

Eurest

Organic vs Organised Socialisation

Designing workplaces where connection happens naturally.

Whitepaper 2

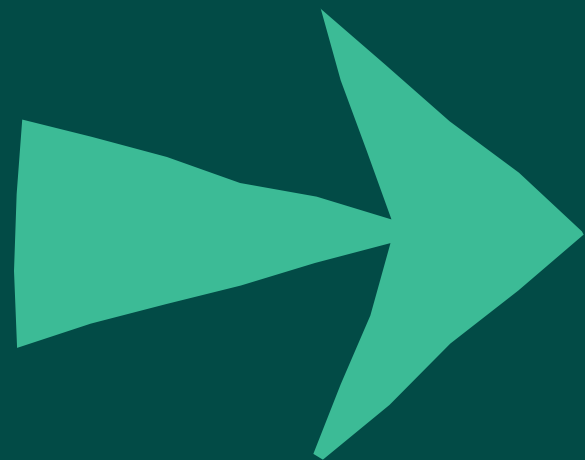


Social connection at work is no longer a ‘nice to have’, it is a measurable driver of engagement, retention and productivity.

Yet despite 77% of employees saying that being able to socialise at work matters to them, more than one in four report feeling lonely or isolated on the job. That gap represents both a challenge and an opportunity for workplace and facilities professionals.

This paper draws on research from The Power of Socialisation report to explore two distinct but complementary forms of workplace socialisation: organic, informal moments of connection that happen throughout the working day, and organised, structured events designed to bring people together around shared experiences and company culture.

The evidence is clear: workplaces that support both forms of connection create environments where people feel more engaged, better supported and more aligned with their organisation's goals. The physical environment, the spaces, rhythms and hospitality experiences that facilities teams design and manage, plays a central role in making that connection possible.



The Connection Imperative.

The physical workplace is under more scrutiny than ever.

Facilities and workplace managers are increasingly asked not just to manage space, but to justify it to demonstrate that the built environment actively supports culture, productivity and the kind of human connection that keeps people coming back.

Hybrid working patterns, evolving employee expectations and a growing focus on wellbeing have all reshaped what employees need from their workplace. And while technology has made remote collaboration easier, it has also made the moments of genuine, in-person connection more valuable and, for some employees, more elusive.



Research from The Power of Socialisation report puts the scale of the opportunity into focus:

77% of employees say it is important that they can socialise at work.

27% report feeling lonely or isolated in the workplace.

The distance between those two figures is where organisations have the most to gain. Creating workplaces where connection happens naturally, regularly and inclusively is one of the most practical levers available to attract, engage and retain talent.

This paper explores how two forms of socialisation shape that experience, and what facilities and workplace teams can do to support both.

Organic Socialisation: The Value of Everyday Connection.

What it is:

Organic socialisation refers to the informal, unplanned moments of connection that occur naturally throughout the working day. A conversation while waiting for the coffee machine. A quick catch-up between meetings. A shared laugh over lunch. These interactions are not scheduled or structured, they happen because people are in the same space at the same time.

They may seem incidental, but the data tells a different story.

74% of employees prefer organic socialisation over organised events, valuing its authenticity and ease.

Employees who regularly engage in organic socialisation are significantly more likely to feel connected to their colleagues and to say they have at least one genuine friend at work. Those relationships, in turn, become informal support networks which are particularly valuable during periods of high pressure or change.



Why it matters for workplace design:

For organic socialisation to occur, employees need the right conditions: time, permission and space. Research highlights how frequently those conditions are absent:

- 22%** of employees say heavy workloads leave no time to socialise
- 40%** only take breaks when circumstances allow, rather than as a regular habit
- 40%** do not have allocated break times
- 1/10** say there is no suitable place at work to socialise with colleagues

That last figure is particularly relevant for facilities professionals. The absence of welcoming, accessible social spaces is not just a design gap, it is a direct barrier to the kind of everyday connection that underpins healthy workplace culture.

Demand for these moments is growing, especially among younger employees. 48% of workers say they would like to socialise more with colleagues, a figure that rises to 59% among Gen Z and 56% among Millennials. As these cohorts make up an increasing share of the workforce, the expectation that workplaces actively support informal connection will only intensify.

The role of food and hospitality spaces:

One factor appears consistently across organic social interaction in the workplace: food and drink. Coffee breaks, shared lunches and kitchen conversations are among the most reliable catalysts for informal connection, bringing people together without the formality or pressure of a structured event.

Thoughtfully designed cafés, dining areas and break spaces therefore do much more than provide sustenance. They function as social infrastructure, informal hubs where relationships are built and maintained as part of the natural rhythm of the day. When these spaces are welcoming, accessible and well-placed, social interaction becomes habitual rather than exceptional.

For workplace and facilities teams, this is an area of genuine strategic leverage. Investing in the quality, design and positioning of hospitality spaces is, in effect, investing in culture.

Organised Socialisation: Connecting People to the Organisation.

What it is:

Organised socialisation refers to structured events and activities designed to bring employees together – team lunches, breakfast briefings, workshops, cultural celebrations, wellbeing activities and workplace activations. Unlike organic socialisation, which connects people to each other, organised events serve a different but equally important purpose: they connect people to their employer.

The impact on organisational alignment is striking:

74% vs 56%

employees who participate in organised events are more likely to understand their organisation's strategy and goals

61% vs 28%

employees who participate in organised events are more likely to feel connected to senior leadership

55% vs 23%

employees who participate in organised events are more likely to see opportunities for career advancement

Why participation falls short and how to address it:

Low attendance at organised events is rarely a sign that employees do not want to connect. In most cases, the barriers are practical rather than motivational.

Only 10% of employees say social events are simply not available to them. The more common obstacles are:

- Workload pressure: employees feel they cannot step away
- Events scheduled outside working hours
- Family or caring responsibilities
- Long commute times making after-work events impractical
- Activities that do not appeal to a diverse workforce

31% of employees cite personal commitments as a barrier to participation, with parents disproportionately affected. Designing organised socialisation that genuinely works for a broad and diverse workforce means taking these constraints seriously.

Designing events that work:

The most effective organised socialisation feels like a natural part of working life, rather than an obligation added on top of it. A few principles tend to make the difference:

Keep it regular and varied. Smaller, more frequent events tend to achieve broader participation than large, infrequent ones. A mix of formats; breakfast catch-ups, team lunches, short knowledge sessions, cultural celebrations, means there is something accessible for most employees.

Time it well. Events held during working hours are significantly more accessible for employees with long commutes or caring responsibilities. Where possible, build social moments into the existing rhythm of the working day rather than asking employees to give up personal time.

Consider different preferences. Not every employee is energised by large group gatherings. Offering a range of formats, from informal coffee catch-ups to structured workshops, helps both introverts and extroverts find comfortable ways to participate.

Lean into food and drink. Hospitality consistently acts as a social lubricant in workplace events. Food-led activations, from a simple breakfast spread to a themed lunch, lower the threshold for participation and create shared experiences that are easy to enjoy.





Balancing Both: A Framework for Connected Workplaces

Organic and organised socialisation are not competing approaches, they serve different, complementary functions.

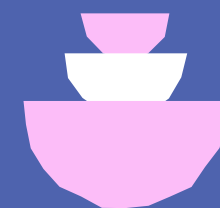
Organic Socialisation builds the day-to-day human connection that supports individual wellbeing, peer relationships and a sense of belonging.

Organised Socialisation strengthens employees' relationship with the organisation itself: its leadership, its culture and its direction.

Workplaces that invest in both create an environment where employees feel simultaneously supported by their colleagues and connected to something larger. That combination is one of the strongest foundations for sustained engagement.

The practical implication is that neither form of socialisation should be treated as sufficient on its own. A workplace rich in organic connection but lacking structured moments of alignment risks employees feeling personally comfortable but organisationally adrift. Conversely, a workplace focused on organised events without the informal social infrastructure to support everyday connection can feel formal and impersonal.

The goal is a workplace where both can thrive and where the physical environment, the hospitality offer, and the events program work together to make connection the path of least resistance.





Key Takeaways:

Audit your social spaces. Are break areas welcoming, accessible and positioned to encourage natural interaction? Are there enough informal spaces beyond the desk for employees to gather spontaneously?

Protect break time. Work with HR and leadership to reinforce a culture where taking breaks is expected, not exceptional. Allocated break time is a prerequisite for organic socialisation.

Invest in hospitality environments. Cafés, dining areas and food experiences are among the most cost-effective social infrastructure a workplace can offer. Design them with connection in mind, not just convenience.

Build a varied events calendar. Prioritise regular, accessible, food-led events scheduled during working hours. Variety in format ensures broader participation across different employee preferences and life stages.

Measure participation and experience. Track which events achieve the broadest reach and gather employee feedback. Use that insight to refine the programme and identify gaps in the social offer.

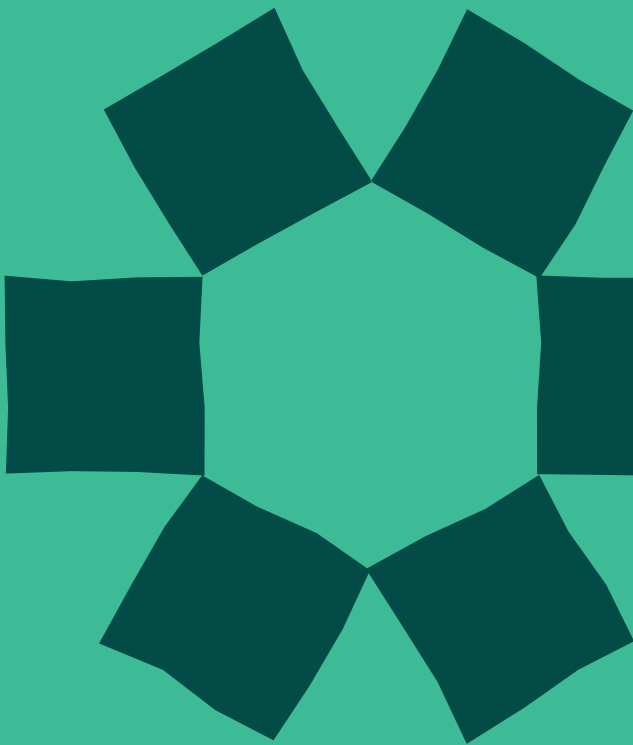
Conclusion.

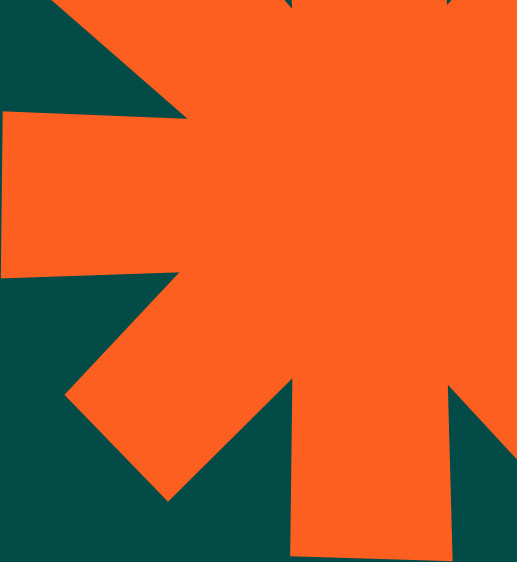
The design of space is, in many ways, the design of opportunity. Every decision about where people eat, where they pause, where they gather between meetings, these choices shape the social fabric of an organisation, often more directly than formal culture programs.

Facilities and workplace managers who think beyond desk ratios and room booking systems, and who consider where and how informal connection happens, are among the most strategically valuable voices in shaping how people experience work.

The research is clear: when employees feel genuinely connected, to colleagues and to the organisation, they are more engaged, more aligned and more likely to stay. Creating the conditions for that connection is not just a wellbeing initiative. It is a business strategy.

At Eurest, we work with organisations to create hospitality environments that support both the everyday moments of organic connection and the curated experiences that bring teams together with purpose. From thoughtfully designed break spaces and dining areas to food-led workplace activations, our aim is to make connection the natural rhythm of the working day.





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References:

Compass Group PLC, The Power of Socialisation, 2024 - research referenced throughout this paper.