



Invest in Your Wellness with Wellness Works®

Welcome to the UBA Partner Firm exclusive newsletter focusing on your biggest and most personal asset – wellness.

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How Work Environment Shapes Your Wellbeing

When we think about wellness, we often think about the choices we make. We might focus on what we eat, how much we move, how well we sleep, or what we do to manage stress.

But there is another part of wellbeing that can be easy to overlook: the environment around us.

Lighting, noise, temperature, air quality, and the ability to find an appropriate space are part of our everyday work experience. We may not pay much attention to these things until something feels wrong. The lights create glare. A nearby conversation makes it difficult to concentrate. The room is always too warm or too cold. The air feels stuffy.

Today, workplace and business leaders are paying more attention to those everyday conditions.

In its [2025 Global Workplace Survey](#), Gensler examined the experiences of more than 16,000 office workers across 15 countries. One of the themes to emerge was the importance of choice. Employees with greater control over where and how they work reported better workplace experiences, and Gensler highlighted access to private areas, flexible environments, and the ability to control lighting and noise among the features of effective workplaces.

JLL is seeing a similar shift. Its [2025 Workforce Preference Barometer](#), based on 8,700 office workers across 31 countries, found that nearly 40% believed their office experience could be improved. Ergonomics and acoustic comfort were among the areas of dissatisfaction.

The message for employees and employers is worth considering: workplace wellness isn't only about what we do during the day. It can also be influenced by the space in which we do it.

Let There Be Light

Lighting is one of those workplace features that's easy to take for granted.

Yet it has become part of a broader business conversation about creating environments where people can work comfortably and effectively.

A [2025 Forbes article on office lighting](#) underscores the importance of physical environment for their employees as a component of organizations' investment in talent, technology, and training. Lighting goes beyond aesthetics and has a significant impact on physical and emotional well-being.

That doesn't necessarily mean making every workplace brighter.

Different people and different tasks can call for different conditions. Gensler's workplace research points to the value of giving employees greater control over their environments, including lighting. A [2026 study of office lighting conditions](#) adds some scientific context, finding differences in visual comfort, fatigue, lighting preferences, and some measures of cognitive performance under different lighting conditions.

The practical takeaway may be less about finding the "perfect" light and more about having options.

Try it: Look at the lighting where you spend most of your day. Could you reposition your workspace to take advantage of daylight? Would adjusting blinds reduce glare? Could a task lamp give you more control over the light you need for a particular task?

Listen to Your Surroundings

A ringing phone. A nearby conversation. A meeting happening a few feet away. Construction outside.

Noise is another area receiving attention from workplace designers.

In its look at [workplace design and employee experience](#), JLL identifies acoustics as one of the workplace factors that employees commonly rate poorly. Its research argues for workplaces that offer a choice of spaces rather than expecting every type of work to happen effectively in the same environment.

The workplace-design industry is moving in this direction too. In a [2025 Work Design Magazine article](#), acoustic design is described as an often-overlooked part of employee wellness. The article highlights workplaces that combine private and social areas and use lighting, acoustics, furnishings, and other design elements to create spaces for different activities and experiences.

Of course, silence isn't always possible or even preferable. Some people enjoy background sound, while others need quiet when concentrating. A collaborative meeting and an hour spent analyzing a complicated spreadsheet probably don't require the same environment.

The question may be whether employees have enough choice.

Try it: Notice which sounds are most disruptive during your day. If your workplace offers different settings, consider matching the space to the task. A quieter location or headphones may help with concentrated work, while collaborative spaces may be a better fit for conversations and group projects.

Clear the Air

Air quality may be one of the least visible parts of the workplace environment, but it has become an important topic in workplace and facilities management.

Ventilation, filtration, building systems, furnishings, cleaning products, outdoor pollution, and activities such as cooking can all influence indoor air.

JLL's workplace-design research includes air quality among the considerations involved in creating workplaces intended to support employee performance and wellbeing. Its broader [research on workplace wellbeing](#) also argues that employers need to get the fundamentals of the workplace experience right rather than viewing wellbeing only through programs or amenities.

This is also an area where the distinction between individual and organizational wellness becomes particularly clear.

Employees can make some adjustments to their immediate surroundings. They generally can't change an office building's ventilation or filtration system.

Try it: At home, use kitchen ventilation when cooking and change HVAC filters according to the manufacturer's recommendations. At work, persistent odors, moisture problems, stuffiness, or other air-quality concerns can be raised with the appropriate facilities or building management team.

Find a Comfortable Temperature

Office temperature may be one of the oldest workplace debates. One person reaches for a sweater while another wishes the room were cooler.

There is a reason finding the perfect setting can be difficult.

Thermal comfort depends on more than the number on a thermostat. Clothing, humidity, air movement, activity level, personal preference, and characteristics of the space can all affect whether someone feels comfortable.

JLL's workplace research identifies thermal comfort, along with acoustics and spaces for individual work, among factors that are commonly rated poorly in offices. Its larger point is important: designing a workplace that supports employees involves understanding how people use and experience the space rather than assuming one environment will work equally well for everyone.

Try it: Focus on what you can control. Dressing in layers, adjusting blinds, changing your seating location, or using an employer-approved fan may help. If temperature is consistently uncomfortable, talk with your manager or facilities team about available options.

One Size Doesn't Fit Everyone

Taken together, these workplace trends point toward a larger change in thinking.

The goal may not be to create one "perfect" office. It may be to create an environment that gives people options.

Gensler's 2025 research puts employee agency at the center of this idea. Employees with greater choices in where and how they work were more likely to report that their workplace supported both individual and team

productivity. The research also found that employees increasingly value workplaces that feel natural, calm, and comfortable rather than traditionally "corporate."

JLL's research reaches a similar conclusion. As organizations ask employees to spend more time in the office, employees are paying attention to the quality of the experience once they get there. JLL's 2025 Workforce Preference Barometer found that dissatisfaction with the office environment was associated with more negative perceptions of hybrid-work policies.

That makes lighting, noise, temperature, air quality, and access to different kinds of spaces more than facilities details. Together, they form part of everyday employee experience.

Take a Fresh Look at Your Space

You don't need to understand building science or workplace design to become more aware of your surroundings.

Pause during your workday and ask yourself:

- Is the lighting comfortable for the work I'm doing?
- Are there sounds that repeatedly distract or bother me?
- Does the space regularly feel stuffy?
- Am I frequently too warm or too cold?
- Do I have access to different environments for different kinds of work?
- Is there one small change that would make my workspace more comfortable?

For remote and hybrid employees, the same questions can be useful at home.

A lamp can be moved. A desk might be repositioned closer to daylight. A distracting sound may be reduced. A different workspace might be better suited to a particular task.

Not everything, however, is within an employee's control.

Wellness Is Also About Where We Work

Employee wellness programs traditionally focus on helping individuals make healthy choices. Those efforts matter. But employees spend their workdays inside environments that organizations also help create.

For employers, this broadens the wellness conversation. Instead of continually asking what healthy behavior an employee can add to an already busy day, organizations can also ask a different question:

Does the environment where our employees spend their day help support their wellbeing?

There is no single workspace that will feel perfect to everyone. People have different preferences, and different tasks call for different conditions. That makes flexibility, choice, and employee feedback especially valuable.

For employees, the starting point can be simple: notice your surroundings and identify the conditions that help you feel comfortable and able to do your work.

For organizations, it means recognizing that wellness is shaped not only by programs and benefits, but also by the everyday environment employees walk into.

This month, take a fresh look at the space where you spend your day. Your next wellness adjustment might not be something you add to your routine. It might be something you change in your surroundings.

Book Review | Building Wellness from the Inside Out

We spend much of our lives inside buildings, yet most of us give little thought to how those spaces might influence our health.

In [*Healthy Buildings: How Indoor Spaces Can Make You Sick or Keep You Well*](#), Joseph G. Allen, director of Harvard's Healthy Buildings Program, and John D. Macomber of Harvard Business School explore what happens when we begin thinking about buildings not simply as places to live and work, but as environments that can influence the people inside them.

The authors combine public health, building science, and business perspectives to examine indoor air, ventilation, humidity, pollutants, building materials, and other aspects of the built environment. Just as important, they make the case that healthier indoor environments should matter to organizational leaders, not only architects and facilities professionals.

Book Highlights

Allen and Macomber encourage readers to notice aspects of buildings that are often invisible until there is a problem.

The book examines ventilation, air quality, temperature, humidity, dust, lighting, noise, and building materials, connecting these seemingly separate elements to a larger conversation about human health.

One of the book's strengths is its business perspective. Instead of treating a healthy building solely as a construction or facilities issue, the authors ask leaders to consider the people occupying the building and how decisions about indoor environments may affect them.

That perspective can be particularly useful for organizations evaluating their wellness strategies. Programs that encourage healthy individual behaviors have a role to play, but employees spend their workdays within an environment that the organization also helps create.

A Key Takeaway

One of the book's most useful ideas is that a healthy workplace is not created only through individual choices.

Employees can adjust a lamp, move to a quieter location, or add another layer when a room feels cold. They cannot personally redesign a ventilation system, replace building materials, or address larger indoor air quality concerns.

That distinction creates an important role for employers. Listening to employee concerns, maintaining building systems, monitoring indoor conditions, and considering health and comfort when making decisions about physical spaces can make the environment itself part of an organization's approach to wellbeing.

Healthy Buildings is particularly useful for HR professionals, organizational leaders, facilities teams, and readers interested in the connection between public health and the places where we spend our time. Some sections delve

more deeply into building science and real estate than a general wellness reader may need, but the central idea is broadly relevant: wellness is influenced not only by what we do, but also by the environment in which we do it.

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