

# EVERYTHING YOU'D EVER WANT IN AN INNOVATION HUB

By Amanda Ramos | Innovation Director at Gensler

We define an innovation hub as a distinct environment strategically designed and actively nurtured to promote a way of working that is fundamentally different from an organization's norm.

## TECHNOLOGY SMART

Tech that is **integrated** and **intelligent** because it is designed to generate a **holistic** experience, including knowledge banks you need and will actually use.

## LOCATION INSULATION

An **off-site** address near your company's **mothership** (aka HQ) ensures things will be done differently here while still maintaining a **connection**.

## PLATFORM SHARED

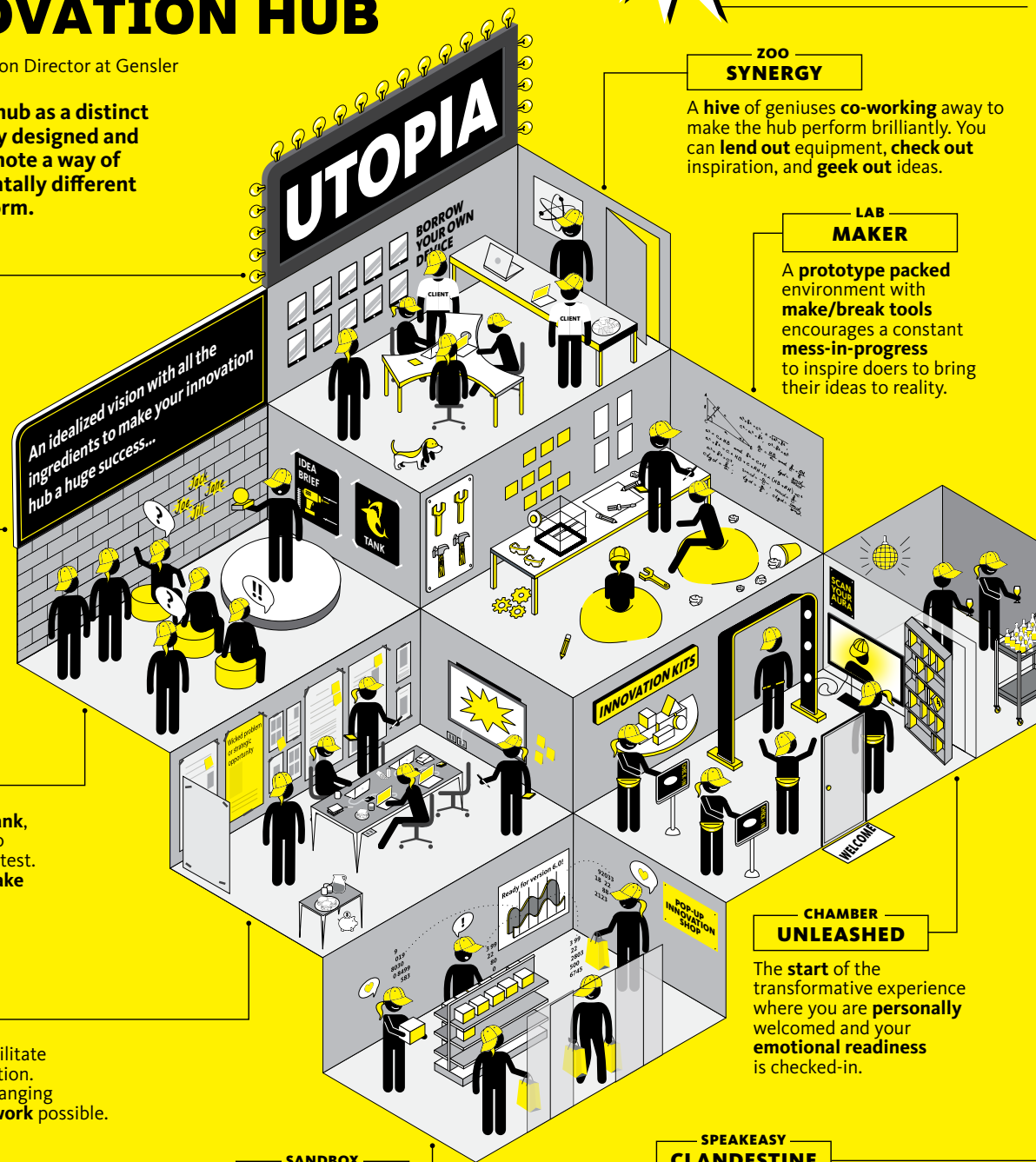
Part **think-tank**, part **shark-tank**, this shared space **invites all** to hear about the latest and greatest. Those who survive proudly **make their mark** on the innovators wall of fame.

## WAR ROOM DISRUPTIVE

**Four walls** and a **deadline** facilitate intense and authentic co-creation. **Ergonomic furniture** and a changing **gallery-like wall** makes **real work** possible.

## A UTOPIAN CULTURE

Research shows that when companies create these types of settings, they often have a stronger culture of innovation, a more effective workplace, and a far more engaging employee experience. Innovation hubs are worth the investment and can have a lasting impact on the transformation of an organization — when done right. Based on learnings from architecting over 20 innovation hubs globally, we've seen many of these well-intended platforms hit the mark, while others miss it.



24% HIGHER

WORKPLACES WITH INNOVATION HUBS DELIVER 16-24% HIGHER EFFECTIVENESS & EXPERIENCE SCORES<sup>1</sup>

## ZOO SYNERGY

A **hive of geniuses** **co-working** away to make the hub perform brilliantly. You can **lend out** equipment, **check out** inspiration, and **geek out** ideas.

## LAB MAKER

A **prototype packed** environment with **make/break tools** encourages a constant **mess-in-progress** to inspire doers to bring their ideas to reality.

## CHAMBER UNLEASHED

The **start** of the transformative experience where you are **personally** welcomed and your **emotional readiness** is checked-in.

## SPEAKEASY CLANDESTINE

A **secret** (not meant to be kept), this **bar** and its traveling **bar carts** are integrated throughout to keep the conversation **fluid** and energized.

Know that building an environment touted for innovation is a great first step, but the hard work comes afterward; an innovation hub must be authentically and effectively activated to set the conditions for true disruption.

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Workplace Survey 2019, Gensler Research Institute © Gensler 2019

## SANDBOX REAL WORLD

A **pop-up shop** to test concepts with **real customers** leverages **data and insights** to **accelerate** the killing and launching of ideas.

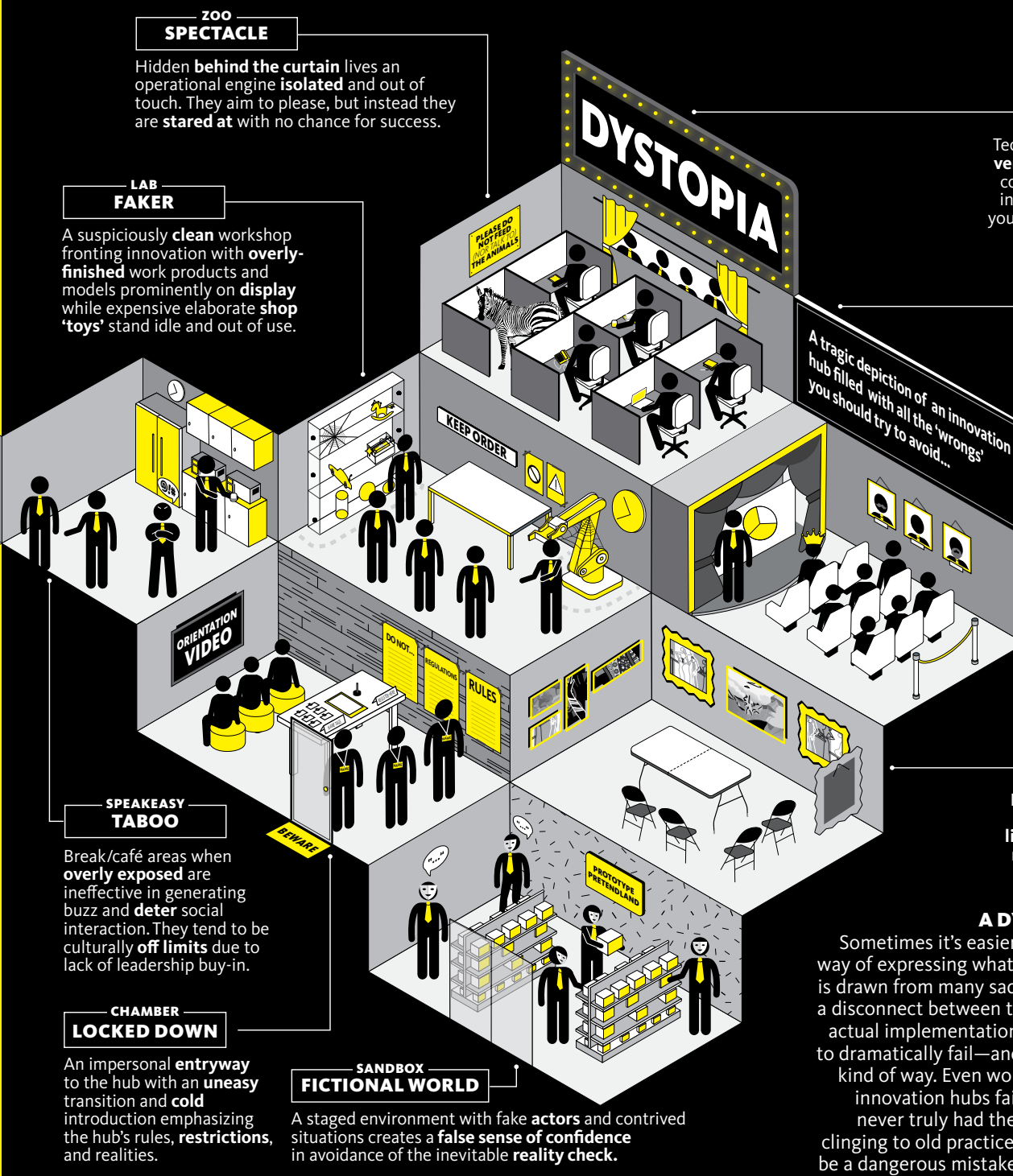
These utopian and dystopian archetypes respectively illustrate key do's and don'ts to consider when creating an innovation hub of your own. This utopia depicts a mash-up of elements we've seen work incredibly well, as well as a few extra bold ideas for those courageous enough to truly push their limits.

# EVERYTHING YOU'D NEVER WANT IN AN INNOVATION HUB

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EVERYDAY AMENITIES, LIKE TYPICAL BREAK ROOMS AND LOUNGES, PROVIDE ONLY 1-2% MEANINGFUL IMPACT ON WORKPLACE EFFECTIVENESS & EXPERIENCE SCORES<sup>1</sup>

2% WHATEVER



## ZOO SPECTACLE

Hidden **behind the curtain** lives an operational engine **isolated** and out of touch. They aim to please, but instead they are **stared at** with no chance for success.

## LAB FAKER

A suspiciously **clean** workshop fronting innovation with **overly-finished** work products and models prominently on **display** while expensive elaborate **shop 'toys'** stand idle and out of use.

## SPEAKEASY TABOO

Break/café areas when **overly exposed** are ineffective in generating buzz and **deter** social interaction. They tend to be culturally **off limits** due to lack of leadership buy-in.

## CHAMBER LOCKED DOWN

An impersonal **entryway** to the hub with an **uneasy** transition and **cold** introduction emphasizing the hub's rules, **restrictions**, and realities.

## SANDBOX FICTIONAL WORLD

A staged environment with fake **actors** and contrived situations creates a **false sense of confidence** in avoidance of the inevitable **reality check**.

## TECHNOLOGY DUMB

Tech that is **tacked on** because a **vendor sold** you on the idea and convinced you to go **overboard** installing bits and bytes beyond your capability and consumption.

## LOCATION ISOLATION

Moving **far off** the beaten path dramatically **lessens synergy** and potentially messages 'this is a place only for the **cool kids**'.

## PLATFORM STAGED

A **board room** for innovation theater where select **VIPs** are privileged to see innovation in its most formal and **lackluster** depiction.

## WAR ROOM DESTRUCTIVE

Rooms symbolic of action that **stand empty** with **museum-like walls** and **flimsy furniture** reveal the intention to neither work long nor hard.

## A DYSTOPIAN EXPERIENCE

Sometimes it's easier to say what not to do as a way of expressing what to do. This dystopian view is drawn from many sad (but true) stories of when a disconnect between the initial intention and the actual implementation causes an innovation hub to dramatically fail—and not in the good "fail fast" kind of way. Even worse, we've found that some innovation hubs fail because the organization never truly had the intention to change at all; clinging to old practices and ingrained beliefs can be a dangerous mistake that hinders progress and blocks an organization's innovation potential.

The biggest word of caution is **BEWARE** — you can have all the right ingredients in your hub, but the resulting experience can either go radically right or wretchedly wrong depending on how you facilitate the activity within it.

Credits: Art direction by Tatiana Gurovich; Illustration by Joseph Navarro and Laura Hernandez; typography by Gina Shevenell and Nicole Stone; editing by Lis Russo; special thanks to the Gensler Hackathon Team, Innovation Leader, and all the clients who inspired this vision.

Disclaimer: All percentages are based on real results from the Gensler 2019 Workplace Survey. However, the story, spaces, characters, and incidents portrayed in this illustration are fictitious. Any resemblance to reality is purely coincidental.