture, which enhances productivity and supports employee wellbeing.

Workplace strategy isn't a trivial, 'nice-to-have', considering the average person will spend roughly 90,000 hours at work over their lifetime.

The traditional office layout was often rigid and hierarchical, echoing the days of past corporate structures. Over the last couple of decades, there has undoubtedly been a shift away from this design and ethos, with offices favouring flexibility over fluorescents and collaboration over cubicles. The agile workspace has gained prominence, with around 70% of office space globally featuring elements of open plan design.

Good workplace strategy goes beyond aesthetics; it will positively impact an organisation from top to bottom. It can make employees feel more valued, more productive and happier, which, in turn, directly affects a business's ROI and income for the better. Those who are highly satisfied at work are more likely to stay, so in order to retain top talent, drive innovation and see a more productive workspace, workplace strategy is a no-brainer.



Opening The Door: a deep-dive with Adam Burtt-Jones, Workplace Strategist and Design Consultant

Adam Burtt-Jones is the co-founder of the consultancy Burtt-Jones and Brewer and has worked closely with AW Spaces on a number of exciting and innovative projects. We sat down with him to get his take on workplace strategy and share his thoughts on making an impact with it.

Reflecting on the 2008 Financial Crash

The 2008 financial crash serves as a case study in the pitfalls of subjectivity. At its core, the crash happened because traders, instead of taking an objective view of market trends, succumbed to the allure of bandwagon thinking. This human tendency to follow the crowd, Adam suggests, is something to be wary of especially in professional decision-making.

Design and Strategy: A Delicate Balance

Adam emphasizes the supremacy of strategy over design. While both are crucial, it's vital to begin with a strategic foundation.

“Always go with strategy first. It sounds really simple, but it's a fundamental part because if people say, I will do some strategy whilst we're doing the design, design always wins. Doing the design first plugs the subjective perspectives of people.”

You need to let strategy lead the initial thinking and the objectives. People might leverage what they want to use for their design and then say that it is strategy or even think design is strategy.

The Essence of Client Understanding

Diving deep into the motivations behind a client's project is fundamental. You need to understand their motivations for engaging in the project. Perhaps they're moving because their lease has ended or there has been an external business change. Other times, it's something to do with a business change external to them. There are many embedded reasons why, so just thinking, what are we doing and why we're here? And why has this project been instigated? These questions are fundamental pieces of the initial phases.

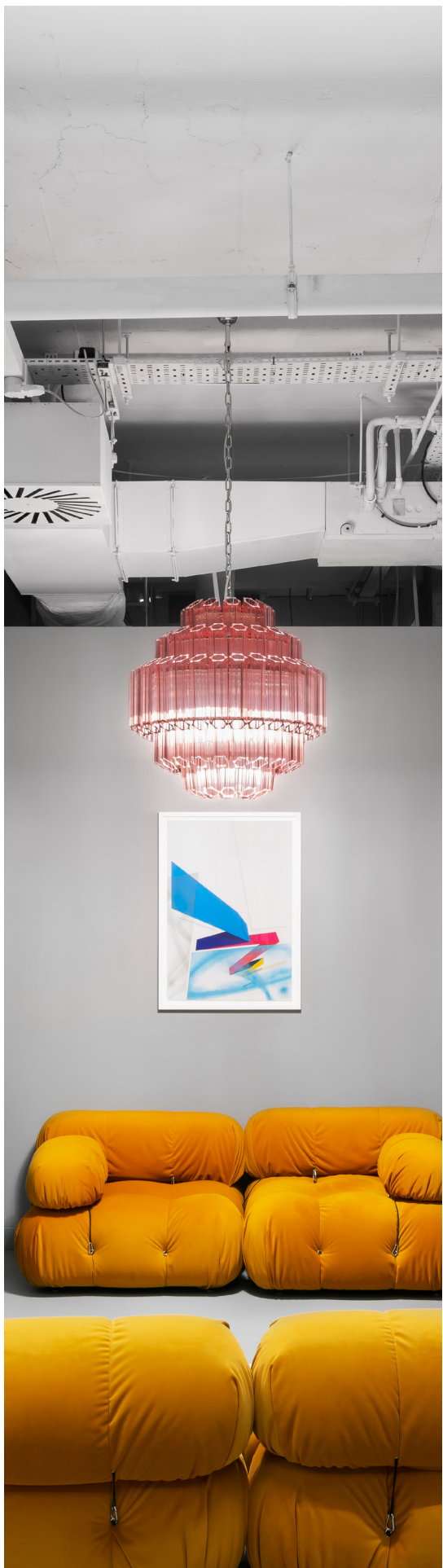
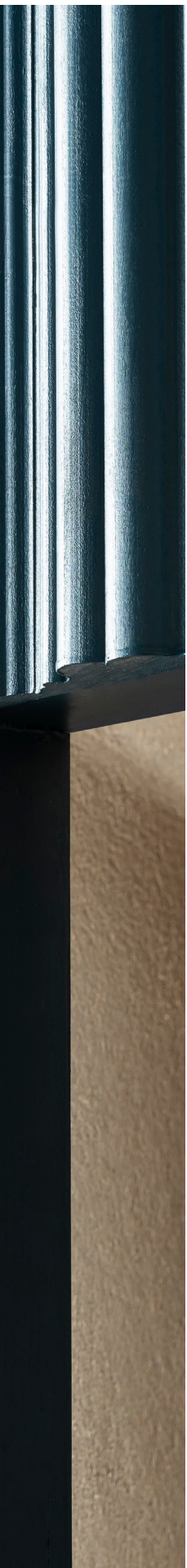
Initiating Strategy Equals Embracing Change

Starting on a strategy is akin to setting the stage for change management. It's the metaphorical act of placing a key in a door. This key symbolizes the first step. For transformative change to manifest, one needs to turn the key and walk through that door.

The Mechanics of Successful Strategy Execution

A strategist's toolkit is replete with methods to convey ideas and align perspectives. Adam notes that when people in an organization are on the same page, working with shared goals in sight, success is inevitable. However, without this alignment, an office loses its essence. It becomes just a location, devoid of purpose and direction.

“If people are doing different things and being non-aligned, they are there for various purposes. You haven't got a business. And then the office isn't an office. It's simply a place where people come and do the things that they'd be doing elsewhere.”



To create a
workplace
strategy that truly
works, you need
to know every
pain point and
every challenge
at all levels of the
business.

Firstly, workplace strategy needs a skilful touch, and we'd highly recommend outsourcing an expert to help you define what you're looking for.

Embrace Data for Insight

1. Start with a Company-Wide Assessment

Before diving into transformative steps, gather detailed insights about your business. This means understanding the employee experience from an ethnographic perspective.

2. Use Reliable Assessment Tools

Try using the Leesman Index. This tool captures employee sentiments and experiences in a clear, objective manner, providing invaluable data for your strategic decisions.

Prepare Your Team for Change

1. Anticipate Drastic Alterations

Your findings might necessitate significant changes in processes, physical layouts, and even company culture. Being prepared for these potential shifts is crucial.

2. Prioritize Transparency in Conversations

Change can be daunting. Instead of imposing decisions, include your team in the dialogue. Ensuring that they're part of the entire process not only empowers them but also eases the transition.

Ensure Wellbeing and Support

1. Involve and Influence

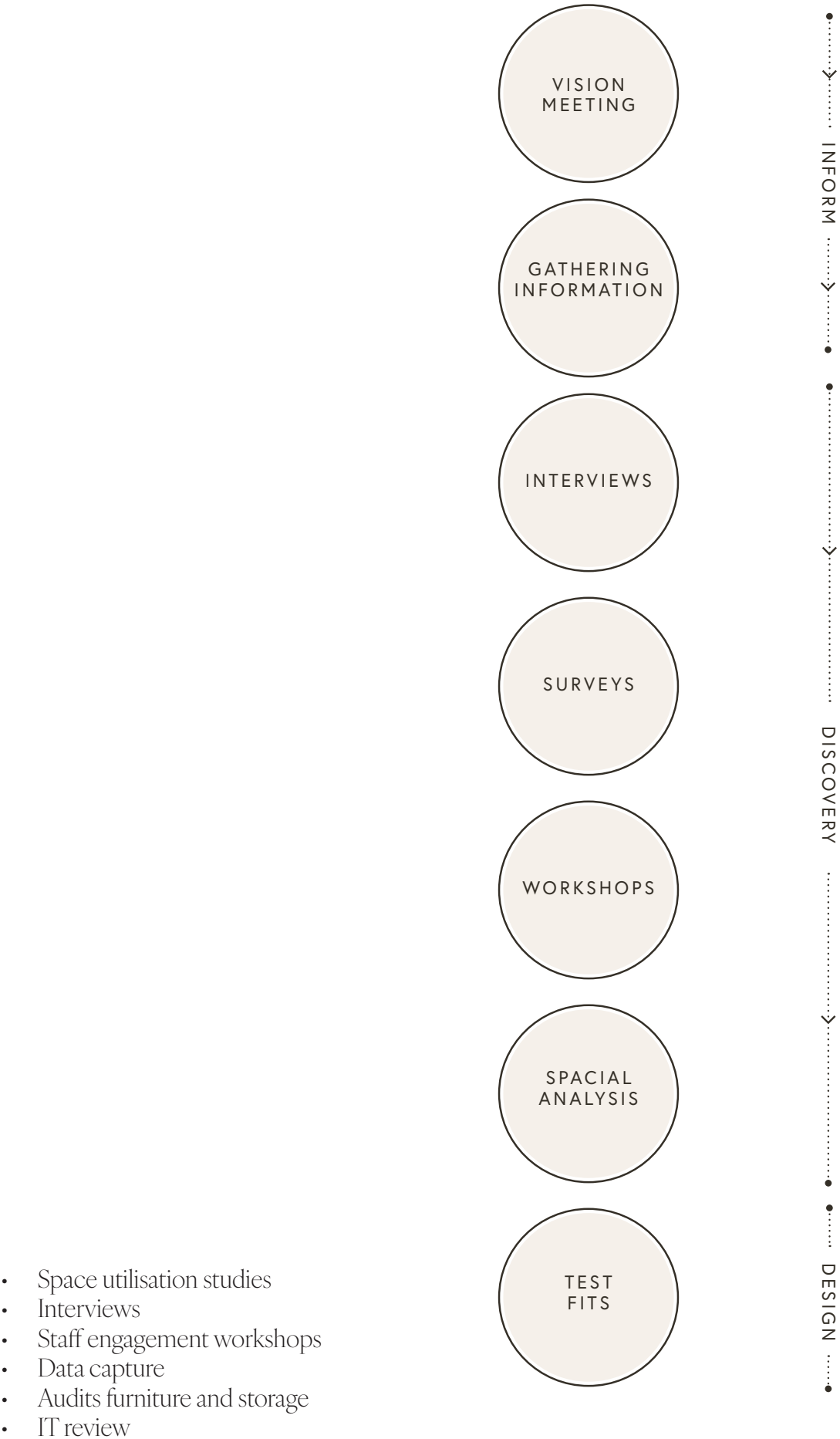
By keeping your team involved, they'll feel they have a say in the changes, which can make them more receptive to new strategies.

2. Recognize the Power of Workplace Strategy

Remember, the wellbeing and continuous support of your team is the cornerstone of any successful workplace strategy. Their buy-in and adaptability can drastically amplify the positive impact on your business.



What's involved in workplace analysis with AW Spaces?



Understanding and harnessing the power of workplace strategy can be the key to unlocking greater productivity, enhanced well-being, and a culture that truly embodies an organisation's core values. From stressing the importance of a strategy-first approach to recognising the vital role of aligning design with an organisation's objectives, the journey to crafting an effective workplace strategy is detailed and requires expertise.

For those committed to undertaking this transformative change, having an expert by your side can be invaluable. Take the next step - don't let your organisation's potential go unrealised. Book a call with a workplace strategist today and set forth on a journey to create a workplace that doesn't just function, but flourishes.

Get in touch with us

hello@awspaces.co.uk • 020 3988 0057