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INVOLVE YOUR TEAM — A PRE-MOVE LISTENING KIT



AN AQUABLU TOOL

The offices people use most tend to be the ones they helped shape. Involving your team early, before the design is set, gives you two things: a clearer picture of what the space actually needs to do, and a team that feels some ownership of the result. This kit sets out a simple way to gather that input, and to turn it into decisions people feel part of.

Start before the design is signed off. Input only helps while it can still shape the plan, so it's worth beginning as soon as a move is on the cards. Once the layout is fixed, feedback tends to arrive too late to act on. (See Chapter 4 — Decide Before Design Freeze.)

HOW TO DO IT, IN TWO PARTS

PART 01 — ASK, AND FIND OUT WHAT PEOPLE NEED

- Understand how people work. It helps to know how each team splits its week between focused, solo work and working with others. That's the basis for getting the balance of quiet and shared spaces right.
- Survey everyone. A short, anonymous form is the easiest way to surface the things people won't raise in a meeting — lighting, noise, storage, the kitchen — along with what they have at home that the office doesn't. (Template below.)
- Meet each team. A short session with each group tends to be worth the time: you learn how people really work, who needs to sit near who, and how they move through a day. (Agenda below.)
- Observe the current space. Before anything is drawn, it's worth noting where people naturally gather and where they get held up.
- Focus on the work itself. The most useful questions are about what people come in to do, where they concentrate, and where they get stuck.

PART 02 INVOLVE THEM, SO THE SPACE FEELS LIKE THEIRS

- Set up a small working group. A handful of people from across the team, involved through the whole project rather than only at the start, gives you a steady sounding board. The people you involve early tend to become the ones who explain the changes to everyone else, and who back you when it gets difficult.
- Let the team own some of the choices. Where you can, hand over the smaller decisions — break-room furniture, colours, the names of the rooms. It's a simple way to build a sense of ownership.
- Explain the reasoning. Take people through what each space is for and how it's meant to support them; it helps them use it as intended.
- Close the loop. Come back and show people how their input shaped the result, including what you couldn't do and why. It's easily overlooked, but it's what keeps the team's trust in the process.

A SURVEY TO GET YOU STARTED

Keep it anonymous, about five minutes, and send it to everyone before you start designing.

HOW YOU WORK

1. In a normal week, roughly how much of your time is solo, focused work versus working with other people?

   Solo |||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||| Altogether

2. How often do you struggle to find somewhere quiet to concentrate?

   Never |||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||| Always

3. How often do you struggle to find space for a quick chat or a last-minute meeting?

   Never |||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||| Always

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HOW THE CURRENT SPACE RATES

(for the first three, the middle is the sweet spot; for the rest, further right is better)

Too much, too little, or about right?

- Lighting — too dim ○—○—○—○—○ too bright
- Temperature — too cold ○—○—○—○—○ too warm
- Noise — too quiet, no buzz ○—○—○—○—○ too loud to focus

How well does each one work?

- Air and ventilation — stuffy ○—○—○—○—○ fresh
- Storage — never enough ○—○—○—○—○ plenty
- Kitchen / break area — doesn't work ○—○—○—○—○ works well
- Somewhere to focus — hard to ○—○—○—○—○ easy to find
- Somewhere to work together — hard to ○—○—○—○—○ easy to find

Which of these would you fix first, and why?

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WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

1. When you choose to come in, what are you coming in to do?

2. What do you have at home that the office doesn't give you?

3. What's the one thing that would make you want to be here more?

4. What should we keep from the old office? What should we leave behind?

5. Anything else we should know before we start designing?

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A WORKSHOP YOU CAN RUN

One team at a time · 6–10 people · an hour to 90 minutes · before anything is drawn up.

- **5 min** — Why we're here. The move, where you're headed, and how you'll use what they tell you.
- **15 min** — How your team works. Solo versus together; who needs to sit near who.
- **15 min** — Walk through a day. Map a normal working day and where each part happens: getting in, focusing, meetings, lunch, breaks, calls.
- **15 min** — Keep, lose, missing. What to keep from the old office, what to leave behind, and what's missing now.
- **10 min** — Where the team has a say. The decisions you're happy to hand over: room names, colours, break-room furniture, kit.
- **5 min** — What happens next. How and when you'll come back to them.

Five questions worth coming back to

- When you choose to come in, what are you coming in to do?
- What do you have at home that the office doesn't give you?
- Where do you go to focus? To work with others? To take a break?
- What's the one thing that would make you want to be here more?
- What should we keep from the old office, and what should we leave behind?