

INSIGHT

Workplace Psychology & Facilities Management



Introduction

For decades, Facilities Management was primarily associated with buildings, maintenance, compliance, and operational efficiency.

The focus was often on ensuring that workplaces functioned effectively.

The lights worked.

The heating operated.

The building remained compliant.

The facilities were maintained.

These responsibilities remain critical.

However, a growing body of research and workplace experience has revealed something important:

Buildings do far more than support work.

They influence how people think, feel, behave, collaborate, and perform.

Every workplace sends signals.

The layout of an office affects communication.

Lighting influences concentration.

Noise impacts productivity.

Air quality affects cognitive performance.

Meeting spaces shape collaboration.

Breakout areas influence creativity.

The workplace is not simply a backdrop for work.

It is an active participant in human behaviour.

As organisations increasingly compete for talent, productivity, engagement, and innovation, workplace psychology is becoming a strategic priority.

And Facilities Management sits at the centre of that conversation.

What Is Workplace Psychology?

Workplace psychology examines how physical environments influence human behaviour, emotions, wellbeing, and performance.

It explores questions such as:

- Why do certain spaces improve focus?
- What environments encourage collaboration?
- How does workplace design affect stress levels?
- What role does space play in employee engagement?
- Why do some workplaces feel energising while others feel draining?

The answers often lie in subtle environmental factors.

Humans constantly respond to their surroundings, often without consciously recognising it.

Every workplace creates an emotional experience.

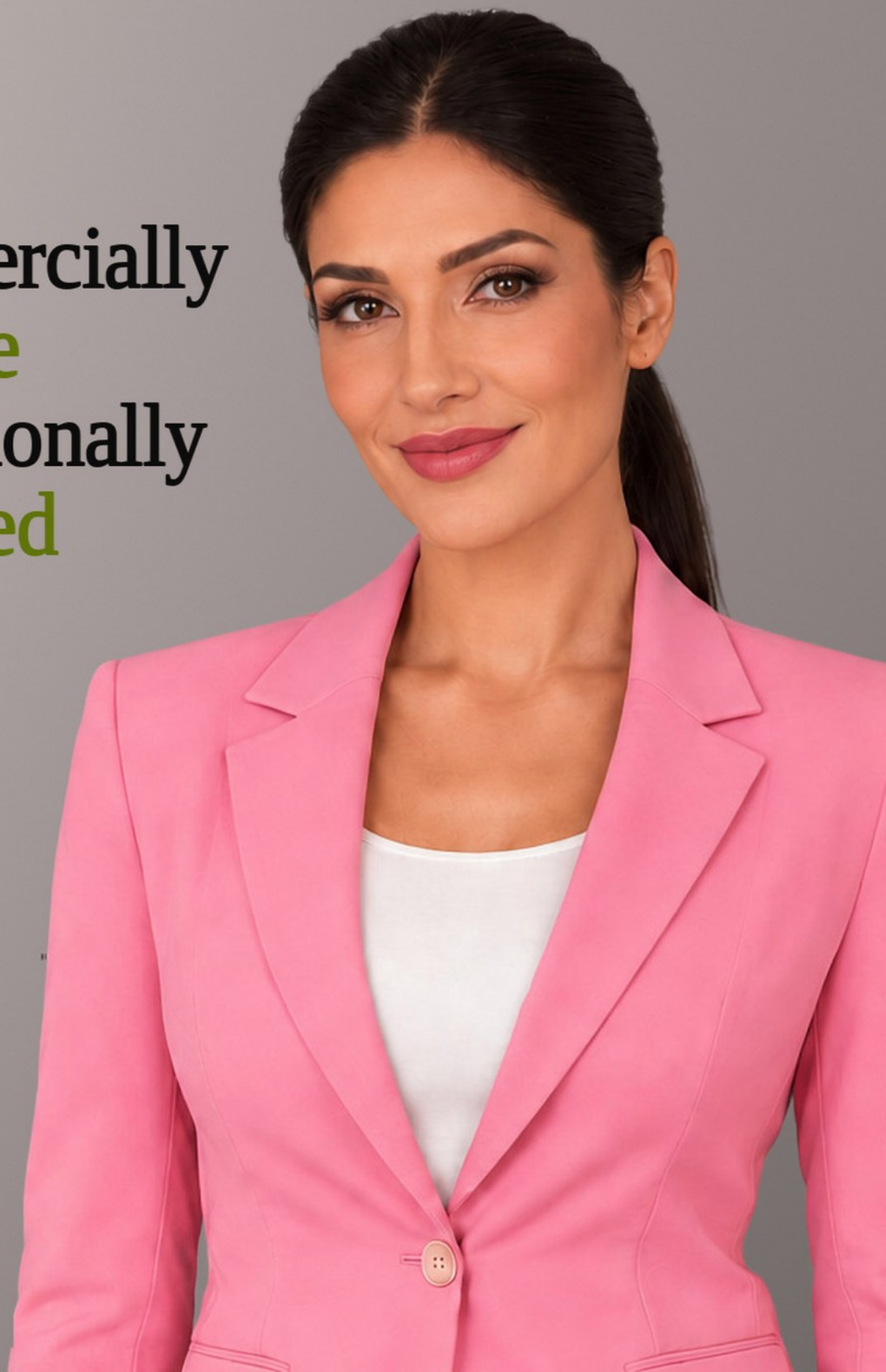
The question is whether that experience is intentional or accidental.

Facilities Management increasingly plays a critical role in shaping these experiences.

—

Commercially
credible
Operationally
informed

—



The Workplace as a Behavioural System

Most organisations think about workplaces in terms of physical assets.

Psychologically, workplaces function more like behavioural systems.

Every design choice influences behaviour.

For example:

Open Spaces

Encourage interaction and visibility.

Private Spaces

Support concentration and deep work.

Informal Areas

Promote spontaneous collaboration.

Meeting Rooms

Shape communication patterns.

Breakout Spaces

Support recovery and creativity.

Circulation Areas

Influence movement and interaction.

People naturally adapt their behaviour to the environments around them.

A workplace that supports desired behaviours can improve performance.

A workplace that creates friction can reduce it.

The environment is never neutral.

It is always influencing outcomes.

Focus: The Foundation of Productivity

One of the most valuable resources within any organisation is attention.

Employees cannot produce high-quality work without the ability to focus.

Yet modern workplaces often create constant distractions.

Common challenges include:

- Noise
- Interruptions
- Visual distractions
- Poor space planning
- Overcrowding

Research consistently shows that concentration is one of the most important drivers of productivity.

Facilities leaders must therefore consider how workplaces support focused work.

Key factors include:

Acoustic Design

Noise is one of the biggest barriers to concentration.

Workspace Variety

Different tasks require different environments.

Environmental Comfort

Temperature, lighting, and air quality affect cognitive performance.

Privacy Options

Employees need spaces for uninterrupted work.

The future workplace is unlikely to be entirely open-plan or entirely private.

Instead, successful workplaces provide a range of environments that support different types of work.

Hire for the
next five years,
**not the next
five weeks**



Collaboration: Designing for Connection

While focus is essential, collaboration remains equally important.

Innovation often emerges through interaction.

Ideas improve through discussion.

Problems are solved collectively.

However, collaboration does not happen automatically.

Workplace design significantly influences how people connect.

Successful collaborative environments often include:

- Informal meeting spaces
- Flexible work areas
- Shared social zones
- Cross-functional interaction points
- Technology-enabled collaboration tools

Facilities Management increasingly influences how knowledge flows through organisations.

Well-designed environments encourage interaction.

Poorly designed environments create silos.

As hybrid working becomes more common, physical workplaces must increasingly justify why people come together.

Collaboration is often one of the strongest reasons.

Wellbeing Is No Longer Optional

Employee wellbeing has become a major organisational priority.

This shift is driven by several factors:

- Mental health awareness
- Talent retention challenges
- Employee expectations
- Productivity concerns
- Organisational resilience

Facilities Management plays a significant role in supporting wellbeing.

The workplace affects both physical and psychological health.

Important considerations include:

Air Quality

Poor air quality can reduce cognitive performance and increase fatigue.

Natural Light

Exposure to daylight supports mood and wellbeing.

Ergonomics

Comfort affects both health and productivity.

Biophilic Design

Natural elements reduce stress and improve wellbeing.

Recovery Spaces

Employees require opportunities to recharge.

Wellbeing should not be viewed as a workplace luxury.

It is increasingly a performance strategy.

Healthy employees generally perform better.

—

Fit matters
more than
speed

—



The Emotional Experience of Workplaces

Every workplace creates emotional responses.

Employees often describe spaces using emotional language:

"This office feels energising."

"That meeting room feels intimidating."

"This workplace feels welcoming."

"That floor feels stressful."

These reactions are rarely accidental.

Environmental factors influence emotional states.

Examples include:

Colour

Can affect mood and perception.

Lighting

Influences energy levels and comfort.

Space Density

Affects stress and privacy.

Design Quality

Shapes perceptions of value and professionalism.

Cleanliness

Influences trust and confidence.

Facilities leaders may focus on operational performance.

However, emotional experience increasingly influences employee satisfaction and engagement.

The workplace is both a physical and emotional environment.

Psychological Safety and the Workplace

Psychological safety refers to an environment where people feel comfortable:

- Speaking up
- Sharing ideas
- Asking questions
- Taking appropriate risks

Leadership plays a major role in creating psychological safety.

However, physical environments also contribute.

For example:

Workplaces that provide private meeting spaces may encourage sensitive conversations.

Collaborative spaces may support brainstorming.

Accessible leadership spaces may reduce organisational barriers.

The environment can either support or hinder communication.

Facilities Management therefore contributes indirectly to organisational culture.

The workplace shapes how people interact.

And interaction shapes culture.

Better
leadership
decisions
under
pressure



Hybrid Working and Workplace Psychology

The rise of hybrid working has changed workplace expectations.

Employees increasingly compare office environments against home environments.

This creates new challenges.

At home, people often enjoy:

- Greater control
- More privacy
- Fewer interruptions

The office must therefore provide experiences that justify the commute.

These often include:

Collaboration

Working together in person.

Social Connection

Building relationships.

Learning

Knowledge sharing and mentoring.

Culture

Strengthening organisational identity.

Facilities leaders are increasingly tasked with creating environments that support these outcomes.

The future office is becoming less about individual desk work and more about purposeful experiences.

Workplace Psychology and Organisational Performance

Many workplace decisions are traditionally evaluated through cost.

However, workplace psychology introduces a broader perspective.

The workplace influences:

- Productivity
- Retention
- Engagement
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Absenteeism
- Wellbeing

Small environmental improvements can produce significant organisational benefits.

For example:

Improved lighting may enhance concentration.

Better acoustics may reduce distraction.

More effective collaboration spaces may accelerate problem-solving.

Facilities Management increasingly influences organisational performance through these factors.

The workplace should be viewed as a strategic asset rather than simply an operational cost.

—
Built on
relationships
Backed by
expertise
—



The Strategic Role of Facilities Management

As understanding of workplace psychology grows, the role of Facilities Management continues to evolve.

Modern FM leaders are increasingly responsible for:

- Workplace experience
- Employee wellbeing
- Productivity support
- Space strategy
- Organisational culture
- Environmental performance

The profession is moving beyond building management.

It is becoming a discipline focused on enabling human performance.

Facilities leaders now influence:

How people work.

How people feel.

How people collaborate.

How people perform.

This shift significantly elevates the strategic importance of Facilities Management.

Designing for the Future Workforce

Future workplaces will likely become increasingly personalised and adaptive.

Emerging technologies may allow environments to respond dynamically to employee needs.

Examples include:

- Smart lighting systems
- Occupancy-based environmental controls
- Workplace analytics
- Personalised workspace settings
- AI-driven space optimisation

However, technology alone is not the answer.

Successful workplaces will continue balancing:

- Efficiency
- Human experience
- Flexibility
- Wellbeing
- Performance

The future workplace must support both organisational goals and human needs.

Facilities Management sits at the intersection of both.

Every search
starts with
the brief



Why Workplace Psychology Matters More Than Ever

Organisations increasingly compete on factors beyond salary.

Employees now evaluate:

- Workplace quality
- Employee experience
- Culture
- Flexibility
- Wellbeing

The workplace has become a competitive differentiator.

A thoughtfully designed environment can help attract, retain, and engage talent.

An ineffective workplace can create frustration, distraction, and disengagement.

Facilities leaders therefore play a growing role in organisational success.

The future of Facilities Management is not simply about managing space.

It is about understanding how space influences people.

Conclusion

The workplace is far more than a collection of desks, meeting rooms, and building systems.

It is an environment that shapes behaviour, performance, wellbeing, and emotional experience every day.

Employees respond constantly to their surroundings.

The spaces they occupy influence how they think, interact, collaborate, and perform.

As organisations increasingly prioritise productivity, employee experience, and organisational resilience, workplace psychology is becoming a critical strategic consideration.

Facilities Management sits at the centre of this transformation.

The most successful Facilities leaders of the future will not simply understand buildings.

They will understand people.

Because the best workplaces are not merely efficient.

They are environments that help people do their best work.

The best
recruitment
conversations
sound more
like insight
than sales



Key Takeaways

- Workplace environments significantly influence behaviour and performance.
- Focus and concentration are shaped by environmental conditions.
- Workplace design directly impacts collaboration.
- Employee wellbeing is increasingly linked to workplace quality.
- Emotional experiences influence engagement and satisfaction.
- Psychological safety is partially supported by physical environments.
- Hybrid working has changed expectations of workplace value.
- Workplace psychology affects productivity, retention, and organisational performance.
- Facilities Management is becoming increasingly focused on human experience.
- Future workplaces will combine technology, flexibility, wellbeing, and performance support.

About Maxwell Stephens

Maxwell Stephens is a specialist Facilities Management recruitment consultancy supporting organisations across the UK.

We help employers recruit Facilities Management professionals who understand not only buildings and operations, but also workplace experience, employee wellbeing, and the evolving relationship between people and the environments in which they work.

For support with Facilities Management recruitment, leadership hiring, or workplace strategy talent acquisition, contact the Maxwell Stephens team.

What the Data Says

The evidence on workplace psychology: work-related stress, mental health, long-term absence and whether workplaces support focused work.

- Stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 52% of all work-related ill health and 62% of working days lost to it in Great Britain in 2024/25.
Source: [Health and Safety Executive, Work-related stress, depression or anxiety statistics in Great Britain, 2025](#)
- 25% of UK employees say their work has a negative or very negative impact on their mental health.
Source: [CIPD Good Work Index 2025](#)
- Mental ill health is the top cause of long-term absence, cited among the top three causes by 41% of UK organisations.
Source: [CIPD \(supported by Simplyhealth\), Health and wellbeing at work 2025](#)
- Individual focused desk-based work matters to 89% of employees, yet only 27% of corporate real estate leaders cite 'enabling productivity' as a reason for the workplace.
Source: [Leesman, The workplace why, 2025](#)
- Maxwell Stephens has specialised in Facilities Management, estates and workplace recruitment since 2006.
Source: [Maxwell Stephens, 2026](#)

Sources were checked in September 2026. Select a source to open the original research. Maxwell Stephens figures are drawn from our own published vacancies and placement records.

See It in Practice

Supporting a High-Performance Workplace Environment at Activision Blizzard

Activision Blizzard asked Maxwell Stephens to recruit an Office & Facilities Supervisor/Manager for its London studio, where workplace services are expected to support innovation and collaboration. Because facilities expertise alone would not be enough, we assessed candidates for interpersonal skills, leadership and a customer-focused approach. The appointee took ownership of workplace services, keeping facilities, support services and employee-facing functions running smoothly.

It shows FM shaping an environment that supports creativity, collaboration and the people working in it.

[Read the full case study at maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/activision-blizzard](https://maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/activision-blizzard)

Related Reading

- The Rising Cost of Workplace Stress and What Employers Should Be Doing About It
maxwellstephens.com/blog/the-rising-cost-of-workplace-stress-and-what-employers-should-be-doing-about-it
- How to Promote Healthy Habits in the Workplace
maxwellstephens.com/blog/tips-for-promoting-healthy-habits-in-the-workplace
- Workplace Loneliness: How Employers Can Build Stronger Connections
maxwellstephens.com/blog/its-good-to-talk-how-to-deal-with-loneliness

Talk to Maxwell Stephens

Planning an FM, estates or workplace appointment? [Contact us](#) for a confidential conversation, or [browse more case studies](#).



A FINE POSITION TO BE IN



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stephens**
Recruitment

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