

Gensler

ASIA WORKPLACE SURVEY 2016



Forging a Uniquely Asian Workplace

Can the Asian workplace embrace experimentation and balance to create a distinct identity?

As Asian companies focus on competitiveness in a global market, they must explore a new, more balanced workplace identity to help them differentiate.

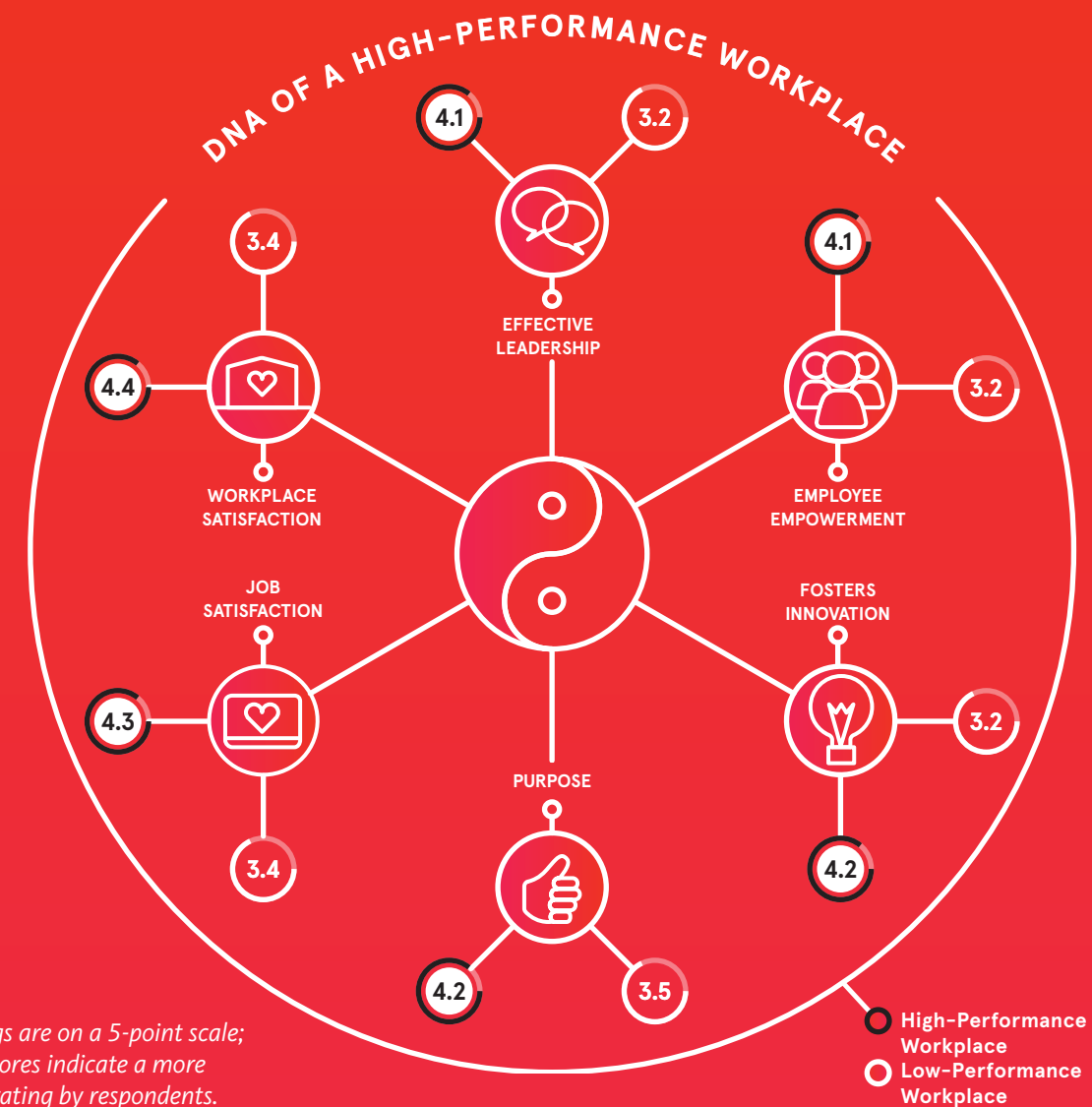
WHAT WE DID

We surveyed a panel-based sample of over 2,000 Asia office workers in 11 industries focused in six major metropolitan areas—Bangalore, Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, and Tokyo—to understand the Asian workplace from the perspective of the worker.

The data collected represents respondents across nine key industries, and a wide distribution of ages and organizational roles. Survey questions explored not only the current state of the workplace—how, and where, employees are working, and how effective those spaces are—but also organizational dynamics, including relationships with teams and managers, and the impact of hierarchy on employee performance and experience. Similar to surveys conducted in the U.S. and U.K., we gathered data using Gensler's proprietary Workplace Performance Index® (WPISM) survey tool.

THE CONTEXT

Today, Asian countries and companies are laser-focused on global competitiveness, and looking for new ways to aspire to excellence, self-sufficiency, and new product and service development to rival the West. Yet today's Asian workplaces still tend to adopt a common, Western narrative, resulting in mostly open plan workspaces combining workstations, offices, and conference rooms. This hand-me-down model of workplace design, a paradigm exported from the U.S. as countries quickly modernized and sought Western-style workplaces in an increasingly global business climate, may now be holding Asian companies and employees back. As organizations continue to focus on talent attraction and business innovation, the **Asian workplace is increasingly in need of a new, differentiated, and home-grown approach to workplace design.**



What do we mean by a high-performance workplace?

A high-performance or “balanced” workplace is one that effectively prioritizes both individual and collaborative work. Employees who rate their workplace highly for both also score better across key performance indicators, as shown above.

THE RESULTS

To help companies be more innovative, have happier employees, and create coherent teams, **the Asian workplace needs to find a better balance of spaces for focused and collaborative work in line with work style and job requirements.** On this, the Asian workplace is similar to those across the world—Gensler's 10 years of workplace survey investigations in the U.S. and U.K. have proven the importance of a workplace environment that effectively supports the myriad activities of today's knowledge workers, and in particular, the need to balance individual and group efforts.

This desire for balance fits with cultural themes that unify Asia—from slokas in Sanskrit, to Buddha's middle path, to the Chinese philosophy of ying and yang, the need for balance is deeply connected to culture and spirituality. For the respondents to our Asia Workplace Survey, the impact of achieving this balance in the

workplace is also clear—**respondents in balanced workplaces are more satisfied with their jobs, see their companies as more creative and innovative, have better relationships with their managers, and enjoy greater work-life balance.**

Equally clear, however, is a desire among our respondents to seek new ways of working that push beyond the boundaries of the traditional, Western workplace design and experience. Unlike the U.S. and U.K., in which a collaborative work environment proved to be a key statistical driver of organizational innovation alongside managerial relationships and meaning in one's work, in Asia the key driver after meaning and relationships is **feeling empowered to experiment with new ways of working.** Flexibility in day-to-day job scope, and a lack of hierarchy in how workspaces are assigned, also prove important factors to Asian office workers today.

Manager relationships, feedback, and freedom to work the way one works best are all more highly rated for employees in high-performance/balanced environments.



WHAT THIS MEANS

Balance builds relationships. Employees in balanced workplaces see their managers in a more positive light, are able to communicate more openly and honestly, better receive feedback, and reported higher work-life balance and job satisfaction. The quality of relationships is also a key factor in creating a culture of creativity and innovation at work.

Mobility enhances performance. Employees in balanced workplaces spend an average of 20 percent less time in their primary workplace or office location, consistent across countries and industries. By having the capability and infrastructure to work outside of the office, they may also be able to shorten travel time in Asia's larger urban centers, increasing their productive working time. Organizations should encourage employees to work from alternative settings, experimenting with not just the how but also the where of their work,

while at the same time being sensitive to local culture and expectations.

Prioritize autonomy and choice. Employees who can choose their own work settings are 1.5 times more likely to work in a balanced environment, and also report higher scores across performance indicators. Choice in when and where to work, paired with a variety of spaces in which to work, is also a key aspect of empowered mobility and experimentation.

Experimentation helps innovation. The central theme of flexibility and the ability to experiment with new ways of working permeated the results of our Asia Workplace Survey. Empowering experimentation, and encouraging employees to take risks in search of new and better ways to work, is of paramount importance.

Balanced workplaces encourage employees to spend more time working away from the office.



Employees in balanced workplaces have more choice in when and where to work.



Experimentation with new ways of working is better supported in balanced workplaces.



PERSPECTIVES

“East Asia has the lowest proportion of engaged employees in the world, at 6 percent, which is less than half of the global mean of 13 percent. The regional finding is driven predominantly by results from China, where 6 percent of employees are engaged in their jobs—one of the lowest figures worldwide.”

– State of the Global Workplace, Gallup

WHAT'S NEXT

To give the Asian workforce, and workplace, its due, the imperative is clear—move beyond workplace models adopted from the West, and find the right balance of workspaces, activities, styles, and cultures to poise Asian companies for competitiveness in the future.

Team

Nachiko Yamamoto, Smita Gupta, Daichi Amano, Connie Ho, Amrapali Agarwal, Shruvan Bendapudi, Caroline Burns, Lijun Cher, Cathy Gu, Fumi Mangyo, Arpita Ray, Taro Uchiyama, Lois Yang

Graphic Design: Danny Wehbe

Bibliography

Gallup. *The State of the Global Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for Business Leaders Worldwide*, 2013.

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About Gensler

As architects, designers, planners, and consultants, we partner with our clients on some 3,000 projects every year. These projects can be as small as a wine label or as large as a new urban district. With more than 5,000 professionals networked across 46 locations, we serve our clients as trusted advisors, combining localized expertise with global perspective wherever new opportunities arise. Our work reflects an enduring commitment to sustainability and the belief that design is one of the most powerful strategic tools for securing lasting competitive advantage.

Gensler's Research Program supports research investigations important to our firm, our clients, and to the ongoing learning and development of Gensler professionals. Research projects are practitioner-led with involvement across the globe. Our teams bring thought leadership to the table as we seek to solve our clients' and the world's most pressing challenges by creating high-performance solutions that embrace the business and world context in which we work, enhance the human experience, and deliver game-changing innovation.

Locations

Abu Dhabi	Denver	Morristown	São Paulo
Atlanta	Detroit	New York	Seattle
Austin	Dubai	Newport Beach	Seoul
Baltimore	Hong Kong	Oakland	Shanghai
Bangalore	Houston	Philadelphia	Singapore
Bangkok	La Crosse	Phoenix	Sydney
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