

The power of choice

Why designing for choice unlocks higher performance, strengthens inclusion, and delivers measurable business impact.

White Paper



Introduction

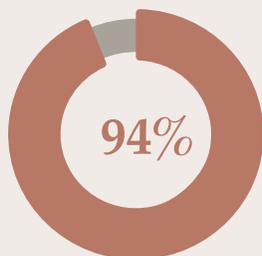
In today's world of hybrid work and constant change, choice has emerged as a powerful driver of engagement, signaling trust, respect, and belonging while giving people greater autonomy to choose how they work best. What was once considered a workplace perk is now a strategic imperative that directly influences performance, inclusion, and organizational success. Research shows that when individuals have the ability to choose where and how they work, they experience higher engagement, stronger well-being, and increased motivation. Without that sense of control, even thoughtfully designed spaces can feel limiting and misaligned.

This white paper explores the critical role choice plays in human behavior and how workplace design can translate research into empowering spaces for people. By aligning environments with fundamental human needs, organizations can create workplaces people are drawn to, strengthening culture, improving retention, and driving long-term business performance.

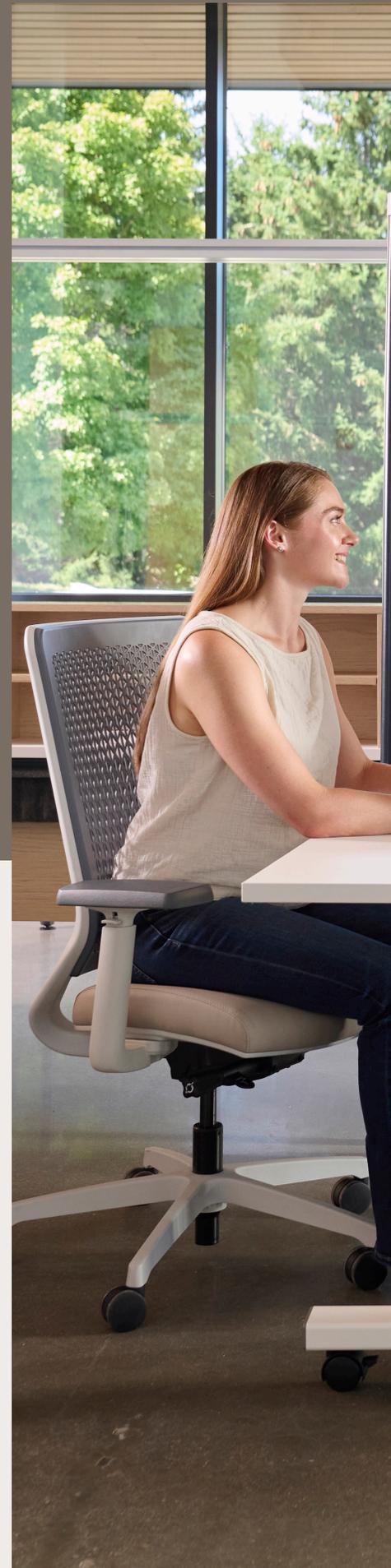
Employees who feel they have **choice in when & how they work** → **2.3x** more likely to **stay with their organization** (Gartner)



52% of employees say they would **benefit from workplace flexibility or choice** (Deloitte)



94% of employees feel the **absence of autonomy in their work** (Effactory)







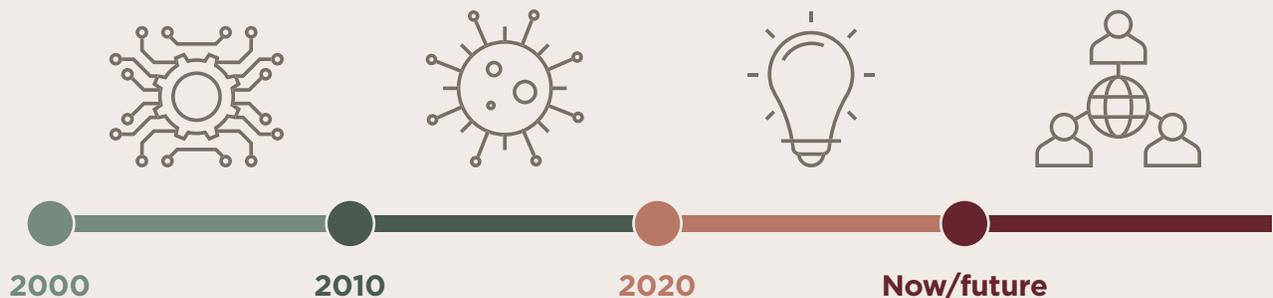
No longer a luxury, choice is essential.

In the last five years, the workplace has undergone the most significant change since the industrial revolution.

Over the last decade, work has been redefined by evolutions in technology, the pandemic, the integration of artificial intelligence, and the transition to new generations in the workforce.

Forces driving change

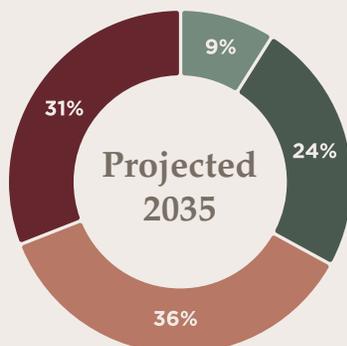
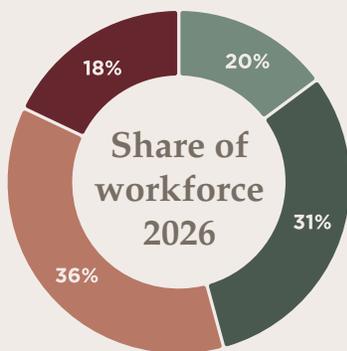
- **Technology** untethered work from place
- **The pandemic** has redefined how and where work happens
- **Artificial intelligence** is changing our roles and responsibilities
- **Generational shifts** are reshaping workplace expectations



New generations, new values

Millennials and Gen Z now make up more than half of the workforce, and by 2030 they will represent nearly 70%, making their values and priorities a critical business strategy. These generations prioritize authenticity, autonomy, and purpose, and they view flexibility and choice as a reflection of trust rather than a perk. Research shows that 78% of Millennials prioritize flexibility and choice over pay, and 74% of Gen Z employees say they perform best when given choice in how they work.

They are seeking environments that align with their values, support their well-being, and empower them to perform at their highest level. Designing for choice is no longer optional; it is a way to design for trust, strengthen belonging, and create workplaces that attract, retain, and inspire the workforce of the future.



(Pew Research Center)





“85% of Gen Z say *authenticity* is more important than status.” (Deloitte)

“78% of Millennials prioritize *flexibility* and *choice* over pay.” (Gallup)

“74% of Gen Z employees say they perform best when given *choice* in how they work.” (McKinsey)

The psychology of choice

Psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan devoted their careers to understanding what fuels intrinsic motivation. Their work resulted in the *Self-Determination Theory*, one of the most influential frameworks in modern psychology. Their theory explains that people thrive, personally and professionally, when three fundamental psychological needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

These needs are universal. They apply across roles, industries, age, and cultures. When work environments support them, people are more engaged, resilient, and effective. When they are undermined, performance suffers.

Understanding these needs provides a powerful lens for rethinking how we design workplaces.

Autonomy People need to gain mastery and control of their own lives and their environment.

Competence People need to feel in control of their own life, behaviors, and goals.

Relatedness People need to experience a sense of belonging and connection with others.





Choice is not a preference; it is a psychological necessity for motivation and well-being.



Design is the bridge between science & experience.

Choice enables people to shape environments that best support their work style and tasks at hand, rather than forcing individuals to adapt to the structures imposed upon them.

Without choice, people are confined to environments that may not empower their best work or adapt to meet the task at hand. With choice, they can align their surroundings with their needs in the moment.

The question is not whether choice matters, but how to design for it intentionally.

Design translates psychological understanding into lived experience. Every environment either reduces friction or creates it.

When the principles of *Self-Determination Theory* are translated into the workplace, they align into four core work modes:



Connect Where people gather, collaborate, share, and build relationships.



Discover Where people learn, explore, brainstorm, and innovate.



Focus Where people concentrate, reflect, and get in the zone.



Restore Where people reenergize, reset, step away, and care for their well-being.

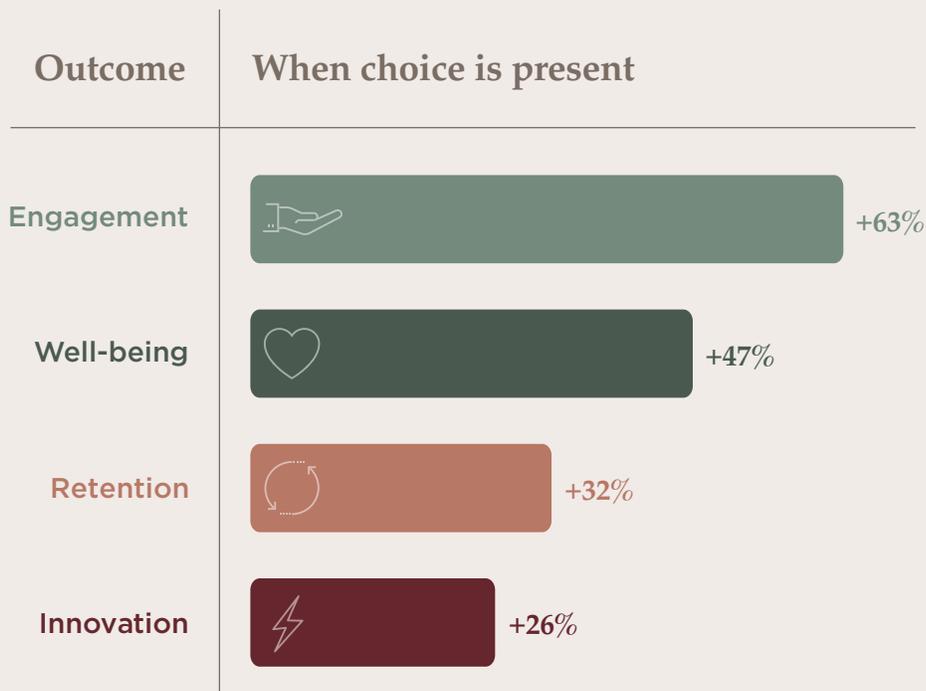
Even in the same role or on the same team, people experience work differently, making **choice a critical inclusion strategy**. Inclusion recognizes that people process information, stimulation, and energy in different ways. There is no single “right” way to work.

Choice allows people to self-regulate throughout the day, enabling the workplace to flex with them rather than forcing uniform behavior.

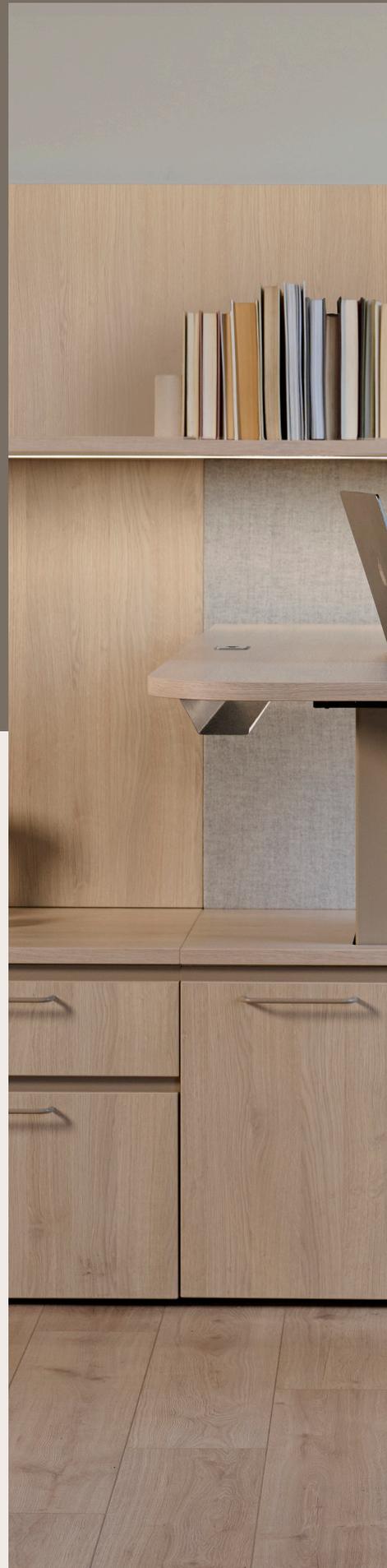
The ROI of choice

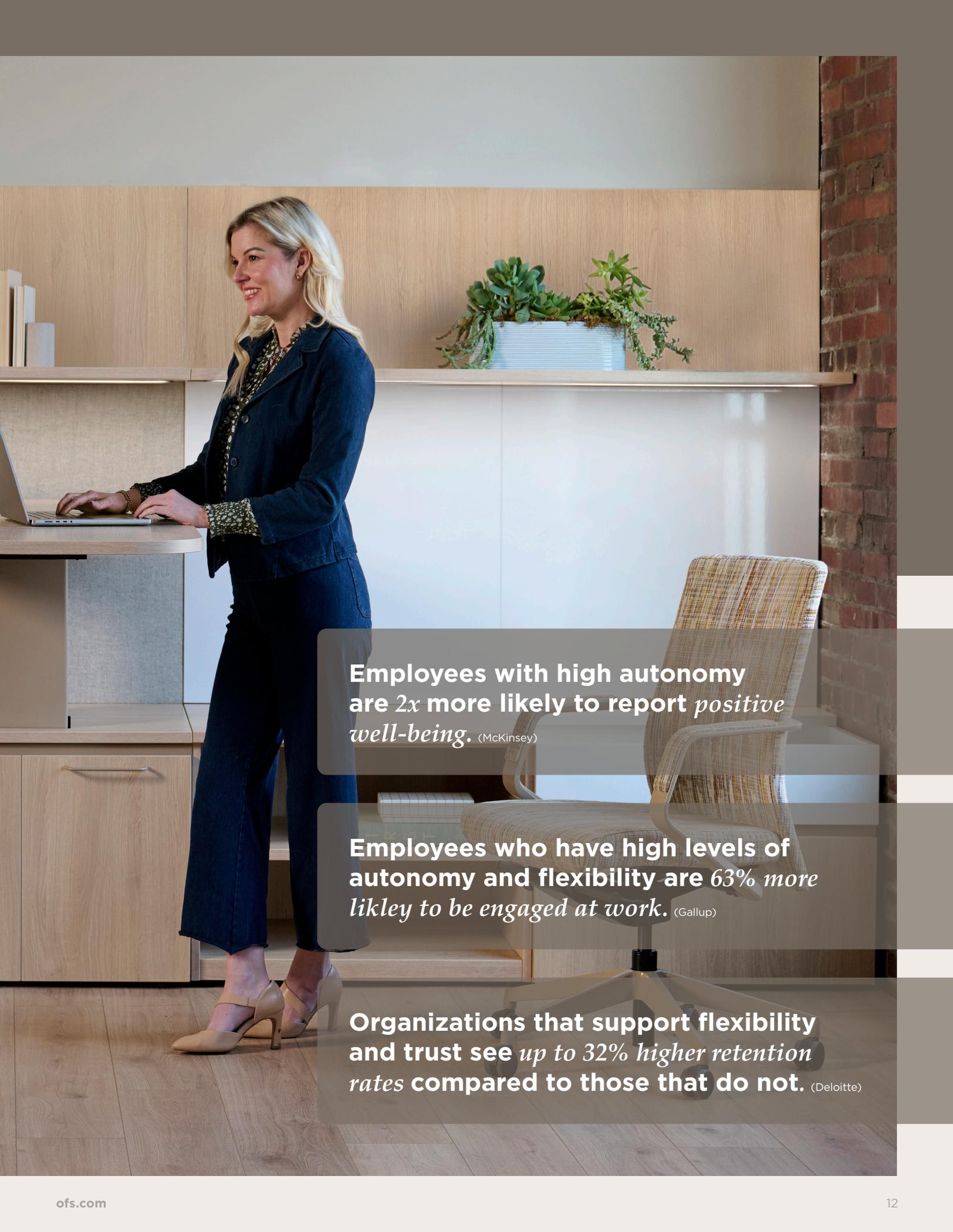
When people feel trusted and empowered, they bring their best selves to work.

The business case for choice is clear. Employees with high autonomy are twice as likely to report well-being and purpose. Organizations that support flexibility see engagement rise by more than sixty percent. Companies that build cultures of trust and adaptability experience significantly higher retention and loyalty.



(Gallup 2023, McKinsey 2023, Deloitte 2024, Harvard Business Review 2022)





Employees with high autonomy are 2x more likely to report *positive well-being*. (McKinsey)

Employees who have high levels of autonomy and flexibility are 63% more likely to be engaged at work. (Gallup)

Organizations that support flexibility and trust see up to 32% higher retention rates compared to those that do not. (Deloitte)



Let's design
a workplace
worth choosing.





References

- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “What” and “Why” of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227-268.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*. Guilford Press.
- Gallup. (2023). *State of the Global Workplace Report*. Gallup, Inc.
- McKinsey & Company. (2024). *Generative AI and the Future of Work in America*.
- Deloitte. (2023). *Global Human Capital Trends: Navigating the Future of Work*.
- Harvard Business Review. (2022). *The Power of Autonomy in the Workplace*.
- Pew Research Center. (2018.) *Millennials are the largest generation in the U.S. labor force*, by Richard Fry.

