social spaces

IQ—EQ
A RESILIENT WORK CULTURE CAN OUTLIVE ANY SPACE—EVEN AN EMPTY ONE.
BECAUSE WORK CULTURES START FROM WITHIN.

They burrow deep in our ideals and aspirations, flow effortlessly through our interactions and expressions. When our work culture takes hold, it becomes part of our identity, nearly inseparable from who we are or the way we get things done.

AND YET, THEY CAN SURPRISE US IN THE MOST UNEXPECTED WAYS.

It’s as though lying beneath the surface is a sleeping giant waiting for the right set of conditions to provoke something truly spectacular in the workplace. And often, all it takes is a gentle nudge or a subtle cue to reveal a culture’s intrinsic potential. That’s why social spaces matter.
SOCIAL SPACES CREATE RICH ENVIRONMENTS RIPE FOR THE WORK CULTURE TO THRIVE.

By aligning the performance (IQ) and poetics (EQ) of the workplace, they can unleash an alchemy of new thinking that previously lay dormant.

They can cultivate happy accidents and serendipitous encounters. Aesthetically stimulate well-being and personal balance.

SOCIAL SPACES DO NOT DEFINE THE WORK CULTURE.

THEY LIBERATE IT.
SOCIAL SPACES NEED PRODUCTS THAT ARE ROOTED IN IQ AND EQ THINKING TO MAKE THE WORK CULTURE TRULY SING.
SAY HELLO TO DUAL, A DYNAMIC SEATING COLLECTION DESIGNED TO CELEBRATE EXPRESSION AND ELEVATE THE CONVERSATION.
EQ—One-of-a-Kind

The duality of material options offers a seat ripe for expression. Upholster it in a single color, choose two, or split the difference with a partially opaque knit base available in eleven finishes, including five accent colors.

IQ—Posture Perfect

Find the right posture for every occasion. A low-back chair for the relaxed and casual collaboration. A high-back chair for when you need time to unwind and recharge. Sit up straight or sink into conversation.
Each chair is equipped with a return-to-center swivel. This subtle gesture can change a static setting into a dynamic space that keeps the conversation flowing and ensures good ideas spread far and wide.
EQ—A Warm Welcome

Home is where the heart is, but the office needs heart too. The lounge design introduces a residential aesthetic to create a welcoming environment for focus and recharge—so that work doesn’t feel like work.
In 15th century Florence, the House of Medici had become one of the most powerful ruling dynasties in Europe. History looks back at the Medicis as having ushered an era of peace and stability into an otherwise volatile region. And yet everything they achieved politically was least among their successes. Outside of their public affairs, the Medicis were patrons of the arts and sciences. They sponsored people from all fields and disciplines to pursue their craft in Florence. For many in the Medici family, this was their passion project writ large. But little did they realize that by bringing a cross-section of artisans together and affording them the independence to create without precept or expectation, the Medicis would contribute to one of the most creative periods in human history: the Renaissance.

This story is instructive for two reasons. First, it reminds us that our beliefs, values, and ideas are innate. Whether we're a 15th century sculptor moving from Venice to Florence or a 21st century company moving from Vancouver to Fort Worth, everything we know and believe travels with us. Second, under the right set of conditions—whether in a city or an office—our ideas can give birth to something even bigger and more consequential. As the Medicis demonstrated, when we break down barriers, improve accessibility to other people, and build a permission structure that values individual autonomy over prescription, we can unleash a groundswell of new thinking and expression.

It’s from this story that management consultant and author Frans Johansson coined the term “The Medici Effect.” Johansson argues that while the Medicis never intentionally aimed to usher in the Renaissance, they established that breakthroughs can be achieved when you foster an environment that allows for seemingly unrelated ideas to mingle. Johansson’s theory is rooted in a notion he calls, “intersectional thinking.” It’s the belief that when you allow people from different disciplines and backgrounds to intersect, you increase the likelihood of growing everyday ideas into extraordinary ones.

These “happy accidents,” as they’re often called, occur all the time. The problem, however, is that we initially attribute success to logic and reason. "Our mind shirks these serendipitous explanations, and searches for convenient patterns instead," says Johansson. "Ask for the keys to career success and you’ll get logical explanations, recommendations, pathways and approaches. Then ask someone how he or she became successful and suddenly it becomes a story of serendipitous encounters, unexpected changes in plans, and random consequences.”

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Steven Johnson, author of “Where Good Ideas Come From,” cautions that we are quick to attribute big ideas to a singular instance of clarity—a “eureka!” moment—when in fact, “a lot of great ideas linger on, sometimes for decades, in the back of people’s minds.” Johnson argues that ideas compound and require spaces like the 17th century English coffeehouses, “where you have lots of different ideas (coming) together, different backgrounds, different interests, jostling with each other, bouncing off each other.” Much in the way the Medicis helped cultivate the Renaissance, English coffeehouses were instrumental in bringing about the Age of Enlightenment. It was the coffeehouse’s communal nature and open architecture that nurtured the exchange of ideas. But arguably, even more important than acknowledging architecture’s role was a growing realization that “we take ideas from other people, from people we’ve learned from, from people we run into in the coffee shop, and we stitch them together into new forms and we create something new.”

When we accept that ideas thrive in the company of other ideas, we can begin to address how space can best support those interactions. It’s one thing to run a coffeehouse; it’s another to run a company with employees sprawled across building wings and floors. Steve Jobs understood this when he set out to design Pixar’s offices.

“If a building doesn’t encourage unplanned collaborations, you’ll lose a lot of innovation and the magic that’s sparked by serendipity.”

So we designed the building to make people get out of their offices and mingle in the central atrium with people they might not otherwise see.” John Lasseter, Pixar’s Chief Creative Officer, immediately experienced what Jobs was aiming to create. “Steve’s theory worked from day one. I kept running into people I hadn’t seen for months. I’ve never seen a building that promoted collaboration and creativity as well as this one.”

What Pixar was able to nurture is what author Matt Ridley provocatively calls, “when ideas have sex.” Ridley makes the persuasive case that “the exchange of ideas, he asserts, is a uniquely human characteristic, and is ultimately what allows cultures to thrive. By way of example, Ridley points to Tasmania, which, due to rising sea levels, became an island 10,000 years ago, completely cut off from Australia. “The people on it not only experienced slower progress than people on the mainland, they actually experienced regress.” Now, 10,000 years later, research is reaffirming that whether we’re discussing the geography of a landmass or the layout of an office space, continuous human contact and the transmitting of information are vitally important to progress.

In a series of experiments conducted by Dr. Alex Pentland and his team at MIT’s Media Lab, office workers were equipped with electronic badges to capture information about their communication, ranging from body language and vocal tones to the conversations with which colleagues they interacted with and how often. What they found was that communication was the most important predictor of team success; more than intelligence, personality skill, and substance of the discussion combined. That last factor—distance—is particularly interesting. The researchers found that idle chatter, even benign conversations about the weather, increased productivity. Dr. Pentland explains: "When you’re chatting with others, you see people’s reactions to things—how other people live their lives and how seriously they take this sort of thing and how seriously they take that sort of thing. What you’re learning implicitly and tacitly from chatting is how to manage your life in job situations. Part of that is about actual job issues, but a lot of it is about your attitude toward the job and your attitude toward other people.”

This line of thinking is challenging the gospel of modern management. The problem, Dr. Pentland argues, is that management literature assumes that whether we’re discussing the weather or the weather, increased productivity. Dr. Pentland explains: "When you’re chatting with others, you see people’s reactions to things—how other people live their lives and how seriously they take this sort of thing and how seriously they take that sort of thing. What you’re learning implicitly and tacitly from chatting is how to manage your life in job situations. Part of that is about actual job issues, but a lot of it is about your attitude toward the job and your attitude toward other people.”

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To create conditions ripe for disseminating, exchanging, and growing ideas, Allen proposed creating spaces designed around shared resources that would attract people from across the office.
This incongruence is in part because we haven’t created the right environment for ideas—and the cultures from which they originate—to thrive. Much like a young seedling, culture needs to be nurtured. It needs the right conditions to grow and the ideal environment to propagate. It’s when things cross-pollinate that we begin to realize that the power of our culture is bigger than the sum of its parts.

These are the happy accidents we seek, but there’s no reason why they should be purely accidental. When we make an effort to break down barriers, improve accessibility to other perspectives, and create permission structures that value personal autonomy, accidental anomalies become intentional norms.

Fayard and Weeks also highlight the importance of a permission structure. If a culture sets norms for behavior, “people generally deem a space to be a comfortable, natural place to interact only if company culture, reinforced by management, designates it as such.” Fayard and Weeks make the case that it’s not enough to just create a space—management needs to empower employees to use it. Human Resources expert Jeane Meister suggests that to create such an environment requires management to recognize that employees each have unique needs from their workplace. By providing a culture of choice, it allows “employees to decide where they want to work in the office each day, be it a collaborative space or a focused, quiet place.” This marks a shift away from standardization, which defined the old way of space planning. Ironically, as the office has become more social, the experience for each employee is becoming even more personalized.

Throughout history, there are few constants. Among them: humans are innately different, yet uniquely connected by a common social fabric; and, ideas are innately human yet have no formal structure that connects them together.

IT’S NOT ENOUGH TO JUST CREATE A SPACE—MANAGEMENT NEEDS TO EMPower EMPLOYEES TO USE IT.
THIS IS BEVY, A DYNAMIC TABLE DESIGN YOU CAN CONFIGURE TO YOUR HEART’S DELIGHT.
bevy
mario ruiz

IQ—Soaring to New Heights
For sitting, standing, or perching, the collection is designed to flexibly solve for any spatial configuration. Six heights, as well as a range of table lengths, offer a bounty of permutations. A low-profile base makes for ease of egress in cafe and booth settings.

EQ—Below the Surface
Reimagine the workplace from the ground up. Multiple base options and a variety of finishes offer a range of ways to customize for the perfect cultural fit. Natural wood, polished aluminum, or a versatile powdercoat available in three colors offer different ways to soften the workspace.

IQ—Power Onward
In spaces that value serendipity, spending time in search of an outlet and away from work and colleagues is a missed opportunity. Each table can be configured with power and a thoughtful chord management system to ensure all your energy is going to the right place.

IQ—Scanning to New Heights
For sitting, standing, or perching, the collection is designed to flexibly solve for any spatial configuration. Six heights, as well as a range of table lengths, offer a bounty of permutations. A low-profile base makes for ease of egress in cafe and booth settings.
Personalize your space to express all that your work culture aspires to be. With a range of tabletop shapes and finishes, including laminate, veneer, solid surface, and back-painted glass, you can create surface appeal with a deeper cultural meaning.

Detail— Oak veneer surface
FINDING CALM IN BASQUE COUNTRY
For many who work at Alki, Basque Country is the only place they’ve ever called home. Building the workshop here was born of a desire to work wherever it is you live. And that’s a sentiment you can appreciate immediately—as if passing through each product, Alki is imparting a sense of what it means to live wherever it is you work. That feeling of welcome and warmth was among the many things that drew us to Alki. Given our interest in social settings, we’re always looking at the ways design affects work inside space, but we’re equally curious about its effect inside ourselves. At one level, social space—expressing the values and identity of the work culture—only cuts at the surface. Ultimately, we are looking at the way social space can deliver a range of sensory responses.

Social spaces

must create interest and compel people to want to work there: organizations that seek to promote serendipity, attracting people from across the office in a natural expectation. And because people and their work have different needs, a space must signal how it will fulfill a person’s desire for energy and motivation or decompression and recharge. Inside a space, we also examine the ways design can engage—exploring how, for example, setting configurations, posture affordances, and tactile interactions can activate a range of sensory responses.

ATTRACTION TO OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IS ROOTED IN OUR HUMANITY.

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The right space not only improves our overall productivity and well-being but also creates a destination that people return to.

FOR OVER 35 YEARS, ALKI HAS BEEN DRAWING UPON THE REGION’S RICH ARTISAN TRADITIONS AND THE QUIET BEAUTY OF ITS NATURAL SURROUNDINGS TO DESIGN PIECES THAT COULD BE DESCRIBED AS MODERN BASQUE CRAFT.
INTRODUCING KUSKOA AND KUSKOA BI, TWO COLLECTIONS RETHINKING THE ROLE OF FORM & MATERIALITY IN THE WORKPLACE.
IQ—Low to High
A seat for every intent. From large cafes to small collaboration zones, the chair, counter-height stool, and bar-height stool configurations offer versatile elegance to pair with a range of table types. The stools provide mid-back support for longer gatherings and a metal footrest to encourage good posture.

EQ—Tactility
A range of material options and finishes provided a variety of ways to express your space. The veneer shell nestles within a solid oak base, which can be finished five ways. Material accents can complement the warmth of the wood with optional inner and outer seat upholstery.

Detail—Oak trestle cradles a curved oak shell
This unique bio-plastic design is derived from plant-based renewable sources. The rugged shell can be finished two ways and optionally upholstered in total or embellished with just an upholstered seat pad. It’s a statement piece you can sit on.

The molded shell provides ample back and arm support for long stretches of work. Two desk versions offer supreme mobility, available with a 4-star swivel or 5-star caster in two powdercoat finishes. The guest chair sits firmly on a solid oak trestle available in five finishes. Perfect for collaboration and conference room scenarios.
WELCOMING LASAI, A LOUNGE WITH A CALMING SENSIBILITY AND A CRAFTED TOUCH.
IQ—An Invitation to Sit

The low-profile, Hans Wegner-inspired recline is ideal for getting comfortable and catching up with colleagues. The single and double seat configurations are constructed with high-density foam and a wraparound oak structure to bring a welcoming, lifestyle feel into the workspace.

Detail—Oak and dual upholstery create visual texture
The lounge’s visual and tactile cues infuse a sense of balance in today’s ephemeral work environment. The solid oak frame can be finished five ways to add warmth, while the cushions and outer shell allow for different upholstery finishes that can accentuate a space with a quick blast of color or subdue it with a muted palette.
 SOCIAL SPACES ARE LIKE A CHOREOGRAPHED ENSEMBLE OF INTENTION AND EXPRESSION, WHERE EVERY PRODUCT HAS A ROLE TO PLAY.
luta
antonio citterio b&b italia project

bankside
jasper morrison b&b italia project

4-Star Chair 5-Star Chair High Counter Stool Guest Chair

Lounge Chair Settee
ac lounge
antonio citterio b&b italia project

Two-Seater Sofa Three-Seater Sofa Seating Ottoman

AC Lounge Statement of Line

Parsons Table
Parsons Table
Round Table

Cavu Statement of Line

Lounge Chair Two-Seater Sofa Three-Seater Sofa Seating Ottoman

Cavu
mario ruiz

studio tk
IQ—EQ
cover lounge
claesson koivisto rune

Cover Lounge Statement of Line

cover tables
claesson koivisto rune

Cover Tables Statement of Line
BREAK FREE FROM CONVENTION AND ALLOW THE WORK CULTURE TO THRIVE.