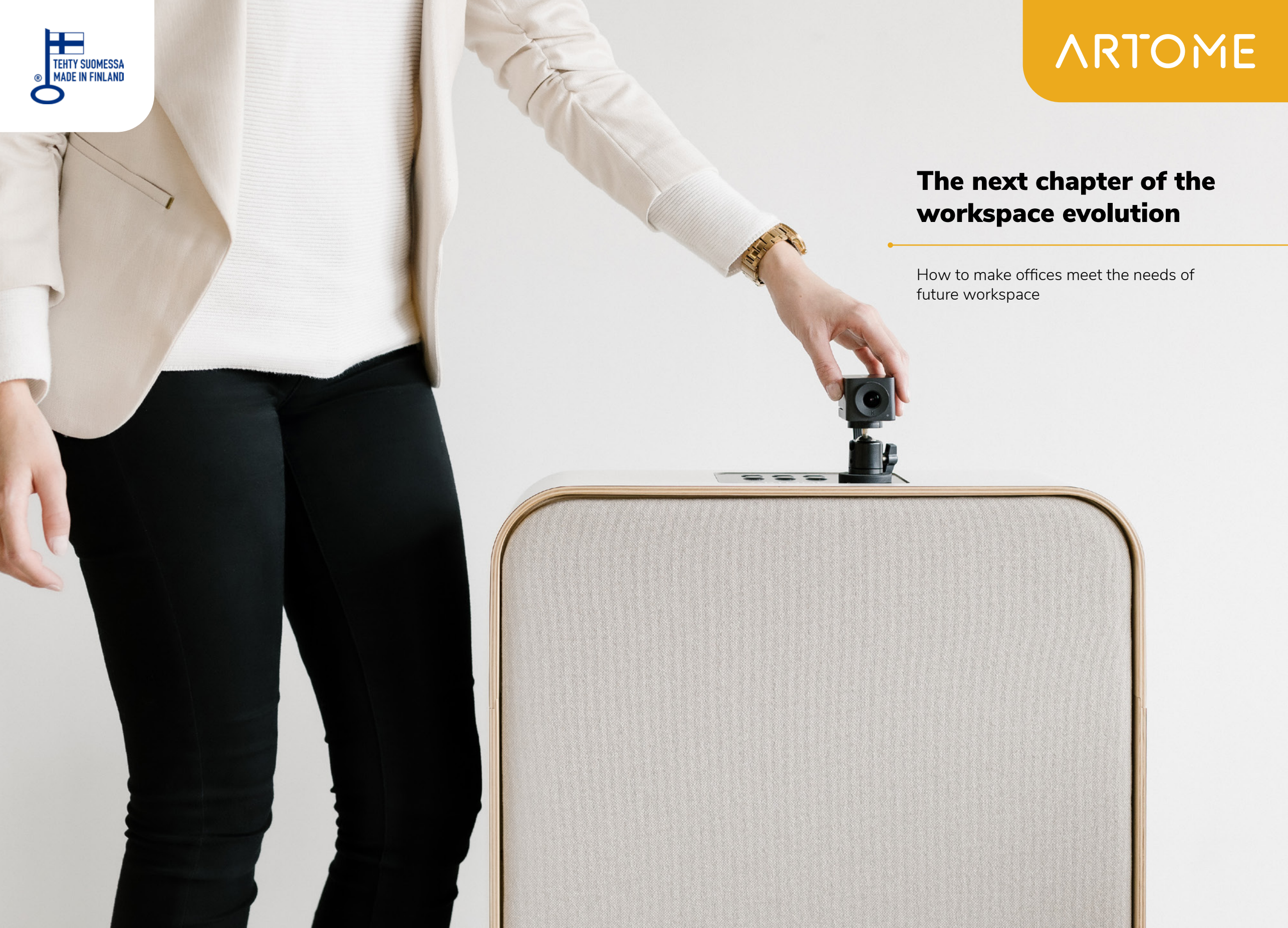ARTOME

The next chapter of the workspace evolution

How to make offices meet the needs of future workspace

Back to the office

As the remote working has come here to stay, we are still experiencing undeniable, yet completely understandable yearning to be in the presence of other people. That's why the focus in creating new office spaces should be in people-centred design, that enables functional and flexible way of working. But how to ensure the efficiency of work as well as easy communication if some people are working at the office and others remotely.

How to adopt the hybrid model?

Studying the new mindset

The world has glided into a new working culture as people are discovering that more versatile ways of work can actually defeat the 9 to 5 office life. But don't take our word for it. Several studies show how the changing working culture is affected to our mindset and expectations. For instance, according to Prudential's survey (1), 68% of the respondents said that the ability to work both remotely and at the work site is the ideal workplace model. Out of those who worked remotely during the pandemic 87% wants to continue to do so at least one day a week. Another survey ran by Flexjobs (2) discovered that not only do employees want to work remotely, but 58% also say that they would look for a new job if they were unable to continue working remotely in their current position.

This leads to the conclusion that the hybrid model is here to stay, like it or not. The traditional way of working full hours at the office is long gone and the beginning of an entirely new working culture is already on the way. The demands and expectations are not only setting the standards on how we build our offices in the future, but on how we choose our employment strategy as well.

While there will still be tasks were working in-person is the only possible approach, it's unlike that the "knowledge workers" will do 100% of their work in the same place anymore.

Enni Karell

Enni Karell works as an interior architect and a biophilic design specialist at Naava. She is interested in human centric and sustainable design solutions which are both core parts of biophilic design as well as values of Naava. When planning the new Naava showroom in Helsinki, she used her knowledge of biophilic design and focused on making the space useful for showcasing different Naava solutions but also a versatile working environment for the company employees.

The biophilic point of view can be based on three principles: nature in the space, nature of the space, and spatial experiences. Nature in the space does not only refer to the presence of the plants and green walls, but also to the air quality, water, fire, weather or different ecosystems. Nature of the space is about bringing organic forms and materials, natural colours and naturally-inspired patterns and shapes or photographs of nature to the space. Even patina on an old wall can represent nature of the space. Spatial aspect refers to how we experience different spaces such as sheltered little corners, wide open spaces and how we feel about moving in different spaces and finding easily the routes that connects them. When also these are being considered in the space planning, the humane approach can be maximized.

With multidimensional and successful biophilic space design it is possible to even have positive effects to the health of the people and increase their wellbeing and quality of life. It is a way to cherish and develop the communication between human and nature and even to the architecture and spaces of the workplace. When employees feel connected to the working environment in different levels, it encourages them to get back to the office even in time of the hybrid working culture.

Creating better and healthier workspaces with humane approach

Although the hybrid working culture enables us to be free from time and place, it still includes spending time at workplace. The benefits in working at the office can be the social aspects of being part of the workplace community, collaboration with the team and the motivation and inspiration of the new ideas that come up when sitting together at the same table. Some of us find it much easier to concentrate on their work at the office and they may also enjoy the possibilities of better chairs and human engineered workstations. Office also offers a separate space, where you can leave all the working related things and thoughts by the end of the day and to ensure the recovery by making the line clearer between your work and private life.

It is still almost too easy for people to stay at home nowadays. To get the employees back to the office, companies should consider creating more vivid and comfortable spaces, that would meet the needs of their staff better. By adding humane aspects to the interior designing, it would be possible to create more enjoyable and healthier spaces and to support the changing social needs such as working together or alone.

One way to add humane approach to the spaces, is to discover the biophilic office environment planning. The word biophilia means the love of nature and living things. According to the principles of biophilia, the need for human to be in contact with the nature evolved when our ancestors became attached to certain kind of environments such as lakesides, forests and other places that provided shelter. This is why we humans are still keen on lakeside views and green environments – we are still drawn to these places in order to survive and to get access to fresh water, food and shelter. This also explains why we feel the desire to sit by the window or to get a plant to our desk when staying indoors as well.

Biophilia is much more than plants and natural light. It is a whole mindset of interior planning that offers more natural, healthier and humane experience to the people using the spaces. It is not just a trend or a style to add more living plants and green walls to the office.

Diverse spaces for diverse people

According to a Flexjobs survey, 55% of employees say their productivity has increased during remote working. However, another study by Becker Friedman Institute (3) shows results of increased communication costs and declining employee productivity while remote working.

This is where the work gets personal. In the world of almost endless possibilities, most employees are now able to choose the location that best serves their personal needs. This also makes the line between work and private life no longer as straightforward as it used to be, and it comes with both pros and cons. As the survey showed, enabling remote working can be an important factor in decision making between keeping a job or to look for a new one. From this point of view, we should see the hybrid work model as an attractive opportunity for both employees and employers, as it enables more flexibility to the work routines. As discovered in the surveys, remote work is not enough, we need personal presence as well. It is crucial to ensure easy communication and flexible ways of work even if your staff is located around the globe. The pressure to find right kind of communication solutions that support staff interaction and well-being now and in the future is a real deal. The best tools must support communication anywhere and almost with any device and still ensure that the employee does not feel the need to be available all the time. This of course sets responsibilities to the employee as well. Good self-control skills become a significant virtue, because an overly dedicated employee who has difficulty balancing work and private life can, in the worst case, find him or herself working 24/7.

Productivity and efficiency are essential features in every workplace. When assessing the contribution of these to remote working, it can be a double-edged sword.

The full benefits of remote work can be reached with the right tools. The key to making teleworking smooth and productive is to ensure the use of technology that allows easy and clear communication. Easy-to-use solutions that are independent of the operating system are valuable in both remote and face-to-face meetings as they allow people to focus on the actual work instead of spending their energy learning and managing the technology.
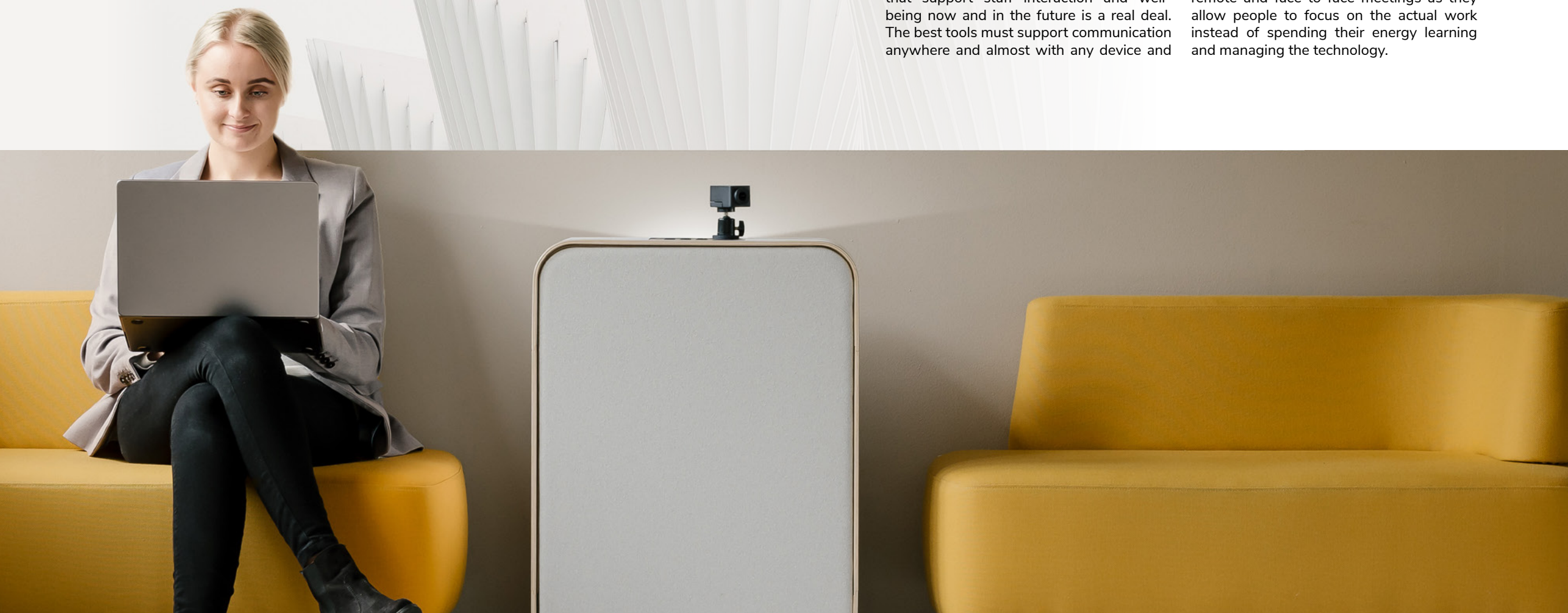
Traditional solution

The traditional presentation technology usually needs electrical planning, cabling and installation. The traditional solution also requires time and money in construction, and it can only be used in one room because the technology is fixed permanently.

Flexible solution

The flexible presentation technology requires no installation and is easy to use. All-in-one movable solution transforms any space for videoconferencing, presentation and hybrid meetings easily and with adaptable image size everyone is able to see the information clearly.

From traditional to historical

What is the winning combination then, what comes to choosing a right kind of technology? The communication systems usually require expertise and often come without a real overall maintenance. This means that different components, such as speakers and displays, are not guaranteed to work together continuously. Almost every office worker is familiar with the situation where the integrated technology of a meeting room fails. A projector that is mounted to the ceiling doesn't power up, so someone is called to climb up to see what's wrong. Or the image from the computer is shown without problems via HDMI-cable at the big screen, but the speakers are not working at all.

Audiovisual solutions with multiple devices fixed permanently in room structures are a commonly used option for meeting rooms and classrooms all around the world. Planning and installing such systems take both time and money. Not to mention that once the technology is fixed to a certain room, the value of the entire system is limited to just that one location.

We shouldn't settle for poor technological solutions

Flexible technology supports information sharing

When talking about information technology in general, the way we provide, process and share the information data has changed dramatically. Data affects constantly to our behaviour in daily life and with the help of different mobile devices we are on the verge of knowledge all the time. To keep up with the latest updates and to lead a successful business, it is vital that the used AV-solutions can share and present the data in a flexible way.

Education sector is already familiar with the ideology of designing spaces specifically for information sharing. When designing school buildings, architects must be able to identify the spatial solutions that support the pedagogical objects. Knowledge sharing is the main function of the spaces and designers must pay attention on how to integrate devices and install AV-technology to support this. Although these principles in school designing have been essential for years, the adaptable ways of using the spaces are now more valid than ever. Movable audiovisual technology releases designers from cabling planning and installation. It is not only simple to exploit but cost effective too. Movable solutions enable easy knowledge share in any space and help to increase the space utilisation. This also sets new kinds of requirements to the audiovisual technology industry. We need to remember that technology should be made from human to human and to ensure the usability of the movable solutions, they must be easy-to-use to lower the threshold of introduction. Also, when dealing with different kinds of portable devices with divergent interfaces, the technology must support any device without additional software installation or troublesome docking stations.

How to succeed

1 **Accept that there is no going back** – most of the employees prefer to work in hybrid world which includes both remote and in person presence. So, if you don't accomplish it, someone else will

2 **Ensure efficiency** - choose technology, that enables easy and clear communication and promotes the flexible spaces

3 **Bring your office to the future of work** – support the hybrid ideology and expertise throughout all the actions of building adaptable spaces