

# MIPIM 2026

Two themes dominated all others at this year's annual Cannes gathering: the transformational power of AI and the far-reaching implications of geopolitical uncertainty.

Both will remain firmly on the radar for business leaders in the year ahead – and their influence on the business landscape, each in its own distinct and significant way, could prove pivotal.

Here are our six key takeaways from MIPIM 2026.

# AI is transforming the business landscape



The week's keynote speech was given by Nobel Prize-winning economist Philippe Aghion, best known for the concept of 'creative destruction': the idea that economies grow when new innovations replace outdated ones. AI was front of mind.

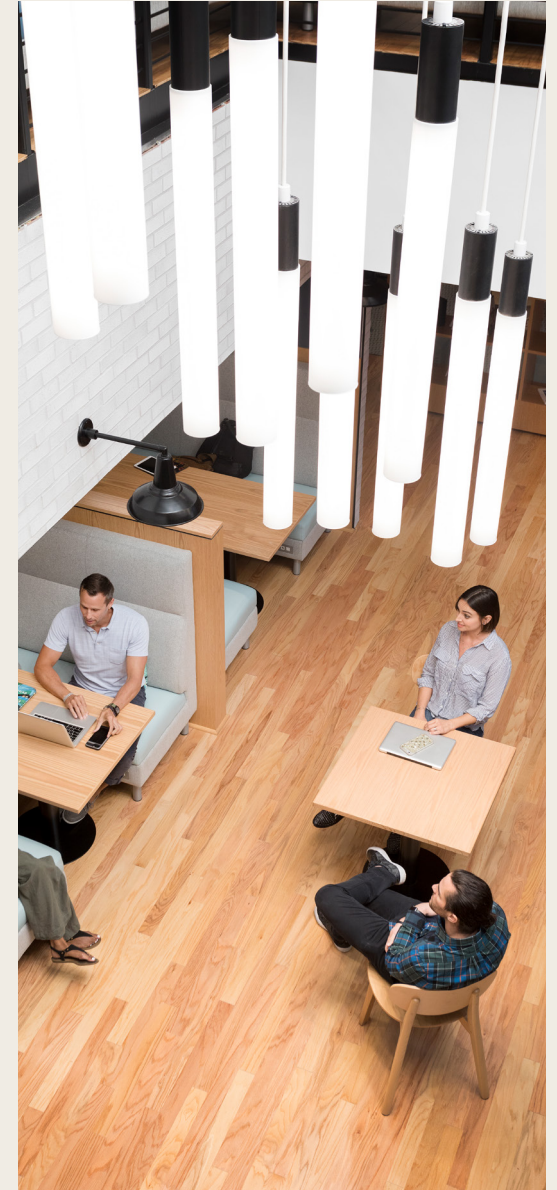
"Technology changes everything eventually and has always shaped how we work, but the difference today is the speed at which that change is unfolding," says Mark Dixon, Founder and CEO of International Workplace Group (IWG). "The mistake many people make with AI is to treat it like a modest efficiency tool, when in reality it's part of an exponential curve. Change like this doesn't just tweak jobs – it changes the velocity of business itself."

Josh Panknin, Director of Real Estate AI Research and Innovation at Columbia University, agreed that companies looking for quick-fix AI models will not get the results they are looking for. As one delegate put it: "We expect to see more investment in AI, but access alone will not set anyone apart. What will matter is who actually implements it well, embedding it into how assets are operated, decisions are made and experiences are delivered."

# Uncertainty is the new certainty: firms are doubling down on flexibility

“Uncertainty is the new certainty” one delegate wryly stated, as the event took place against the background of fresh conflict in the Middle East. Increasing levels of geopolitical uncertainty are leading more businesses into flexibility, who want to remain asset-light, and are therefore focused on reducing spend and decentralising whilst harnessing the advantages of a workspace platform.

At the same time, as AI adoption continues to accelerate business productivity, CEOs and CFOs are reconsidering how much space they need, where they need it and what its purpose is. “Businesses simply don’t know how much space they will need in just one or two years from now,” says Dixon. “This further underscores the need for flexibility as a key priority.”



# Regenerating commuter towns

Traditional commuter towns are being redefined as workers increasingly seek locations that combine a good quality of life with access to high-quality workspaces, strong transport links and top-class amenities.

This shift was brought to life at MIPIM, where the regeneration of Middleton in Greater Manchester, UK, was used as a compelling example of how values-led investment can unlock 'good growth'. Plans for the area include a new Metrolink station, high-quality homes and business spaces and improved public areas, roads and pathways.

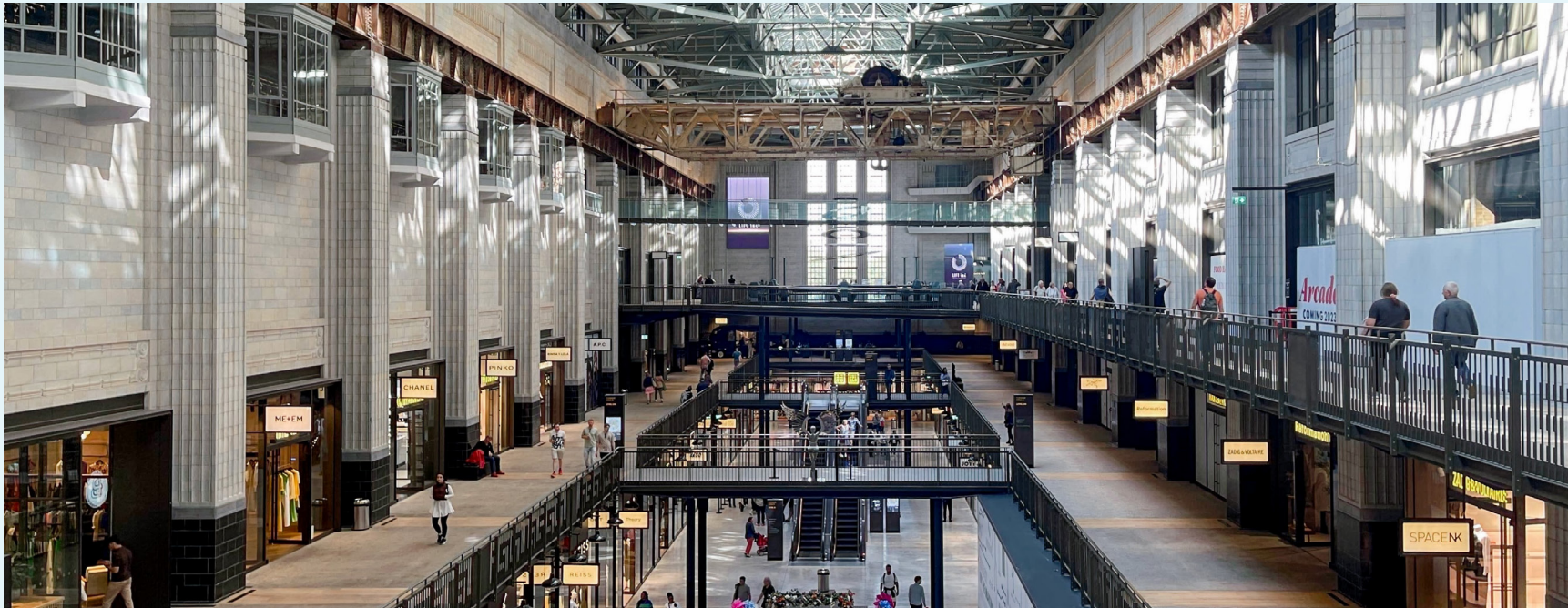
Altrincham, another Manchester commuter town where successful regeneration has already taken place, is home to two state-of-the-art Regus flex spaces. "People want to work close to where they live, it's as simple as that," says Dixon. "The idea that every morning, office workers wake early, jump into polluting cars or overcrowded trains, and travel many miles to their place of work will very soon be a crazy thing people only did in the past."



Of the 1,132 new locations signed by IWG in 2025, more than 80% were in suburban and small town areas, directly reflecting the changing geography of work.



# New standards are emerging in premium workspace design



Like the current redevelopment of Olympia, London's iconic Battersea Power Station reopened in 2022 as a dynamic mixed-use destination, home to The Engine Room – a bespoke IWG workspace – apartments, restaurants, bars, shops and more.

"Offices are back but there has undoubtedly been a flight to quality," Sam McClary, CEO of the British Council of Offices, said at the event. "The need for well designed and developed offices that provide employees with a great experience has never been more important." In other words, companies need to justify the time and expense of commuting to a city centre HQ.

Increasingly, standalone buildings are not enough, and there is a trend towards workplaces that form part of a broader experience. An example can be found at Olympia, a £1.3 billion new arts, entertainment and creative district in West London on the site of the famous exhibition halls. A cutting-edge IWG workspace will open there later this year, with workers able to benefit from high-end restaurants and bars, music and theatre venues, and attractive public spaces.

"Companies that want to attract and retain the best talent know that they need to offer high-quality destinations with access to a wide range of amenities," says Dixon.

# Sustainability remains a paramount priority



High oil and gas costs as a result of geopolitical events together with escalating climate risks meant that sustainability and energy efficiency continued to be major talking points this year. AI cropped up in this context, too, as a practical means to lower energy use. Intelligent building management systems powered by AI can bring significant savings. In addition, a growing concern for both investors and occupiers is whether buildings have sufficient electrical capacity, cooling systems and digital infrastructure to support data-intensive and AI-driven business operations. The term 'AI readiness' is rapidly going mainstream.



High ESG credentials are now seen as a critical differentiator in the commercial real estate sector. A new report by the Society of Industrial and Office Realtors and the University of the Built Environment highlighted that ESG compliance is crucial for attracting finance, tenants and investment across Europe. IWG is accredited through the RE100 to transition its entire portfolio to 100% renewable electricity by 2030, together with the implementation of innovative technologies reducing energy use and creating efficiencies across its network.

# Africa is on the rise

A new content initiative at this year's event was a dedicated focus on Africa's real estate market. Rapid urbanisation and increasing funds for development are driving significant growth across the continent. By 2050, 60% of Africa's population is expected to live in urban centres, and this is igniting demand across the whole real estate spectrum.

Recent Knight Frank data shows that occupancy rates for high-grade workspaces are reaching record levels across Africa, and IWG's network is growing rapidly to meet this unprecedented demand. Egypt is among the Group's fastest growing markets, recently recording 300% year-on-year growth and with at least 30 more locations set to open in 2026. Expansion also continues in new markets, with Benin, Togo and Cameroon all added to the IWG network in 2025.



# Conclusion

By the end of the week, the general mood was one of cautious optimism. “Firms that harness the transformative power of AI and other cutting-edge technologies will stand apart from the crowd in the year ahead,” says Dixon. “At the same time, organisations that remain flexible and agile will not only be able to weather ongoing turbulence but position themselves to grow through it.”

We support more than eight million workers through our network of 5,000+ flexible workspaces in 130 countries. Find out more about what we do at [iwgplc.com](https://www.iwgplc.com)