Analysis of Hotdesking vs. Assigned Desk Workplace Models

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Hotdesking vs. Assigned Desks in Coworking Spaces: A Comprehensive Analysis

https://archieapp.co/blog/hot-desking-statistics/

Figure: A modern open workspace with unassigned desks, typical of hotdesking environments.

Introduction

In the evolving world of coworking spaces, one key strategic decision is whether to offer hotdesking (unassigned, flexible seating) or **assigned desks** (dedicated workstations for each member). This choice impacts everything from daily productivity and collaboration to long-term space utilization and user satisfaction. With hybrid work patterns on the rise post-pandemic, many companies and coworking

operators are rethinking the traditional one-desk-per-person model. In fact, only **40% of companies now maintain a 1:1 desk-to-employee ratio**, down from 56% a year earlier, as more embrace desk-sharing to reduce unused space (Source: cbre.com). Coworking spaces themselves have become mainstream hubs for freelancers, startups, and even large corporate teams, valued for their flexibility and community. This report provides an in-depth comparison of hotdesking versus assigned desks in shared work environments, examining advantages, disadvantages, and their effects on **productivity, collaboration, well-being, privacy, flexibility, and cost-efficiency**. We draw on statistics, case studies, and expert insights to inform coworking managers, corporate real estate planners, and workplace strategists on how these models influence different types of workers and overall space planning.

Hotdesking vs. Assigned Desks: Overview and Definitions

Hotdesking (also known as "desk sharing" or flexible seating) refers to an arrangement where workers do **not have fixed desks**. Instead, they choose any available desk each day – essentially a first-come, first-served system (or sometimes a desk **booking** system known as *hoteling*) (Source: regus.com). In coworking spaces, hotdesking is common: members on a flexible plan arrive and grab an open seat in a shared area, often working alongside people from different companies. This setup aligns with the *"Activity-Based Working"* philosophy, enabling people to move between different work areas (lounge, booth, desk, etc.) depending on their tasks (Source: archieapp.co)(Source: archieapp.co). Hotdesking surged in popularity with the hybrid work trend – as employees come to the office only a few days a week, keeping a personally assigned desk for each person often leaves desks empty on any given day (Source: archieapp.co). Desk sharing lets organizations **shrink the footprint** needed: for example, many companies now assign **2+ employees per desk** on average, and some plan for 3:1 ratios to optimize space (Source: cbre.com).

By contrast, an assigned desk (or *dedicated desk* in coworking terms) is a workstation **exclusive to one person** (or one team). It is **reserved full-time** – even when that person is not present, no one else uses that desk (Source: regus.com). In coworking spaces, a member paying for a dedicated desk typically can leave their equipment or personal items and expects the same spot every day. This is analogous to booking a reserved seat on a train versus general admission: the reserved seat gives peace of mind and a guaranteed spot (often in a preferred location), whereas unreserved travel gives more spontaneity but no assured seat (Source: regus.com). Dedicated desks in coworking are often located in semi-private corners or specific zones, offering a bit more privacy, and usually come at a premium price for that guaranteed access and personal space (Source: regus.com)(Source: regus.com). Notably, **hotdesking is the norm for most coworking memberships**, with dedicated desks and private offices marketed as upgraded options for those who need them (Source: regus.com)(Source: regus.com).

Both models can coexist – many coworking spaces offer a mix of hotdesk areas and dedicated desk areas to cater to different needs. The choice between them involves trade-offs in cost efficiency vs. comfort, **flexibility vs. certainty**, and **community mixing vs. personal space**. Below, we break down the advantages and disadvantages of hotdesking and assigned desks in shared workspaces, followed by analysis of their impacts on various factors and worker types.

Advantages of Hotdesking (Flexible Seating)

Hotdesking offers several benefits for both workspace operators and users:

- **Optimized Space Utilization & Cost Savings:** By eliminating one-to-one desk assignments, organizations can maximize workspace usage and avoid paying for desks that sit empty during sick days, vacations, or remote-work days (Source: regus.com). Fewer dedicated desks mean a smaller real estate footprint is needed to accommodate the same number of people, directly reducing rent and overhead. Industry research shows companies can save significantly on office costs with this model – **up to 30% in real estate savings** through better space optimization, according to a JLL study (Source: community.sap.com). Many businesses have seized this opportunity: a 2024 CBRE survey found the majority of firms are moving away from the 1:1 desk-to-employee ratio, with **desk sharing now favored by 60% of North American companies** in some form (Source: archieapp.co). For coworking operators, hotdesk memberships allow "overselling" capacity (e.g. selling more memberships than physical desks, assuming not everyone comes at once) to boost occupancy and revenue. On average, successful coworking spaces operate at about 75–85% occupancy of desks in use (Source: coworker.com) – a balance that keeps the space lively yet cost-efficient. This efficiency is crucial for offering affordable plans; hotdesk rates are often significantly lower than dedicated desk plans (e.g. in U.S. coworking, a hot desk might cost $300–$500/month whereas a dedicated desk is $600–$1,100 (Source: optixapp.com)).

- **Supports Hybrid Work & Flexibility:** Hotdesking aligns naturally with **hybrid and remote work models**. As employees split time between home and office, flexible seating lets workplaces adapt to fluctuating daily attendance without allocating a permanent station for each person (Source: archieapp.co). Coworking spaces leveraging hotdesks can welcome part-time users and floating teams seamlessly. This model offers great **day-to-day flexibility**: people can choose when or whether to come in, and the space can expand or contract usage dynamically. For example, if mid-week is peak occupancy and Mondays are quiet (a common pattern (Source: archieapp.co)), the operator isn't stuck with unused desks on off-days – those unused spots simply aren't claimed. Hotdesking also allows **more agility for growth or changes**: companies using coworking hotdesks can add or remove memberships easily as their headcount changes, without the burden of a fixed office or unused dedicated desks. This agility is a big reason **59% of businesses now prefer**

flexible coworking space for expansion over traditional long leases (Source: archieapp.co). The ability to **"set up and go"** anywhere in the office appeals to those who value freedom in choosing their work setting (Source: regus.com). In short, hotdesking enables an *"on-demand"* workplace that fits the fluid nature of modern work.

- **Encourages Collaboration and Networking:** Removing fixed seats can foster a more **dynamic, social work environment**. When people change seating daily, they inevitably interact with a wider range of colleagues or fellow coworkers than if they were always next to the same neighbors. This **mobility encourages cross-pollination** of ideas and serendipitous encounters. As one source notes, not having a fixed station means employees might sit with coworkers from other departments or teams, sparking fresh conversations and knowledge-sharing that can lead to creative solutions (Source: nexudus.com). Hotdesking is often touted to **break down silos** – for example, an engineer might sit near a marketer one day and gain new perspectives. In coworking settings, flexible seating enables **networking opportunities** among diverse professionals (freelancers, entrepreneurs, corporate remote workers, etc.) in the space. Chance interactions in a café area or at communal tables can lead to collaborations or business connections. *"A great option for opportunities to collaborate with other hot desk users,"* as one coworking provider describes it (Source: regus.com). The overall atmosphere tends to be lively and communicative, which can be energizing. Some research even ties hotdesking to **increased creativity and resilience**, as employees become more adaptable and open to change through daily variety (Source: nexudus.com)(Source: nexudus.com).

- **Fosters Equity and a Dynamic Culture:** In a hotdesking environment, **everyone has the same type of workspace**, which can promote a sense of equality. There are no corner offices or window seats permanently assigned to higher-ups – all members or employees share the same pool of desks. This can **flatten hierarchies** and create a more inclusive vibe, where people mingle regardless of rank or company. Additionally, the ever-changing seating can make the office feel fresh and energetic. Each day might bring a new view, a new neighbor, or a new spot in the office (near a window, at a high-top counter, etc.), which some find invigorating compared to being stuck in one cubicle. This *variety* can help combat monotony and stimulate different thinking. From an operations standpoint, companies often use freed-up space (from having fewer fixed desks) to create more **collaboration zones, lounges, or amenities** that everyone can use, further enhancing the workplace experience (Source: cbre.com). Many coworking spaces with hotdesking invest in comfortable common areas, phone booths, and meeting rooms – giving hotdesk users access to diverse work settings that they can choose throughout the day. Such environments, when well-designed, can actually improve overall **well-being and engagement**; some studies on activity-based workplaces (a concept akin to hotdesking with multiple activity zones) found that a majority of workers felt productivity *could* increase when they have the freedom to choose a workspace suited to their task (Source: chanty.com).

- **Better Organization and Cleanliness:** A subtle perk of hotdesking is that it tends to enforce a culture of **cleanliness and minimal clutter**. Since no one "owns" a desk long-term, people usually clear their workstation at day's end and cannot accumulate stacks of papers or personal items over weeks. Desks are often left **cleaner and tidier**, which makes the overall office more presentable and relaxing (Source: nexudus.com). Employees who might otherwise let files pile up are prompted to go paperless or store files digitally, contributing to an efficient, even eco-friendlier workspace (less paper, fewer personal devices when shared equipment is used). Many coworking spaces provide lockers for hotdeskers to stash belongings, and regular cleaning crews refresh shared desks, keeping hygiene standards high. As a result, **shared areas stay neat**, and the space can be readily used by someone else the next day without inconvenience. Some workers also report that having to set up fresh each day forces them to be more organized in planning their work – they bring only what they need and maintain a streamlined routine (Source: nexudus.com). (Of course, this advantage holds if the hotdesking system is managed well with clear policies on cleanup.) Overall, the **"clean desk" culture** associated with hotdesking can contribute to a professional and efficient atmosphere.

*In summary, hotdesking's benefits center on **flexibility and efficiency** – it makes better use of space and money, adapts to modern work patterns, and can inject sociability and variety into the work experience. For many coworking spaces, a hotdesk model is a core offering that allows a broader range of members to join at lower cost while keeping the environment bustling.*(Source: regus.com)(Source: archieapp.co)

Disadvantages of Hotdesking

Despite its efficiencies, hotdesking also comes with notable downsides and challenges:

- **Lack of Personal Space and Belonging:** One of the most commonly cited drawbacks of hotdesking is the absence of a **permanent, personal workspace** for individuals. Employees often **feel frustrated or disconnected when they can't "claim" a desk** as their own (Source: chanty.com). There's no opportunity to set up ergonomic peripherals just how you like them, pin family photos to a cubicle wall, or consistently nestle into the same cozy corner. This can inhibit one's ability to *"settle in"* and feel comfortable. Over time, the nomadic setup might erode employees' sense of **belonging and identity at work** – some report feeling like a visitor in their own office every day, which can dampen morale. A literature review of two dozen research papers found that **flexible desking arrangements uniformly tended to breed employee discontent**(Source: kornferry.com). The lack of ownership can particularly impact people who value stability or who see their workspace as an extension of their professional self. In coworking spaces, while many appreciate the casual vibe, some members eventually desire a dedicated spot to call their own. *"Some people need or like their own desk,"* notes a Regus report, whether for peace of mind or practicality (Source: regus.com).

Without any personal zone, workers must pack up all belongings (laptops, notebooks, accessories) each day – a **cumbersome routine** that some find exhausting (Source: chanty.com). This daily uncertainty (Will I find a seat I like? Will I have the right equipment or neighbors?) can create low-level stress that chips away at job satisfaction (Source: kornferry.com). In essence, hotdesking trades personal comfort for flexibility, and not everyone copes well with that trade.

- **Impact on Morale and Well-Being:** Studies and case reports have linked hotdesking to **drops in employee morale** in certain contexts. A recent scoping review concluded that while hotdesking has some benefits, there is **"an overall negative impact on staff morale"**, largely due to strains on teamwork and communication (Source: opal.latrobe.edu.au). Employees commonly voice feeling **less valued** or "just a number" when they lose their personal desk. For example, the tech giant Salesforce initially implemented hotdesking at its offices but later **brought back assigned desks for certain teams after a wave of employee complaints** that the office felt impersonal and made it harder to get work done (Source: archieapp.co). Frequent issues affecting well-being include **anxiety about finding a workspace** (some people come in extra early just to secure a preferred desk), and the cognitive stress of daily decisions about seating or equipment setup. Hygiene worries also affect comfort – workers may feel uneasy sharing desks, especially if they're unsure the last user sanitized the area (Source: chanty.com). During COVID-19, such concerns became prominent, but even beyond the pandemic, people can be bothered by messy or germy conditions left by others. **"Hot-desking isn't the primary reason workers avoid offices, but it's a telling piece of the puzzle,"** explains Maria Amato, a workplace expert: combined with commute costs and other hassles, an uncomfortable seating policy can tip the scales toward people staying home (Source: kornferry.com). In surveys, many employees say not having a consistent spot with proper setup makes the office *less* attractive than their home office, which can hurt overall engagement (Source: kornferry.com). Indeed, a 2024 meta-review confirmed that flexible seating often correlates with **lower employee satisfaction**, citing complaints about lack of personal space and the stress of unpredictability (Source: archieapp.co). Thus, without careful management, hotdesking can undermine the very collaboration and culture it aims to foster, by leaving workers feeling unsettled and undervalued.

- **Privacy and Distraction Issues: Open, unassigned seating can compromise privacy and concentration.** In a hotdesking scenario, one typically works in a communal area with varying neighbors, which means sensitive phone calls or confidential work conversations are easily overheard. There's no permanent office or cubicle to retreat into. Employees might feel **uncomfortable discussing private matters** (e.g. an HR issue or a client negotiation) when anyone could be nearby. Security can be a concern too – papers or screens with confidential info might be visible to others in a shared space (Source: chanty.com). From a focus standpoint, hotdesking environments – often open-plan – can be **noisy and full of interruptions**. On any given day, you might end up next to a chatty group or, say, across from a sales rep making frequent calls. If your work requires deep focus, these ambient distractions are detrimental. One practical example: *"Hot*

desking a sales personnel with a coder would drop the latter's productivity, as the salesperson may frequently get calls," an analysis noted (Source: chanty.com). Without designated quiet zones or enforcement of etiquette, employees in hotdesk settings can struggle with more **distractions** than they would at a fixed, perhaps more controllable desk. This is borne out in behavior: a **Harvard Business Review survey of 819 employees** found that over half **actively tried to avoid unwanted interactions with colleagues** in open seating plans (Source: kornferry.com) – meaning people sometimes put on headphones or even skip coming in to dodge distractions. In coworking spaces, professionals often resort to phone booths or meeting rooms for privacy, which helps, but those resources can be limited if everyone needs them. Overall, hotdesking can make it harder to find a reliably quiet, secure spot for certain tasks, **potentially hurting productivity** and comfort if the environment isn't well-managed with alternative quiet spaces.

- **Desk Availability Uncertainty:** The **"musical chairs" problem** is an inherent risk in hotdesking. On busy days, especially mid-week when most people come in, there may simply not be enough desks for everyone. If a workspace overshoots its capacity or if many members decide to show up concurrently, latecomers can end up **scrambling for a place to sit** – or having no desk at all. This uncertainty can be frustrating and time-wasting. Reports from the return-to-office phase illustrate this: both Amazon and the UK's Starling Bank had to adjust or delay RTO plans because they found they **didn't have enough desks to accommodate peak attendance**, leading to chaos and pushback. Nobody wants to wander the floor with a laptop in hand, hunting for an open seat or awkwardly camping at a lounge sofa not designed for work because all desks are taken. Even the *perception* of scarcity can trigger stress – employees might feel they have to **arrive earlier** or play office politics to secure a decent spot (some resort to "unofficially" reserving a favorite desk by leaving items there, which can undermine the fairness of the system (Source: archieapp.co)). Implementing a **desk reservation system** (hoteling) can mitigate the daily uncertainty, but that adds another layer of complexity (booking software, rules about how long one can hold a reservation, etc.). If the system is not user-friendly, it can spawn its own frustration – fiddling with an app just to find a seat each day (Source: chanty.com). In coworking environments, most try to keep the ratio of members-to-desks reasonable, but at popular times even coworking hotdesk areas can fill up, leaving a poor experience for someone who can't find a workspace or has to sit in a high-traffic area they don't like. Essentially, **capacity management is a critical challenge** with hotdesking, and when it fails, the user experience suffers greatly.

- **Not One-Size-Fits-All – Role and Personality Misfit:** Hotdesking **doesn't suit every job role or individual**. Certain sectors require dedicated equipment or strict confidentiality that make shared desks impractical – for instance, firms in law, finance, or healthcare dealing with private files often **need private, assigned spaces** to meet regulatory and client privacy demands (Source: nexudus.com). Creative roles that use specialized gear (large monitors, drafting tablets) may find it burdensome to lug these tools around or reconfigure them daily. Additionally, some people simply

thrive on routine and stability; these individuals may feel anxious or less productive when forced into a constantly changing seat pattern. Generational or cultural differences play a part too. A 2024 study noted that many **Gen Z workers actually view having *their own desk* as a valued perk**, and experts suggest that assigned seating can help young employees by giving them a sense of stability and a place to receive mentorship from nearby colleagues (Source: nexudus.com). By contrast, these early-career professionals might struggle in hotdesk setups where mentors or team leaders are not consistently located near them. Personality-wise, introverts or those who highly value personal territory at work may find hotdesking alienating, whereas extroverts or highly adaptable personalities might not mind it. In practice, companies that tried a universal hotdesking approach have sometimes encountered a segment of very unhappy staff. For example, when one Australian government department moved to activity-based seating, some employees felt *socially isolated and lost their team culture*, indicating the model posed **challenges for roles requiring close support and camaraderie** (as seen with certain social workers in a study) (Source: nexudus.com)(Source: nexudus.com). In sum, a hotdesking policy must reckon with the reality that it **won't suit everyone** – there will almost always be a group of people or types of work for whom a fixed desk is much more conducive.

- **Management and Logistic Challenges:** Running a hotdesking environment requires **proactive management and good technology**. Without clear policies and tools, it can devolve into confusion. Offices need to invest in **desk booking systems or real-time occupancy displays** so people can find open spots efficiently (Source: chanty.com). There must be guidelines about etiquette: e.g. how long you can leave a desk for lunch before it's considered free again, rules against "camping" at multiple spots, cleaning up after yourself, etc. Enforcement of these rules can be tricky – it adds an extra task for community managers or HR to monitor desk use and mediate conflicts (like someone leaving belongings to hold a desk all day). Additionally, infrastructure must be set up to make moving around easy: ample power outlets everywhere, standard docking stations or monitors at each desk to minimize setup time, lockers for storage, and readily available support if equipment doesn't work. These are **non-trivial investments** that come with hotdesking. If a company or coworking space underestimates this, users may face problems like incompatible equipment or wasting time searching for a monitor or charger that works (Source: archieapp.co). Hotdesking also generates **more internal traffic** – people roaming to find colleagues or equipment – which has to be accounted for in office layout and IT networks. In summary, the flexible model demands a well-thought-out system and continuous oversight. As one guide notes, *long-term hotdesking success requires organization and management* – from software to policies to feedback loops (Source: nexudus.com). Without that, the intended benefits can be lost amid chaos and employee frustration.

In aggregate, **hotdesking's disadvantages** underscore a central theme: human factors matter. The efficiency gains can be undermined if workers feel uncomfortable, distracted, or alienated. Many companies have discovered that any cost savings need to be balanced against potential impacts on

productivity, morale, and retention. For coworking operators, it's vital to mitigate these downsides (through design, amenities, and rules) so that flexible seating remains an attractive choice and doesn't drive members to seek more stable arrangements elsewhere.

Advantages of Assigned Desks

Opting for **assigned desks** (each person having a fixed workstation) brings its own set of benefits, particularly regarding employee comfort, consistency, and sometimes productivity:

- **Consistency, Comfort, and Personalization:** An assigned desk offers a **stable home base** for a worker each day, which can greatly enhance comfort and efficiency. People can **set up their workspace exactly how they like it** – arranging monitors at the right height, choosing an ergonomic chair and adjusting it once (instead of afresh every day), and keeping frequently-used tools or reference materials at hand. Over time, individuals tend to optimize their personal desk for their work style, which can boost productivity (no setup time each morning) and reduce physical strain. There's also a psychological comfort in **knowing exactly where you'll work** when you arrive at the office (Source: kornferry.com). This predictability removes the minor anxieties of hunting for a spot or adapting to a new environment, allowing one to **focus on work faster**. Additionally, employees can **personalize their space** – pin up motivational quotes, display team swag or family photos, maybe keep a favorite coffee mug on the desk. These personal touches, while seemingly small, can increase one's **emotional connection to the workplace** and make the environment feel welcoming. Regus notes that dedicated desk users appreciate the ability to store paperwork or equipment they need and to *"personalize their working spaces, with family photos and similar touches."*(Source: regus.com) This sense of ownership often correlates with higher satisfaction. In coworking spaces, dedicated desk members can leave a monitor or leave their decor on the desk, making it feel like *their* corner of the shared office. All of this consistency contributes to employees feeling **grounded and comfortable**, which is positive for mental well-being and can translate into steadier productivity.

- **Enhanced Belonging and Team Cohesion:** Having an assigned desk can strengthen an employee's sense of **belonging to the organization or space**. It's a tangible indicator that "this is *my* spot in the office; I have a place here." That can be important for morale – especially for new hires or junior staff who may derive confidence from simply having a dedicated seat with their name on it. In a survey reported by Business Insider, many younger workers (Gen Z) indeed saw having a personal desk as a *work perk* and a facilitator for getting mentorship, implying it made them feel more integrated and supported (Source: nexudus.com). From a **team perspective**, assigned seating often allows colleagues who work closely to sit near each other by design. Teams or departments can be grouped in clusters, which **facilitates communication and collaboration within those teams** – you can quickly ask a question across the desk or huddle with your group without needing to find where

everyone is today. This stable proximity can build camaraderie and trust over time. In contrast to a hotdesk scenario where your neighbors might change daily, fixed neighbors allow relationships to deepen, which is good for teamwork. For coworking members who are part of a small company or startup sharing the space, **having a block of dedicated desks together helps maintain their team identity** and culture within a larger coworking community. They can reliably find each other and collaborate without uncertainty. Moreover, a fixed area for a team means they can personalize that nook (whiteboards with team ideas, or even just the knowledge that "Marketing team sits here") which can foster a micro-community. Assigned desks also help **wayfinding and accountability** – colleagues and managers know where to expect someone to be, which can improve communication ("I can stop by Alice's desk to discuss this, since I know where she sits"). Overall, the permanence of assigned desks tends to reinforce structure, which many teams find beneficial for coordination and morale.

- **Immediate Productivity – No Setup Overhead:** With a permanent desk, employees can **hit the ground running** each day. Their workstation is already equipped with the necessary hardware, software, and connectivity. For example, a developer with multiple monitors and a docking station can leave everything connected and simply plug in their laptop to start work within seconds. There's no time lost adjusting chairs, relocating around the room for an outlet, or logging into shared devices. This can result in **higher productivity**, especially for roles that rely on extensive setup or equipment. It also reduces IT issues – at an assigned desk, one can maintain their configuration; in a shared scenario, a worker might waste time finding a compatible charger or troubleshooting a different monitor every day (Source: archieapp.co). As Mark Royal of Korn Ferry points out, a key test of an effective office is whether **"workers can picture where they'll be working before arriving"** and know they'll *"have what [they] need"*(Source: kornferry.com). Assigned desks inherently pass this test. Furthermore, having a fixed workspace makes it easier to leave work materials set up: you can keep that spreadsheet open on your screen or have reference books on your desk without packing them up – this continuity can make longer-term projects easier to manage. For knowledge workers, the mental association with a consistent workspace can also aid focus (your brain knows "desk = time to work"), potentially improving concentration. Especially in coworking spaces, dedicated desk users avoid the minor daily disruptions that hotdeskers face (like checking in at reception or finding a seat), letting them maintain a **steady routine**. While hard metrics vary, many employees report feeling **more productive when they have their own desk** – one poll suggested 46% of workers felt more productive in a dedicated setup, attributing it to fewer personal disruptions and more ownership of their environment (Source: chanty.com). In essence, assigned desks streamline the workday by removing uncertainties, which can elevate both actual and perceived productivity.

- **Greater Privacy and Security:** Although coworking spaces and modern offices are largely open, having an assigned spot can afford a bit more **privacy and security** compared to pure hotdesking. Often, dedicated desks in coworking are in quieter sections, maybe with dividers or a corner location,

so those members experience a more private ambiance (Source: regus.com). One can position their monitors strategically or use privacy screens knowing they'll be in the same place daily. They can also keep documents or equipment locked in their personal desk drawers or a locker that comes with the desk – meaning sensitive material is not hauled around or at risk of being left in a random spot. In contrast, a hotdesker might avoid bringing certain confidential paperwork at all, for fear of not having a secure place for it. Assigned desk users also **don't have to worry about someone else using or moving their stuff**. If they step out for lunch, they can leave their laptop and notes on the desk with confidence it'll remain undisturbed (since everyone knows that desk is taken). This security is both practical and psychological – it reduces the vigilance one needs to have in a shared environment. Furthermore, for those with **accessibility or ergonomic needs**, a dedicated desk is a boon. They can set up special equipment (e.g. an ergonomic chair, standing desk, or assistive technology) that stays in place (Source: regus.com). For instance, an employee with back pain might need a particular chair; if they have an assigned desk, that chair can stay there reserved for them, whereas hotdesking could force them to search for it or not have it at times. Thus, dedicated desks ensure **consistency of accommodations** for those who need them, supporting inclusivity. All told, while an assigned desk in an open office is still a shared environment, it provides **a semi-private enclave and reliability** that many workers prefer for peace of mind.

- **Alignment with Expectations and Culture:** In some organizations (and for many employees), the traditional notion of having one's own desk is deeply ingrained. Providing assigned desks can align with employee expectations and cultural norms, which can aid acceptance and comfort. For example, in regions or industries where employees have historically had personal offices or cubicles, moving directly to a free-seating plan can be jarring. A middle ground of assigned desks in an open plan can preserve a sense of personal territory while still modernizing the office. Companies that tried eliminating assigned seats sometimes found employees disengaged or resisted returning to office; conversely, when **Salesforce responded to complaints by reinstating fixed desks for certain teams, it helped quell discontent**(Source: archieapp.co). This suggests that listening to worker preferences for assigned spots can improve morale and RTO compliance. In coworking, offering a dedicated desk option caters to those who *want* to be part of a coworking community but also desire a consistent workspace – essentially capturing a broader market of users. It's a way to attract professionals who might otherwise rent a private office because they need stability; a dedicated desk gives them a personal foothold at lower cost than an office, *"combining the benefits of both [coworking and private office] at a competitive cost,"* as one coworking brand advertises (Source: theyard.com). For the user, this means access to the vibrant community and shared amenities of coworking **without sacrificing personal comfort**. Dedicated desks thus can be seen as a premium or loyalty feature – members often treat that area as their community within the community, leading to tight-knit groups and high retention for the space operator. In summary, assigned desks align well with human tendencies for ownership, can enhance satisfaction by meeting expectations, and serve as a valuable offering for those who need the extra consistency in a shared workspace.

It's clear that **assigned desks prioritize the individual's sense of stability and control**. Especially for work that demands focus or for workers who place a premium on routine, the dedicated desk model can significantly improve their daily experience. Companies and coworking spaces often leverage a mix – using assigned desks for core staff or those who need them, while keeping others flexible – to balance these advantages with the efficiencies of hotdesking.

Disadvantages of Assigned Desks

On the flip side, maintaining assigned desks in a shared environment has downsides, particularly around space efficiency and adaptability:

- **Inefficient Space Usage & Higher Real Estate Costs:** The most pronounced disadvantage of one-person-one-desk arrangements is **lower utilization of space**. When each desk is tied to a specific individual, that desk often sits **empty whenever the person is out** – be it due to remote work days, travel, illness, or vacation. In today's hybrid work era, many desks in traditional offices are unoccupied a large portion of the time (some estimates show offices are only 40–60% full on an average day (Source: archieapp.co)). Those empty desks represent wasted capacity **that still incurs cost** – the company or coworking operator is paying rent, utilities, and upkeep for space not actively used. From a business standpoint, this is **less cost-efficient** than a hotdesking model where you can have multiple people use the same desk at different times. A dedicated desk in a coworking space will **always cost more** than a hotdesk membership for the same reason – you're essentially leasing full-time access to one spot, so if you only use it 3 days a week, it's under-utilized. *"To make it worth its cost, you need to be sure you're going to use it,"* Regus advises about booking a dedicated desk (Source: regus.com). For the space provider, offering too many dedicated desks can limit the number of total members and reduce the vibrant density that often attracts people to coworking. It can also lead to a visibly emptier space on any given day (if a chunk of dedicated members are absent), which might diminish the energetic atmosphere for others. In contrast, with flexible seating, one could sell, say, 1.2 memberships per desk knowing not all show up at once (Source: deskmag.com), improving overall occupancy. So, assigned desks trade efficiency for exclusivity. This can also hamper **scalability** – if a new person joins, you need to ensure a physical desk is available for them, which might mean expanding real estate sooner than you would under a shared model. In sum, rigid assignment tends to **increase real estate and operational costs** per user, which is a key reason many organizations have shifted away from all-assigned seating (Source: cbre.com).

- **Reduced Flexibility and Adaptability:** Assigned seating makes the workplace **less flexible in responding to change**. If a team shrinks or people leave, you might end up with unused desks that can't easily be repurposed because they're still "owned" by someone (or just sitting empty awaiting a new hire). Conversely, if you need to accommodate more people temporarily (e.g., interns or

contractors joining for a month), it's harder to do so without additional desks because existing ones are off-limits. It's a more **static allocation** of resources. This inflexibility also applies to the day-to-day: if someone with an assigned desk decides to come in only two days a week, their desk remains unused on the other days rather than dynamically available to others. For companies facing fluctuating headcount or experimenting with rotating in-office schedules, assigned desks can become a hindrance or require complex scheduling to "share" an assigned desk (which often defeats the purpose of assignment). In coworking spaces, a bank of dedicated desks locks that area for those specific members – if one member is on vacation for two weeks, that desk lies fallow (unless the operator has a program to temporarily sublet it, which is rare). **Flexibility in where to work is also reduced for the employee**: with an assigned desk, one might feel tethered to that spot even if the office has other appealing areas. They might be less inclined to move to a different floor or a lounge for a change of scenery because psychologically their desk is their zone. While some may see that as a good routine, others could find it monotonous. In contrast, a hotdesking policy inherently encourages movement and choice. Thus, assigned desks can make both the organization and the individual **less agile**. In a rapidly changing work environment, this rigidity can be a drawback. It's notable that only about **11% of European business leaders in 2024 expected a return to fully assigned seating for everyone**(Source: archieapp.co), reflecting a consensus that some flexibility is needed. An assigned-desk model, if not managed, can lead to **excess capacity or shortages** that aren't easily corrected without a major reshuffle or expansion.

- **Fewer Spontaneous Interactions and Networking Opportunities:** While fixed seating can strengthen local team bonds, it can also **limit wider interaction** across the office or coworking community. When people sit in the same spot next to the same neighbors every day, they tend to interact mostly with that set group. There's less mixing between departments or with new members. Over time, silos can form – e.g., the sales team always on one side of the floor might rarely talk to the engineering team on the other side, because there's no natural intermingling via seating. In coworking scenarios, dedicated desk members might stick to their corner and be less involved with the broader membership. They might not attend community events or network as much because they already have their established spot and routine. Hotdeskers, by floating, often end up chatting with different people, whereas dedicated desk folks might settle into a **comfort zone that reduces serendipitous encounters**. One industry insight phrased it as: hotdesk areas are *"wonderful for networking"* but dedicated desks, often more isolated, are *"not great for networking"* (though they offer more privacy) (Source: regus.com). Also, because collaboration in assigned-desk environments often happens in *designated meeting areas* (since you must leave your seat to go talk to someone elsewhere), there might be a formality that cuts down on the casual brainstorming that can occur when people roam. Some research on open offices found that when people are fixed in one open environment, they sometimes resort to electronic communication to avoid disturbing others, leading to **declines in face-to-face interaction** (an unintended outcome). While assigned seating doesn't cause that directly (it was more an open-plan issue), it's true that **spontaneity can be lower** when

everyone has an entrenched place. In coworking, new members might feel less integrated if many others already have "their spots" and social circles around those spots. Essentially, assigned desks can create mini-territories that, if the culture isn't actively cross-connecting people, might reduce the cross-company or cross-functional mingling that sparks innovation and community.

- **Visibility of Underutilization and Energy Levels:** One could argue that an office or coworking space full of assigned desks might at times feel **underpopulated or less vibrant**. Imagine a Thursday where 30% of employees are traveling or remote – in a hotdesk setup, those empty chairs could be taken by others or removed in favor of more communal space, but in an assigned setup, you'd see a lot of **empty desks with perhaps idle monitors and personal nameplates**. This can have a psychological effect, making the space feel a bit like a ghost town even if those absences are temporary. For coworking operators giving tours to potential members, seeing many unused dedicated desks might send a signal that the community isn't very active (even if that's just due to that day's schedules). On the contrary, a full flexible area often has a buzz with nearly every seat taken at peak times (and if not, the extras are invisible). Additionally, fixed desks can encourage people to **"camp" at their desk all day**, since that is their default zone, which might reduce movement around the space. When everyone is huddled in their personal nook, the office may seem quieter or more siloed, lacking the energetic intermixing of a flex environment. While some see that as positive for focus, others feel it dampens the social energy. From the operator's perspective, **occupancy metrics look worse** with assigned desks: a space might be at 90% leased (desks sold) but only 60% utilized on a given day, whereas a hotdesk model might reach 90% actual use on peak days with the same number of people, giving a fuller feel. This is partly why **smaller coworking spaces (with fewer members) that rely on dedicated desks often run at only ~50% actual occupancy, leaving revenue on the table**(Source: coworker.com). In summary, the dedicated approach can inadvertently create an environment that *appears* and *functions* as less bustling, which can affect user experience and perception of success.

- **Cost Commitment for Users:** For individual members or teams, choosing assigned desks usually means a **higher cost and commitment**. Coworking spaces charge a premium for a reserved desk – often nearly **double the price of a hotdesk membership** in many markets (Source: optixapp.com). This can be a barrier for freelancers or startups on a tight budget. If their needs change (say they need to travel for a month), they might feel they're wasting money on a desk they aren't using. In contrast, a hotdesk plan or pay-as-you-go is financially lower risk. So, dedicated desks require users to **justify the expense through consistent use**. If a small business gets dedicated desks for, say, 5 people and then two employees leave, they're stuck paying for those two extra desks (often contracts are monthly or longer-term) until they downsize the agreement. This rigidity can lead to dissatisfaction if not managed. Some users also feel that once they pay for a desk, they *must* use the coworking space heavily to get their money's worth – potentially causing presenteeism (coming in even when working from home might be just as effective or more convenient). That somewhat

conflicts with the flexibility that coworking is supposed to offer. On the company side, having many assigned seats can mean **higher facility costs** per employee, as discussed, which might not be ideal if the workforce is not in full attendance daily. In an era when many employees expect to work remotely some of the time, paying for 100% space for 60% average attendance is a tough sell to finance departments. Thus, organizations may feel assigned seating is **economically unjustified** unless they enforce full-time office attendance (which itself can cause friction with employees). This cost factor is driving many toward flexible models despite some employee preference for dedicated desks (Source: cbre.com). In coworking, it means dedicated desk offerings might attract a smaller segment (those willing to pay extra for stability) whereas the larger market goes to hotdesks or hybrid solutions.

In essence, **assigned desks sacrifice flexibility and efficiency for the sake of stability and personal space**. They can be ideal for some users but generally **increase costs and require more space** per capita. Many coworking operators and companies now adopt a blend: keeping some dedicated desks for those who truly need them (or as an upsell premium service), while relying on flexible seating for others to ensure space is used efficiently. This mix attempts to capture the advantages of each model while minimizing the downsides.

Impact on Productivity and Performance

Productivity can be influenced by the workspace model in complex ways. Both hotdesking and assigned seating have potential upsides and downsides for individual and team performance, often hinging on how well the environment is managed and how people work best:

- **Focus and Distractions:** A key determinant of productivity is the ability to focus when needed. Assigned desks, by providing a consistent environment, can help minimize distractions – an employee can curate their space (set up monitor filters, wear noise-cancelling headphones they keep at their desk, etc.) and count on a familiar setting conducive to their concentration. There's no time lost each day to finding a spot or adjusting to a new environment, which means more **"flow" time** for work. On the other hand, a poorly designed open office with assigned desks can still be noisy or interrupt-prone; it's just consistently so. Hotdesking in an open plan often **amplifies distraction risk** because you might end up near different people or in suboptimal locations (like near the door or pantry) on busy days. If not mitigated, this variability can hurt focus – some days you may be very productive (quiet corner, great lighting) and other days less so (loud neighbors, no privacy). The research evidence here is mixed: while one survey suggests **46% of workers felt more productive in a hotdesking environment** (citing fewer personal side tasks and a sense of urgency to finish work without a permanent perch) (Source: chanty.com), a broad review of activity-based flexible offices found many employees experienced **drops in perceived productivity**, especially if they had more

interruptions or difficulty finding the right space for focused tasks (Source: archieapp.co). A lot comes down to how the workspace is equipped – for example, offices that implement hotdesking often add **quiet zones or focus rooms** as alternatives. If those are available, a hotdesk user could choose a silent area for deep work and potentially be *more* productive than at a fixed desk in a noisy team area. In assigned setups, if someone is stuck next to a chatty coworker indefinitely, that can be a chronic productivity drain (they might have to request a seat change to fix it, which is cumbersome). So, neither model guarantees quiet; it's about **providing choices**. The most effective workplaces, according to CBRE, are those that let **94% of employees have a choice of where to work in the office** – which suggests that the freedom to seek out the right environment (a principle of hotdesking) can enhance productivity if properly supported.

- **Collaboration vs. Heads-down Work:** Productivity isn't just about individual output; it's also about effective collaboration when needed. Hotdesking can improve productive collaboration by making colleagues more accessible and mixing up teams. For example, if a project requires input from finance and engineering, a hotdesking setup might lead to these team members sitting together for a day, speeding up information sharing. Also, being physically closer to a broader range of people via hotdesking might lead to quick problem-solving chats that would otherwise be an email chain. This can make the *team* more productive. However, constant mingling can also lead to more interruptions ("drive-by" questions or social chatter) that reduce individual productivity – one reason *over half of employees in open offices try to avoid unnecessary interactions*(Source: kornferry.com). Assigned desks keep teams in defined areas, which is good for intra-team collaboration (everyone knows where to find members of their team) but can slow down inter-team communication (walking across the office to another department is a deliberate effort). The **optimal scenario** for productivity seems to be a balance: an office where it's easy to find and collaborate with colleagues, but also easy to separate and focus. Activity-based work environments strive for this by offering varied spaces. In practice, many companies with hotdesking encourage a form of **"zoning"** – e.g. designating a quiet work zone, a collaborative zone, etc., which 70% of one study's participants said improved productivity when properly implemented (Source: chanty.com). Without such structure, hotdesking might devolve into everyone working in a loud common area (hurting focus), or conversely people isolating themselves with headphones (hurting collaboration). It's noteworthy that a **Gensler survey** found the top reason (48% of respondents) people come into an office is *to focus on work*(Source: kornferry.com) – a reminder that the workspace must support concentration or else employees will choose to stay home. Hotdesking needs to be "done right," as experts say (Source: archieapp.co), with the *right perks like quiet spaces and reliable desks*, to truly boost productivity. Otherwise, a comfortable assigned desk at home might outcompete a chaotic desk at the coworking space.

- **Task Type and Workflow Efficiency:** Consider how different work tasks fare under each model. For routine, repetitive tasks or long-term projects, assigned desks may yield higher efficiency because workers have a stable setup and can leave materials out. For tasks that benefit from cross-functional

input or creativity, hotdesking might shine by exposing workers to new ideas or colleagues. One can imagine a scenario in a coworking space: a freelance graphic designer at a hotdesk overhears a marketing consultant discussing strategy and chimes in with a creative idea – a beneficial unplanned collaboration that wouldn't happen if everyone was siloed at fixed desks. From a workflow perspective, hotdesking can eliminate some **idle space inefficiencies** (no waiting for someone to come back to a specific desk to ask a question if you can just sit near someone else who can help in the meantime). Conversely, assigned desks can create **workflow stability** – e.g., a team can set up a war room of adjacent desks with all their project binders spread out, which wouldn't be possible if they had to clear the area each day. There's also the matter of **time lost or gained**: A hotdesking employee might spend 5-10 minutes each morning finding a desk, logging into a desk-booking app, adjusting the chair, etc., which over a year is a chunk of time not working. An assigned-desk employee doesn't lose that time, but if their fixed seat is far from, say, the people or tools they need frequently (printers, colleagues, etc.), they might lose time walking around. Hotdesking allows repositioning closer to needed resources on a given day (e.g., sit near the lab on days you need lab work). Research on **organizational productivity in ABW** settings suggests that giving employees autonomy to choose spaces can *improve* some productivity measures like intra-team communication and knowledge sharing, but may *worsen* others like individual task efficiency if not handled well (Source: kornferry.com)(Source: nomorepainergonomics.com.au). It truly depends on the nature of the work. For highly creative or interactive work, the buzz of a flexible environment might boost energy and output; for heavy analytical or phone-based work, a consistent quieter environment might yield better results.

- **Employee Perception and Output:** There's an important psychological aspect: if employees *feel* more productive, they are likely to be more engaged. Many employees equate having their "own desk" with the tools to do their job effectively. Taking that away can, at least initially, create a mindset that productivity is impeded – they might focus on what's missing (e.g., "I don't have my proper monitor today, so I can't work as well"). Over time, if hotdesking issues persist (like trouble finding desks or equipment), employees may become frustrated and productivity can drop simply due to lower morale and higher cognitive load. This is evidenced by companies like Salesforce reversing hotdesking for some because employees explicitly said it made it **harder to feel comfortable and get work done**(Source: archieapp.co). On the other hand, a well-executed flexible seating plan with abundant resources might make employees feel empowered – they can choose a space that suits their task (a quiet corner for writing, a cafe table for brainstorming) which can enhance output quality. In coworking surveys, **91% of employees said they'd be more likely to come into the office (and presumably be productive there) if the right perks were available** – notably, *"better tech, more privacy, or just a reliable place to sit"*(Source: archieapp.co). This highlights that productivity in hotdesking arrangements is tightly tied to having the necessary infrastructure (tech, privacy options, assured seating). If those are present, many workers can be just as productive, if not

more so, than in a fixed environment. If they are lacking, productivity suffers. With assigned desks, the requirements are simpler (give someone a decent desk and chair and they'll adapt it to their needs), so the baseline productivity might be more consistently met.

In summary, **productivity outcomes** can vary widely. A **well-supported hotdesking environment** can drive both individual and collaborative productivity by offering choice and reducing unused downtime, but a poorly supported one can hamper focus and create friction that reduces output. **Assigned desks** can provide consistency that supports productivity for certain tasks and personalities, but can also lock in inefficiencies and limit adaptive collaboration. Many organizations measure productivity indirectly (through output, employee surveys, etc.) and find that a hybrid approach – fixed spaces for those who need a stable setup, and flexible spaces for those who thrive in movement – often yields the best overall performance. The key is to ensure that whichever model, the **workspace design supports the work** (e.g., quiet areas, collaboration tools, proper equipment) so that employees aren't fighting the environment to get their job done.

Impact on Collaboration and Community

The nature of workspace seating can significantly influence **how people interact**, share knowledge, and form a community, especially in coworking spaces where networking is a valued benefit:

- **Serendipitous Interactions:** Hotdesking is often championed for enabling **chance encounters** and cross-functional mingling. When people aren't tethered to a specific spot, they're more likely to sit next to someone new or bump into different individuals in the course of finding a seat. This can lead to organic conversations that spark collaboration or simply build social cohesion. In a coworking space, this is a major draw – freelancers or remote workers might meet potential clients or partners just by sharing a table for the day. The *"fluid, inclusive culture"* encouraged by hotdesks means employees regularly interact with peers outside their immediate team, fostering a broader sense of community and breaking down cliques (Source: wework.com). For example, an architect might strike up a chat with a software developer in a coworking lounge, leading to a creative solution for a design app. These **weak-tie connections** are known to drive innovation and knowledge exchange in organizations. In contrast, assigned desks can make interactions more **predictable and siloed** – you tend to talk mostly to your neighbors (who are often on your team or in your department). Over time, departments might only socialize internally. Coworking spaces with many dedicated desk users might see little mixing between those in the fixed desk area and those in the hotdesk area, unless actively facilitated. So for a vibrant inter-company community, hotdesking helps "**collisions**" of people and ideas to occur more frequently.

- **Team Communication and Collaboration:** There's a flip side: effective **team** collaboration can be easier when colleagues have designated places. If a team is all assigned seats in one cluster, they can convene quickly, leave notes for each other on desks, and have a stable zone for ongoing collaborative work (like a project war-room atmosphere). With hotdesking, team members might scatter unless they make an effort to co-locate each day. This can complicate quick huddles or impromptu discussions – you might have to message teammates to find out where they are seated today, which adds friction. Some companies address this by encouraging teams to **coordinate their in-office days and even reserve a pod of desks together** (a practice sometimes called "team hoteling"). But if not coordinated, there's a risk that hotdesking **weakens intra-team bonds**, especially if some team members are often absent. One study of social workers noted that remote/hotdesk arrangements led to "an absence of team culture" for some – they felt less supported because their team wasn't physically together often (Source: nexudus.com). Similarly, corporate managers observed that with hotdesking, employees sometimes found it **"difficult to locate"** their colleagues, hindering teamwork and mentorship (Source: kornferry.com). That's why certain firms reinstated fixed desks for teams that rely on close daily collaboration (Source: archieapp.co). Coworking spaces see a parallel: startup teams using coworking may initially try hotdesk memberships but often gravitate toward renting a fixed cluster of desks or a small office so they can sit together and collaborate easily. The coworking model accommodates this by offering team areas or dedicated desks as teams grow. So while hotdesking **enhances cross-team mingling**, assigned seating can **strengthen within-team communication** by providing consistency.

- **Community Building and Culture:** In coworking environments, building a sense of community is a key value proposition. Hotdesking members naturally circulate and are likely to engage in community events (lunches, happy hours, etc.) because they don't have a isolated perch to retreat to – they're already in the mix. They also often use **common areas** more (since they don't have a personal office to hide in), which increases opportunities for networking. Meanwhile, those with dedicated desks might form a micro-community among the fellow dedicated desk renters and could be **less inclined to mingle** beyond that circle without encouragement. The Regus comparison notes that hotdesking is *"wonderful for networking,"* whereas dedicated desks tend to be **"more quiet and private"**, implying fewer casual interactions (Source: regus.com). For the overall culture of a space or company, hotdesking can create a **buzzing, interactive culture** but might dilute strong team identities or traditions (since teams aren't always sitting together). Assigned seating can reinforce a **stable culture** within teams or departments but might require additional measures to integrate those groups company-wide (like cross-department projects or social events). One interesting phenomenon in open offices with assigned seating is that people often still communicate digitally to avoid bothering others – a Harvard field study famously found face-to-face interactions dropped in an open office as people resorted to email/IM, possibly to preserve privacy or due to overstimulation. So simply being physically present doesn't guarantee collaboration; the **workspace ethos and norms** matter. If hotdesking is implemented but employees feel territorial or anxious (e.g., staking

claims early to a spot), it can actually reduce friendly interactions and increase tension. If assigned seating is implemented but teams are siloed by layout (different floors or walled sections), it can also stifle cross-team collaboration. Thus, the impact on community is nuanced. Generally, **hotdesking catalyzes a broader community network** (especially in coworking where diverse professionals cross paths), whereas **assigned desks cultivate localized camaraderie** but can isolate groups. A healthy workplace might need to consciously foster both: encourage hotdeskers to form interest groups or attend events for cohesion, and encourage those at dedicated desks to venture out of their bubbles periodically.

- **Unwanted Interactions and Etiquette:** Collaboration has a darker side – not all interactions are positive or desired. With hotdesking, employees might find themselves next to someone disruptive or incompatible (e.g., a very noisy person when they need quiet, or an inquisitive neighbor when they need focus). In an assigned model, if you have a problematic neighbor, at least it's a known quantity and you can adapt or formally request a change if it's bad. With hotdesking, it could be **anyone any day**, which can heighten social anxiety for some ("Will I sit next to someone who talks my ear off today?"). The HBR survey mentioned earlier indicates many try to **avoid "unwanted interactions"** in flexible open setups (Source: kornferry.com). So, ironically, a concept meant to increase collaboration might cause people to build defensive behaviors (headphones, taking calls in stairwells, etc.) to carve out personal space. That's why **clear etiquette guidelines** and culture setting are important in hotdesking scenarios – e.g., norms about using phone booths for long calls, not "camping" at a large table alone, keeping volume moderate, etc. In coworking, community managers often play matchmaker and monitor dynamics to ensure a collegial atmosphere. With assigned desks, norms are a bit more static (you know your neighbors and develop routines with them), and unwanted interactions might be less because people have tacit arrangements (like "we chat in the morning then quiet down"). The **quality of interactions** differs: hotdesking might yield more breadth of interactions (meeting many people shallowly), and assigned seating might yield more depth (same people building a rapport). For community health, you ideally want both breadth and depth – broad networking and deep friendships or tight teams. No one model delivers both automatically; it's about **balance and active community management**.

To conclude, **collaboration thrives on accessibility and trust**. Hotdesking maximizes accessibility (everyone is everywhere), which can lead to a rich collaborative web but needs guardrails to ensure those interactions are fruitful and not intrusive. Assigned desks maximize stable connections and trust within set groups, which can lead to very cohesive teams but fewer fresh inputs from outside. Coworking spaces often solve this by blending: they have communal hotdesking areas and also offer dedicated desks or offices for teams, plus orchestrate events to bring everyone together. The goal is to ensure that flexible seating arrangements truly do **"foster collaboration and innovation"** as advertised (Source: nexudus.com), while minimizing the chances that people feel isolated or disconnected in the crowd.

Meanwhile, preserve some dedicated spaces for those collaborations that need consistency. In essence, the **community impact** of either model can be positive if managed, but hotdesking leans toward building a **wide networked community**, and assigned desks lean toward building **tight-knit sub-communities**.

Impact on Employee Well-Being and Morale

Employee **well-being** – including mental health, stress levels, and overall morale – is deeply affected by the work environment. Hotdesking and assigned desks can influence well-being in different ways:

- **Stress and Anxiety:** Hotdesking can introduce daily **uncertainty** that elevates stress for some individuals. Not knowing if you'll find a suitable desk, or worrying about having to come early to secure one, can create a constant low-level anxiety (Source: kornferry.com). The **"where will I sit?" question** each morning is trivial for some but nerve-wracking for others, especially more introverted or anxious personalities. Additionally, concerns about cleanliness (using a workstation someone else just used) have a hygienic stress component – for example, during flu season or in the aftermath of COVID-19, sharing desks can make people nervous about germs (Source: chanty.com). Even with cleaning protocols, the *perception* of risk can affect peace of mind. On top of that, lack of personal space can be psychologically disorienting; humans have a natural sense of territoriality, and having that removed can make a workplace feel unwelcoming. Some employees describe feeling **homeless at work**, which can eat away at morale. A study reviewing hotdesking's effects noted that it often caused employees to feel **"disconnected"** and less supported, negatively impacting mental well-being and teamwork (Source: opal.latrobe.edu.au). In coworking contexts, if a member consistently struggles to find a space or to adapt to different environments, they might feel stress that they wouldn't in a dedicated office. That said, **not everyone experiences hotdesking as stressful** – more adaptable folks might find it invigorating and enjoy the freedom. Many coworking enthusiasts actually report improved well-being versus working alone at home, **despite** the lack of an assigned desk, because the social aspects and change of scene boost their mood (Source: tandfonline.com). So personality and personal preference play a big role. For those who thrive on variety, hotdesking can alleviate the boredom or stagnation they'd feel at one desk. For those who need stability, it can be a source of continuous stress. Employers have to recognize these differences and possibly offer a mix to cater to both groups.

- **Sense of Belonging and Identity:** Morale often stems from feeling valued and "at home" in one's workplace. Assigned desks tend to **enhance the sense of belonging** – having your name on a desk or a team corner decorated with inside jokes can make you feel you're truly part of the organization. This can be especially significant for newcomers integrating into a company culture; a personalized workspace is like a foothold of identity at work. Hotdesking can dilute that feeling – everything is transient and generic, so employees might feel **"just another body"** rather than an integral member.

Indeed, companies heard feedback that hotdesking made offices feel *"impersonal"* and undermined employee comfort (Source: archieapp.co). Personalization, like photos or a plant on your desk, is actually linked to higher well-being – it's an expression of self. If you remove that outlet, some employees feel less emotionally connected. A survey cited earlier indicated many Gen Z workers see having their own desk as a perk that contributes to their work satisfaction (Source: nexudus.com). Moreover, not having a consistent spot can reduce the **informal social rituals** that build belonging – for instance, your desk neighbors saying good morning regularly, or the team decorating someone's desk on their birthday. These little morale-boosters can fall by the wayside if seating is constantly shifting. On the other hand, hotdesking can also create a **broader sense of belonging to a community** rather than a desk. Coworking members often report that while they don't have an assigned seat, they still feel a strong sense of community belonging – it's tied to the space as a whole (through social events, communal areas) rather than a particular desk. They may value being "part of this cool coworking hub" which offsets not having a personal desk. Additionally, some employees feel a sense of pride and modern identity working in an environment that's flexible and mobile – it can signal that the company is forward-thinking. If the culture celebrates flexibility ("we're all digital nomads within the office"), employees might align their identity with that and feel good about it. Thus, **morale impacts depend on cultural framing**: If hotdesking is seen as a cost-cutting inconvenience, it'll hurt morale. If it's seen as liberating and egalitarian (and managed well), it might not.

- **Mental Health and Social Well-Being:** Social well-being at work (feeling connected to colleagues, not isolated) is a critical component of mental health. Assigned desks ensure you are **physically near your team or familiar colleagues** consistently, which can provide social support – people notice if you're having a bad day, or you can easily chat to relieve stress. That steady camaraderie can be a buffer against work stress. Hotdesking might expose one to *more* people, but those interactions may be more superficial. It's possible to feel **lonely in a crowd** if every day you sit near strangers and don't form deeper relationships. Some employees in flexible offices report feelings of isolation or lack of community, ironically because the community is too fluid to anchor to, especially if management doesn't facilitate social bonding (Source: nexudus.com). In coworking, while many enjoy meeting new people, others may find it harder to make friends if faces change often. However, coworking spaces usually have community managers and events precisely to combat that and create a consistent sense of fellowship beyond desks. For mental well-being, **control over one's environment** is often cited as a factor – too little control (e.g., you can't sit where you feel comfortable, or you can't personalize anything) can lead to frustration and a feeling of powerlessness. Hotdesking can diminish that sense of control; one might feel at the whim of whatever desk is left. Assigned desks give a small sphere of control (this is my domain). Stress and mental fatigue can also come from the cognitive load of hotdesking: remembering to book a desk, coming early to set up, meeting new neighbors (social effort), etc. Over time, this can contribute to burnout if employees are also dealing with heavy workloads. On morale specifically, a **review of 24**

studies on hotdesking found lower overall satisfaction and morale among employees in those environments, often due to the issues above (lack of space personalization, increased stress) (Source: kornferry.com). Knowing this, some companies have introduced measures to boost morale in hotdesk environments – like **providing lockers and "home zones"** so people have some consistency, or fun rotating seating games to lighten the mood. Ultimately, if employees feel the company's move to hotdesking is purely to save money at their comfort's expense, morale will dip. Conversely, if they feel it's a well-considered strategy that also benefits them (through nicer amenities, more remote flexibility, etc.), they may accept it without major morale loss.

- **Physical Well-Being:** We should also note the physical aspect: assigned desks allow one to maintain ergonomic setups (reducing risk of strain injuries), whereas hotdesking can lead to **poor ergonomics** if one ends up at a makeshift spot (e.g., a lounge sofa with a laptop, or a desk that isn't adjusted correctly) (Source: nomorepainergonomics.com.au). If employees frequently can't get a proper workstation and instead work in awkward postures, this can affect physical health (neck/back pain), indirectly harming well-being and satisfaction. Many hotdesking environments counter this by equipping all desks with adjustable chairs and monitor arms, but not all do, especially if ad-hoc spaces (like cafe tables) are used. Knowing they have a proper, personalized ergonomic chair each day can ease someone's mind and body, whereas uncertainty can cause tension (literally and figuratively).

In conclusion, **employee well-being tends to thrive on security, support, and comfort**. Assigned desks inherently provide a stable sense of place and often tighter-knit support networks, which can bolster well-being and morale (fewer daily hassles, more personalization, clear belonging). Hotdesking, if not implemented thoughtfully, can chip away at those elements – increasing daily hassles, reducing personal comfort, and making social connections fleeting. That said, a *thoughtfully implemented* hotdesking scheme, coupled with a positive, community-oriented culture, can mitigate many negatives: for instance, **companies that listened to complaints and added more privacy options, better tech, and guaranteed seating saw employees become far more amenable to hotdesking**(Source: archieapp.co). Some even report higher wellbeing due to flexibility (avoiding commute on some days, choosing to work near colleagues when desired, etc.). Coworking spaces often excel at this balance by offering wellness amenities (meditation rooms, social events, etc.) that boost well-being, ensuring that even without an assigned desk, people feel cared for and part of a community (Source: archieapp.co). In essence, the **implications for well-being** depend heavily on execution: the concept of hotdesking itself can strain mental comfort, but with the right environment and options it can coexist with high well-being. Assigned desks are generally a safe bet for comfort but come at the cost of less flexibility which, for some, is also a well-being factor (e.g., feeling chained to a desk every day might reduce happiness for those who crave change). Thus, organizations might consider offering **choices** – those who feel happier

and less stressed with a dedicated desk should have that option, while those who enjoy flexibility can take advantage of hotdesking. A one-size-fits-all approach to well-being is unlikely to succeed, as personal differences are significant.

Considerations for Different Worker Types

Different categories of workers have distinct needs and may respond differently to hotdesking vs. assigned desk arrangements. Below we analyze how each model affects various types of workers commonly found in coworking spaces or hybrid work situations:

Freelancers and Independent Professionals

Freelancers, entrepreneurs, and independent contractors are a core demographic in coworking spaces. **Flexibility and cost-efficiency** are usually top priorities for them. Hotdesking tends to suit freelancers well because it offers **low-cost access** to a professional workspace without long-term commitment. A freelance graphic designer or writer might only need a desk a few days a week, or for short-term projects, so a hotdesk day pass or monthly membership is ideal – they pay only for what they use. Moreover, freelancers often join coworking communities to **network and combat isolation**, and a hotdesk environment naturally exposes them to new people and conversations regularly, helping them make contacts. Indeed, coworking statistics show that independent workers benefit from the social and collaborative atmosphere: many report higher well-being and productivity in coworking than at home due to fewer distractions and less loneliness (Source: archieapp.co). Hotdesking facilitates this by mixing them with a variety of other professionals each day.

However, not all freelancers prefer hotdesking. Those with **established routines or equipment** (e.g., a freelance software developer with a multi-monitor setup, or a tailor who needs a specific workbench) might lean toward a dedicated desk so they can leave their gear set up and have reliable access. Also, some seasoned freelancers have a steady workload that justifies being in an office every day – they may decide the extra cost of an assigned desk is worth the comfort and permanence. In coworking, a common pattern is freelancers starting with a flexible hotdesk plan and, if they find themselves coming daily and needing more stability, eventually upgrading to a dedicated desk (or small office) as their business grows.

Morale and productivity for freelancers can be influenced by the desk model: hotdesking gives them freedom (which they value) and a sense of community when they want it, but it might frustrate those who crave a consistent environment for creative focus. A freelancer has no corporate IT department setting up their space, so dealing with daily setup can be a hassle if the coworking space isn't well equipped. On the other hand, many coworking spaces pride themselves on being "freelancer-friendly" with robust

infrastructure (fast Wi-Fi everywhere, phone booths, communal devices), so hotdesking works smoothly. Freelancers also often schedule their own hours, so they might come in during off-peak times when hotdesks are plentiful, experiencing less of the competition for space that employees might at 9am.

Overall, **freelancers generally benefit from hotdesking** due to its flexibility and networking advantages. A **2019 global survey** found that the majority of one-person business owners favored coworking memberships that did not tie them to a single desk, valuing the ability to scale up or down as needed (Source: archieapp.co). As the number of independent workers continues to grow (expected to rise significantly through 2030 (Source: archieapp.co)), coworking spaces with ample hotdesk options will likely remain attractive. That said, providing a few dedicated desks or reservable stations for those independents who need a consistent spot can help retain members who might otherwise outgrow the hotdesk format as their work patterns stabilize.

Remote Corporate Employees

These are employees of a company who work remotely (often from different cities or countries than their main office) and use coworking spaces as a touchdown point. For them, **flexibility and reliability** are key. Typically, a company might provide a coworking membership (like WeWork All-Access or a similar pass) which allows the employee to use **any available hotdesk** at a coworking location near them. This is essentially the hotdesking model writ large – not just unassigned within one office, but unassigned across a network of spaces. The advantage is clear: the **employee can go to any coworking location** as needed, which is cost-effective for the company compared to maintaining a dedicated regional office or a permanent desk that might seldom be used. Many large corporations now utilize coworking for distributed staff; in fact, corporate teams make up nearly **28% of coworking users** as of 2023 and climbing (Source: archieapp.co), precisely because of this flexibility.

For remote corporate employees, hotdesking means they can **drop in on their own schedule** – one day a week, or when visiting a city – without worrying about a lease or reservation beyond perhaps checking space availability. It grants them the social aspect of an office on demand. However, they may face the challenge of ensuring a desk is free when they need it. If a coworking space is near capacity, a remote worker who arrives midday might not find a spot, which can be problematic if they rely on it for important work or video calls. To mitigate this, many coworking providers allow remote employees to **book a desk or room in advance** (a form of hoteling), or the company might rent a set number of guaranteed seats. Still, in essence, these employees operate as perpetual hotdeskers.

Assigned desks could come into play if a company has multiple employees in the same coworking hub. For example, if a tech firm has 5 remote workers all in San Jose, they might decide to rent 5 dedicated desks at a coworking space so those employees have a guaranteed spot and can also sit together as a mini-team. This gives those remote employees a more consistent experience (essentially a satellite office). It can improve their sense of belonging to the company because they have a physical

representation of the company (their cluster of desks) at the coworking site. It also aids in team building if those remote colleagues collaborate. Some companies indeed opt for **assigned desks or private suites** in coworking for a group of remote staff – about **60% of companies, regardless of work model, have plans to expand via flexible office space**, with many preferring coworking over leases for satellite teams (Source: archieapp.co). This suggests companies are balancing flexibility with some permanence when needed.

From the remote employee's perspective, having an assigned desk in a coworking space means they can leave a monitor and supplies there, making it feel like their office. It removes the unpredictability of hotdesking, which can be comforting since being remote can already make one feel disconnected. On the other hand, if the person only comes occasionally, a dedicated desk could sit idle often, which isn't efficient. Many remote employees appreciate the **choice** to use various coworking locations or skip commuting on a given day – a rigid desk assignment could tether them more than they want. Thus, companies often evaluate usage frequency: if an employee is in a coworking space 3-4 days a week, a dedicated desk might be justified; if it's 1-2 days, flexible hotdesking is fine.

In summary, **most remote corporate workers thrive with hotdesking/hotel-style arrangements**, enjoying the flexibility to use spaces as needed. Their main needs are a reliable workspace when they need one, good connectivity, and maybe occasionally a private room for calls. As long as the coworking provider meets those, they can be productive and feel well-supported – 85% of corporate occupiers said access to on-demand coworking has a positive impact on employee well-being, illustrating that being able to choose a workspace (like a hotdesk near home) is a boon for remote staff (Source: theinstantgroup.com). For those who require a stable setup (perhaps due to specialized equipment or daily use), the company can opt for a more **assigned solution within the coworking space**. It's a matter of tailoring to the frequency of use. The coworking model is inherently designed to accommodate both: floating passes for irregular use and dedicated stations for regular use.

Hybrid Teams and Office-Remote Hybrid Workers

Hybrid teams – groups where members split time between office and home – face unique coordination challenges. If a hybrid team is utilizing a coworking space as their meetup location on in-office days, the question arises: how do they ensure they can **sit and work together when they do come in?** If they rely on purely hotdesking, there's a chance that on a given "team day" the space might not have enough adjacent seats for everyone, or some team members might be scattered. This can undermine the whole point of coming together. Therefore, many hybrid teams choose some form of **reservation or assignment** for their in-person collaboration days. For example, a distributed software team meeting twice a week at a coworking space might reserve a block of desks or a conference room for those days to

ensure they're co-located. In coworking, they might simply rent a **meeting room or day office** on team days if the group is small. If the team is larger or meets frequently, securing dedicated desks might make sense so that on any in-office day, they have a guaranteed zone.

Within a company office scenario, hybrid teams often have **"neighborhoods"** – a designated area of hotdesks for their team. Team members don't have individually assigned seats, but they know to sit in that area when they're in. This blends flexibility with some consistency. It helps maintain team cohesion (you're near your teammates) without giving everyone a permanently empty desk on off-days. This approach could be mirrored in coworking if a team takes, say, 8 memberships and the coworking operator informally ensures 8 hotdesks in a certain area are available to them when needed (some coworkings do offer team packages like this).

For **productivity and morale**, hybrid teams benefit from face-to-face time to brainstorm and bond, so when they are co-located, it's crucial that the environment supports that – ideally seating them together in a quiet enough area to talk or near a whiteboard, etc. If hotdesking makes their in-office days chaotic (half the team spread out, or no suitable space to gather), it can frustrate them and reduce the value of coming in. That's why some companies with hybrid schedules moved away from pure hotdesking – *Salesforce's example* of restoring assigned desks for certain teams was in part to ensure those teams could collaborate effectively on in-office days (Source: archieapp.co). A hybrid team might assign desks to core team members who come often and leave some flex spots for rotating members or visiting colleagues.

Hybrid individual workers (not necessarily a team, but someone who is in office 2-3 days, home the rest) likely prefer the **same desk each time they come** if possible. There's a comfort in returning to a familiar spot on your office days. If the organization doesn't provide that (and uses hotdesking), the worker might still unofficially gravitate to the same area or desk ("my Tuesday desk"), and may feel annoyed if they find it taken. Some companies allow hybrid workers to **claim a permanent desk if they commit to a minimum in-office frequency** (like 3+ days a week). Otherwise, they must hotel. This can create a two-tier feeling, but it balances utilization with preference. Hybrid workers also tend to cluster on midweek days (Source: archieapp.co) (Tue/Wed/Thu), meaning hotdesk demand spikes then. If not managed, that leads to stress (as mentioned with Amazon's RTO desk shortage). So for hybrid teams, it's often beneficial to adopt **some level of desk reservation**: e.g., a booking system where each team member books their desk on team days, ensuring the system doesn't overbook beyond capacity. Many companies (64% in one survey) are prioritizing desk booking software to handle exactly this scenario.

In coworking, hybrid corporate teams are increasingly common (e.g., a regional sales team that meets twice a week in coworking). The coworking space that can flexibly accommodate that – maybe by offering a **dedicated team area on certain days and hotdesks on others** – will win their business. It's a bit complex operationally, but doable with good planning.

To sum up, **hybrid teams benefit from a hybrid approach to seating**: some predictability (like reserved desks or zones on team days) combined with flexibility (no fixed desks sitting idle on off-days). The goal is to support their in-person collaboration while not wasting space when they're remote. If done right, they get the best of both worlds – team cohesion and efficiency. If done wrong (pure unassigned chaos or rigid assignment for people who aren't there half the time), it can either undermine their teamwork or waste resources.

Startups and Small Businesses

Startups and small companies often use coworking spaces to avoid long-term leases and because it gives them amenities and flexibility. Their needs can evolve quickly: a 5-person startup might become 10-person in a few months, or shrink if projects change. For these teams, **flexibility and scalability** of space are vital. Initially, many startups opt for **hotdesk memberships** for each team member (or even just a few memberships that people rotate through if they aren't all in at once) to keep costs low. Early-stage startups often appreciate the open coworking environment for networking – founders can meet investors or advisors in the space, or recruit talent they meet there. The hotdesking model also fits the startup ethos of agility and non-hierarchy (no one, not even the CEO, has a corner office – everyone sits wherever). It can foster a sense that *"we're lean and adaptable."* Additionally, if the team is small and very cohesive, they might move around together (e.g., occupy a shared table each day even if not officially reserved, which some coworkings allow informally).

As a startup grows, **assigned desks or a private suite** often become more attractive. This is for several reasons: one, the team starts accumulating equipment (extra monitors, maybe a server, product prototypes) which are a pain to pack up daily. Two, the work may involve more sensitive discussions (new product plans, confidential data) that they prefer to have in a semi-private area rather than in earshot of other coworkers. Three, the team culture becomes important – they might want a wall to put up a Kanban board or space to display their logo, which a dedicated area affords. Also, as they hire, giving employees a consistent desk can be seen as providing stability (mimicking a traditional office feel to attract talent). Indeed, many coworking spaces market **private offices or team rooms** to startups as they scale beyond a certain size, often around 8-12 people or more.

From a cost perspective, in the early phase, hotdesking is cheaper (no paying for unused time), but once a startup team is working full-time out of the coworking space, the cost difference between multiple hotdesk memberships and an equivalent number of dedicated desks might be justified by the benefits of permanence. For example, if 8 people are each paying $300 for hotdesk ($2400 total) and a block of 8 dedicated desks costs $400 each ($3200 total), the additional $800 might be worth it for guaranteed seating and storage – especially if on some busy days not all 8 could find seats together with pure

hotdesking. Startups also often consider **private offices** if available, which give full control (and sometimes can seat slightly more people in a pinch than official capacity, which startups do to save money).

In terms of **productivity and collaboration**, a startup needs both focus for individual tasks (coding, designing) and constant collaboration (daily stand-ups, brainstorming). Hotdesking in a common area might be distracting for intense work (imagine a startup developer trying to debug code while sitting next to an unrelated, chatty group of marketers from another company). An assigned space for the startup (desks or a small office) can protect them from outside distractions and let them collab freely (they can talk openly without worrying about disturbing strangers). It basically simulates having their own office, nested within the coworking space. This helps with team bonding and identity too – they feel like "this is our corner." Many coworking spaces acknowledge this by offering to brand private offices or allow companies to put a sign by their dedicated desk area.

However, staying in the open hotdesk area has the **benefit of exposure**: startups might get feedback or spark partnerships with others in the space. It's not uncommon for small businesses in coworking to collaborate with each other or even merge teams for projects after meeting. A dedicated private office might isolate a startup from these chance interactions (some startups intentionally leave the door open to invite interaction, or split time between their office and common areas). So the choice can affect their opportunities.

Morale-wise, being in a vibrant hotdesking environment can be energizing for a small startup – it feels like you're part of something bigger than just your company, which can be motivating during the grind of building a business. On the other hand, if the environment is too hectic or if they frequently can't find seats together, it can frustrate the team and harm morale ("We're paying for this space but it's not working for us"). So, as soon as a team feels hindered by the lack of dedicated space, that's usually when they upgrade.

In short, **startups often start with hotdesking and move to assigned desks or private space as they scale**. The coworking model allows this growth: one can incrementally move from a few floating memberships to a cluster of reserved desks to eventually maybe a standalone office suite, all within the same facility – this scalability is a selling point. Each stage has to balance *cost vs. control*. At very early stages, cost savings of hotdesking win. At later stages, control (over layout, guaranteed resources, privacy) becomes worth the cost. The startup's work style matters too: if they heavily pair-program or collaborate, having a fixed table might be needed earlier. If they mostly do independent work and just need somewhere to plug in laptops, they can hotdesk longer.

To illustrate, imagine a small design agency (5 people): initially they each come in with laptops and sit anywhere – it's fine. They network, maybe get clients from fellow coworkers. Six months later, they have large iMacs and a part-time admin; they decide to rent five dedicated desks so they don't haul machines

and so the admin always has a front desk spot. They decorate their area with their branding. A year later, they're 12 people – they move into a private office offered down the hall. This trajectory is very common.

Industry sources echo that coworking is ideal for startups due to this flexibility: it's noted that startups and small businesses choose coworking for an *affordable, flexible office and networking opportunities*(Source: archieapp.co). And if their preferences shift toward more structure, coworking can accommodate that too. The key for coworking operators is to keep such teams happy at each stage – e.g., ensure that while they are hotdesking they can operate smoothly, and have options ready when they seek dedicated space so they don't leave for another facility.

Implications for Space Planning, Occupancy, and User Experience

For coworking space managers and workplace strategists, the choice between hotdesks and assigned desks is not just about individual worker experience – it heavily influences **space planning, occupancy rates, and overall user experience design** of the workplace.

- **Occupancy Management and Capacity:** One of the biggest planning considerations is how to **size the space relative to memberships (or employees)**. With hotdesking, a coworking operator typically **oversells capacity** to a degree, banking on not all members being present simultaneously. For example, they might have 100 physical hotdesk seats but sell 150 hotdesk memberships. The appropriate ratio depends on usage patterns; historically, a ratio around **1.2 members per desk** was common (Source: deskmag.com), though with hybrid work causing peak mid-week usage, some spaces might push it a bit further (1.5:1 or more) with tech-enabled monitoring to avoid issues. Overselling boosts revenue and keeps the space active, but it requires careful monitoring of **peak occupancy**. The aim is to avoid the scenario where members routinely can't find a desk (which would drive them away). Many coworking spaces monitor daily peak utilization and might cap membership sales if they hit, say, 80-90% occupancy at peak. They also often implement **booking systems or check-in requirements** to track usage in real time.

  With assigned desks, occupancy is managed differently: each desk is tied to a paying member (or team), so in theory occupancy in terms of lease is 100% when all desks are leased. But **actual utilization** will often be lower – maybe only 60-70% of those assigned seats are filled on a given day. This is reflected in industry benchmarks: larger coworking spaces (often with more hotflex space) have around **75% actual occupancy**, whereas smaller spaces (which often rely on dedicated desks/offices) might see about half their capacity in use on average (Source: coworker.com). For

space planning, this means dedicated areas need to accommodate that ebb and flow without feeling empty or wasted. Some designs integrate unused dedicated desks into the space as "spare" seating for hotdeskers when the rightful user is away, though permission and logistics for that can be tricky.

From a **real estate portfolio view**, companies embracing hotdesking can plan for **fewer desks than employees**, allowing downsizing of space. CBRE's survey shows companies are indeed planning for increased **seat sharing ratios (e.g., 2:1 or 3:1)** to cut space needs (Source: cbre.com). This can significantly reduce occupancy costs or free up space for other uses. For coworking operators, more hotdesking means potentially more members per square foot, which is good for revenue but only to the point the user experience holds up.

- **Space Layout and Design:** The mix of hotdesk vs. dedicated influences the physical **layout of the coworking space**. Hotdesking areas are typically designed to be **multi-functional and easily reconfigurable** – lots of modular furniture, communal tables, and a variety of seating (couches, high-tops, phone booths nearby, etc.) to cater to different preferences (Source: coworker.com) (Source: coworker.com). The goal is to accommodate a rotating cast of users and encourage movement. Dedicated desk areas, in contrast, often have a more **permanent layout** (rows of desks or cubicles) and are placed in slightly more secluded or quiet sections since those users treat it as their stable office (and as noted, they prefer quieter, personalized space) (Source: regus.com).

  For an optimal user experience, many coworking spaces blend these: perhaps an open bullpen of hotdesks in the bright center of the space (buzzing with energy), with dedicated desks around the perimeter or on a mezzanine where it's a bit calmer. That way, **hotdesk users get vibrancy and dedicated users get some privacy**, yet everyone has access to shared amenities. Space planners also need to incorporate sufficient **amenities to support hotdesking**: enough **lockers** for people to stash things (since hotdeskers can't leave items at a desk) (Source: chanty.com)(Source: chanty.com), **power outlets everywhere** (so anyone can sit anywhere) (Source: chanty.com), and **phone booths or small meeting rooms** to take calls in (since hotdeskers won't have a private area of their own) (Source: chanty.com). A well-planned hotdesking area should also consider **acoustics** – use of sound-absorbing materials, layout that breaks up sound travel – to mitigate the noise issues.

  Another planning aspect is **zoning**: To get the best of both worlds, some spaces establish zones like quiet zones (library-style hotdesk area), collaboration zones (tables for groups or chatting allowed), and social zones (cafe). This allows people to choose environment by work mode (Source: chanty.com). It's effectively designing an office like a city with neighborhoods for different activities. Activity-based work design often accompanies hotdesking to provide those choices (and the aforementioned study where 70% said ABW increased productivity reflects having the right zones) (Source: chanty.com).

In dedicated desk zones, design considerations include providing **lockable storage** for each desk (since those users often keep things on site) (Source: regus.com), maybe slightly larger desk surfaces (to accommodate personalization and equipment), and ensuring consistency in ergonomic setup (since one person will be using it, they might adjust it specifically to them – height-adjustable desks are a plus for dedicated users with specific preferences).

If a coworking space finds that hotdesk demand is far higher than dedicated desk demand (or vice versa), they might physically reallocate areas – e.g., convert a row of underused dedicated desks into additional hotdesk space or small team offices, or if dedicated desks have a waitlist, reduce some open area to add more. Being able to **reconfigure** is itself a benefit of modular design; some modern coworking furniture (movable desks, partitions) allows shifting between layouts as demand changes.

- **User Experience and Satisfaction:** Ultimately, offering the right balance of hotdesking vs. assigned desks is crucial for user (member) **satisfaction**. Different users value different things, so providing options can be a competitive advantage. A coworking space that caters only to one style might alienate a segment of potential clients. For instance, a pure hotdesk-only space may turn off someone who absolutely needs a fixed spot and they'll go to a competitor that offers dedicated desks. Conversely, a space that is mostly private offices/dedicated desks might not attract the transient remote workers or freelancers who bring diversity (and who may later upgrade to offices). Therefore, many successful coworking venues offer tiered memberships: from open hotdesk to dedicated desk to private office, plus day passes, etc. This creates a **pipeline for upsell** (as our startup example earlier showed) and ensures members can find a plan that fits their working style – leading to higher overall satisfaction and retention.

User experience also extends to **daily usability**. In a hotdesk-heavy model, investing in a **good digital reservation or check-in system** significantly improves experience. If members can quickly see where a free desk is, or reserve one for later, it removes uncertainty and builds trust that they'll have a spot (reducing the stress we discussed). Many companies and coworking spaces now provide **interactive floorplan apps** for this purpose (Source: chanty.com)(Source: chanty.com). Some even integrate sensors to show occupancy in real time. Such systems must be intuitive – if they're cumbersome, they can cause frustration (the "complexity of booking system" problem (Source: chanty.com)).

In an assigned-desk model, user experience focuses more on **comfort and amenities** around that desk – since that's their daily environment, things like personal climate control or noise level matter. If an assigned desk area is too crowded or lacks nearby collaboration space, those users might feel stuck or disturbed. It's wise to still allow dedicated desk users to book meeting rooms or use breakout spaces easily so they're not confined.

Another aspect is **community animation**: For hotdesk users especially, programming events (lunch meetups, workshops) can enhance their experience because they don't have a fixed neighbor to get to know over time – events help them network and feel part of a community. For assigned desk users, who might come in daily to the same people, the community forms more naturally at their "neighborhood," but events still add value and bring the entire space together (preventing silos). A vibrant community is cited in coworking research as a factor that improves members' well-being and satisfaction (Source: archieapp.co), so space managers allocate common space for gatherings and encourage mixing between hotdesk and fixed members.

The **appearance and vibe** of the space also tie into whether hotdesk or assigned. A sea of identical assigned desks can feel corporate or dull to some – coworking spaces therefore inject art, varied furniture, plants, etc., to keep it inspiring $34^{\dagger}$. Hotdesk areas often are designed to look more like a trendy cafe or casual lounge to give a *"fun, flexible"* vibe which appeals to younger and creative professionals. This signals the culture of the space. Meanwhile, a section of neatly kept dedicated desks shows that more traditional productivity is also valued. Striking a visual and functional balance can attract a wider audience.

- **Financial and Business Implications:** From the management perspective, hotdesking memberships often mean more members (and thus more diverse revenue streams), but also slightly **less predictability** – usage can fluctuate, and if many members cancel at once you lose revenue but still have fixed costs. Dedicated desk rentals are usually longer-term commitments (members might sign 6-12 month agreements) providing stable income, though each desk is tied to one client. A diversified approach can hedge risks. Also, dedicated desks typically yield a bit lower density, meaning revenue per square foot might be less than an oversubscribed hotdesk area – however, they also typically command higher prices per person. Some coworking spaces find private offices and dedicated desks are the profit centers (with hotdesks being an entry product), whereas others operate almost exclusively with hotdesks and volume. So the business model is influenced by this mix.

Occupancy rates are a key KPI. A coworking space aims to be in that sweet spot (~80-90% physical occupancy at peak) – enough that it's lively and profitable, but not so full that users feel it's overcrowded. If they see consistently <50% occupancy, they likely have too many assigned desks/offices empty (time to market more or convert space). If they see 100%+ attempted occupancy (people hunting for desks), they need to either stop selling hotdesk memberships or add more space/hotdesk capacity, or implement stricter booking. It's a dynamic equilibrium. Tools like OfficeRnD (a coworking management software) or others are used to track these metrics.

Also, **member churn** can be tied to these factors: If hotdesk users frequently have a poor experience (no seats, too noisy), they will cancel. If dedicated desk users feel it's not worth the money (like they could get a small private office elsewhere for similar cost), they may leave. Thus, constantly

gathering feedback (surveys, observation) is important. Often, coworking managers will directly ask, "Do you feel you can find a desk when you need it? Do you feel you have the privacy you want?" and adjust operations accordingly.

In practice, many workplaces are adopting a **hybrid design**: for example, a corporate HQ might designate 60% of seats as unassigned (for hoteling/hotdesking) and 40% as assigned to those who need it (perhaps certain roles or those who opted in). Coworking spaces might have a big open area plus a row of dedicated desks plus some private offices – essentially three tiers of flexibility. This allows **segmentation of users by need and price point**, maximizing occupancy and user happiness.

To reference a real trend: CBRE's Global Occupancy Insights note that as seat sharing increases, offices are being reconfigured with **fewer individual desks and more collaborative and amenity spaces**(Source: cbre.com). Coworking has always had a bit of that DNA – it provides lounges, cafes, event spaces beyond just rows of desks. The rationale is that if people don't each need a desk at all times, you can fill space with other value-adding features. Those features in turn enhance user experience (making the office a place people want to come).

In coworking, this might mean if fewer dedicated desks are needed, converting some area to a new conference room, a podcast booth, or a wellness room could attract more members and provide benefit to all. It's a constant tuning of space allocation.

Finally, **COVID-19 considerations** taught planners to include flexibility in layouts. Hotdesking got tricky during the height of the pandemic due to sharing concerns, but with proper cleaning regimes and perhaps leaving some desks unused for distancing, it has resumed. Some spaces introduced **"semi-assigned"** desks where a member has a rotating desk assigned on certain days to reduce sharing. This creative thinking continues to influence designs (like bigger desks, or easy-clean surfaces).

In conclusion, from a planning standpoint, **hotdesking vs. assigned desks is a balancing act** between efficiency and certainty. The best strategy often is to incorporate both in a complementary way, tailored to your member base. The **user experience** should feel seamless: a hotdesker should feel they have plenty of space options and amenities (not that they are second-class to office holders), and an assigned-desk user should feel they are getting enhanced value (stability, privacy) for their premium. When done right, a coworking space can achieve high occupancy and revenue while also delivering a high satisfaction environment, essentially by **designing for diversity of work styles**.

Conclusion

Both hotdesking and assigned desk models have compelling advantages and significant drawbacks, especially in the context of coworking and flexible work. **Hotdesking** offers unmatched **flexibility, space efficiency, and opportunities for spontaneous collaboration**, aligning well with hybrid work trends and cost-conscious strategies. It enables coworking spaces and companies to **optimize occupancy and reduce real estate costs**, potentially saving up to 20–30% on space needs by eliminating permanently empty seats (Source: community.sap.com)(Source: cbre.com). Hotdesking also fosters a democratic, fluid culture where freelancers, remote employees, and teams mingle, driving networking and innovation across silos (Source: nexudus.com). These benefits, however, come at the cost of **personal comfort and certainty**. Research shows many workers feel less satisfied in unassigned seating arrangements, citing issues like lack of personal space, increased stress, and difficulty focusing amidst constant change (Source: kornferry.com)(Source: archieapp.co). The model can negatively impact morale if not carefully managed, as seen when some firms reversed course after employee pushback about impersonal offices (Source: archieapp.co).

Assigned desks, on the other hand, prioritize **stability, individual well-being, and team cohesion**. They give professionals a sense of ownership and a reliable environment – factors linked to higher comfort and potentially better focus and morale (Source: chanty.com)(Source: regus.com). A dedicated desk can become a personal oasis of productivity, equipped to one's preferences, which is especially beneficial for those who need a consistent setup or have intensive focus work. Having a fixed team area can strengthen communication and culture within that group, providing a "home" at work that boosts belonging. The trade-off, of course, is **reduced flexibility and higher costs**. Fixed desks often sit unused during remote days, leading to inefficiencies in space utilization (actual daily occupancy well below 100%). They lack the agility that modern, rapidly changing organizations often require. Over-provisioning space "just in case" every employee shows up is an expensive safety net – one reason **the majority of companies are moving away from fully assigned seating in their portfolios** (Source: cbre.com). Additionally, assigned seating can limit cross-team interaction and networking, potentially siloing communities within a coworking environment (Source: regus.com).

For **workplace strategists and coworking managers**, the clear conclusion is that **no single model fits all**. The optimal approach is often a **hybrid**: provide a base of assigned desks or private offices for those individuals and teams who truly need consistent space (or greatly value it), while leveraging hotdesking and hoteling for those who are more transient or flexibility-seeking. This allows capturing the benefits of both – cost efficiency and vibrancy on one side, and stability and personalization on the other. Gensler's workplace research and others emphasize giving people **choice and control** as a key to a successful workplace (Source: kornferry.com)(Source: archieapp.co). In practical terms, that means designing

offices and coworking spaces with a **variety of work settings**: quiet zones, collaboration areas, touchdown spots, and some dedicated nooks. Employees and members can then gravitate to the environment that best supports their task at hand, which is the essence of activity-based working.

Crucially, whichever model is implemented must be supported by thoughtful **policies, technology, and culture**. If hotdesking is used, robust booking systems and etiquette guidelines are essential to prevent the chaos and stress of "desk uncertainty" (Source: chanty.com)(Source: kornferry.com). Adequate amenities like storage, phone booths, and cleaned, well-equipped desks make a huge difference in user satisfaction (Source: chanty.com)(Source: chanty.com). Management should solicit feedback regularly and be ready to adjust (for example, if certain days are overcrowded, consider requiring reservations or opening additional space). On the assigned side, it's important to ensure that those desks are actually needed – using occupancy data to identify under-used spaces can inform when to transition some assigned desks to flexible use (Source: cbre.com). It's also wise to avoid a rigid "all or nothing" mandate. Some companies have allowed certain teams or senior staff to keep assigned desks while others hotel, based on job function and preferences, which can improve acceptance of the overall strategy.

Expert perspectives reinforce that **the office must earn its keep** by offering an experience people can't get at home (Source: kornferry.com). Hotdesking or not, employees and members will embrace a workplace that makes their day easier, more collaborative, and more enriching. That could mean better technology (so any desk feels as good as a personal setup), or amenities and social opportunities that make coming in rewarding (Source: archieapp.co). A successful coworking space similarly differentiates itself by community vibe and service quality beyond just a desk. In essence, **space planning should be human-centric**: start from what various users need to be happy and productive, and design the mix of desk arrangements around that.

As the modern workforce continues to evolve, with remote and hybrid work becoming standard, we can expect the trend of **flexible seating to persist and grow**, but also an awareness that one size does not fit all. Already, only a minority of companies envision returning to fully assigned seating for everyone (Source: archieapp.co), and coworking growth (projected at 25% increase year-over-year in the U.S. early 2025 (Source: archieapp.co)) suggests flexible models are filling a vital niche. The most resilient strategy is to remain **agile and data-driven**: use occupancy and satisfaction data to continuously tweak the balance of hotdesks vs. assigned, and to invest in the tools and design elements that mitigate the downsides of each.

In conclusion, **hotdesking vs. assigned desks is not a binary choice but a spectrum of solutions**. By combining elements of both, coworking spaces and offices can create environments that are **cost-effective yet comfortable, collaborative yet focused, and ultimately supportive of the diverse ways people work today**. The references and cases discussed – from CBRE's occupancy statistics to real-world surveys of employee sentiment – all point to the need for intentional implementation. When executed thoughtfully, a workspace can leverage hotdesking's dynamism **without** sacrificing the well-

being and productivity gains that come from a sense of place. The future of workplace strategy likely lies in this balanced approach, continually refined as we learn more from ongoing research and the changing expectations of workers in a post-pandemic era.

Sources:

- CBRE Research (2024). *Americas Office Occupier Sentiment Survey* – Trends in hybrid work and seat sharing (Source: cbre.com)(Source: cbre.com).

- Korn Ferry (2023). *Hot-Desking: Not So Hot with Employees* – Review of employee sentiments and research on hotdesking dissatisfaction (Source: kornferry.com)(Source: kornferry.com).

- Archie (2025). *What is Hot Desking? Statistics, Research & Trends* – Compilation of recent stats (e.g., flexible seating lowers satisfaction, 40% of companies at 1:1 desks) (Source: archieapp.co) (Source: archieapp.co).

- Nexudus (2025). *Is Hot Desking Right for Your Business?* – Pros/cons including sector and individual differences (e.g., Gen Z preferences, social worker challenges) (Source: nexudus.com)(Source: nexudus.com).

- Regus (n.d.). *Dedicated desk vs hot desk* – Industry perspective on differences, with pros/cons for each in coworking (Source: regus.com)(Source: regus.com).

- Coworker.com Mag (2025). *Is Your Coworking Space Half Empty?* – Occupancy statistics (Deskmag study) and strategies for flexible space design (Source: coworker.com)(Source: coworker.com).

- Chanty (2025). *Hot Desking and Its Trends* – Highlights common advantages (cost, collaboration) and disadvantages (lack of personal space, hygiene, booking complexity) (Source: chanty.com) (Source: chanty.com).

- HBR (2022). *Research: How Coworking Spaces Impact Employee Well-Being* – Notes improved relational well-being in coworking (context for community benefits).

- Business Insider via Nexudus (2024). Reporting on Gen Z valuing personal desks and mentorship benefits of assigned seating (Source: nexudus.com).

- Gensler Research (2022). *Workplace Survey* – Found 48% come to office to focus, implying need for supportive environments (Source: kornferry.com).

- Deskmag (2018). *State of Coworking* – Found average 1.2 members per desk in coworking (showing mild oversubscription) (Source: deskmag.com).

- Forrester Research (2024) – European leaders' stance on assigned desks (only 11% expected full return to assigned) (Source: archieapp.co).

- WeWork Survey (2024) – Nearly 60% of companies plan to use coworking for expansion, reflecting preference for flexibility (Source: archieapp.co).

- La Trobe Univ. (2024). *Effects of Hot-desking on Staff Morale* – Concluded overall negative morale impact, despite some benefits (Source: opal.latrobe.edu.au).

- Instant Group Survey (2022) – 85% occupiers say access to coworking positively impacts well-being, underlining importance of flexibility (Source: theinstantgroup.com).

- JLL (2023). *Global Occupancy Planning Report* – Suggests optimized ratios and notes up to ~30% space saving with hybrid strategies (Source: community.sap.com).

These sources and examples underscore the insights throughout this report, providing a research-backed foundation for decision-making about workspace strategy.

Tags: hotdesking, assigned desks, coworking, workplace strategy, space utilization, hybrid work, office design, employee productivity

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About 2727 Coworking

2727 Coworking is a vibrant and thoughtfully designed workspace ideally situated along the picturesque Lachine Canal in Montreal's trendy Griffintown neighborhood. Just steps away from the renowned Atwater Market, members can enjoy scenic canal views and relaxing green-space walks during their breaks.

Accessibility is excellent, boasting an impressive 88 Walk Score, 83 Transit Score, and a perfect 96 Bike Score, making it a "Biker's Paradise". The location is further enhanced by being just 100 meters from the Charlevoix metro station, ensuring a quick, convenient, and weather-proof commute for members and their clients.

The workspace is designed with flexibility and productivity in mind, offering 24/7 secure access—perfect for global teams and night owls. Connectivity is top-tier, with gigabit fibre internet providing fast, low-latency connections ideal for developers, streamers, and virtual meetings. Members can choose from a versatile workspace menu tailored to various budgets, ranging from hot-desks at $300 to dedicated desks at $450 and private offices accommodating 1–10 people priced from $600 to $3,000+. Day passes are competitively priced at $40.

2727 Coworking goes beyond standard offerings by including access to a fully-equipped, 9-seat conference room at no additional charge. Privacy needs are met with dedicated phone booths, while ergonomically designed offices featuring floor-to-ceiling windows, natural wood accents, and abundant greenery foster wellness and productivity.

Amenities abound, including a fully-stocked kitchen with unlimited specialty coffee, tea, and filtered water. Cyclists, runners, and fitness enthusiasts benefit from on-site showers and bike racks, encouraging an eco-

conscious commute and active lifestyle. The pet-friendly policy warmly welcomes furry companions, adding to the inclusive and vibrant community atmosphere.

Members enjoy additional perks like outdoor terraces and easy access to canal parks, ideal for mindfulness breaks or casual meetings. Dedicated lockers, mailbox services, comprehensive printing and scanning facilities, and a variety of office supplies and AV gear ensure convenience and efficiency. Safety and security are prioritized through barrier-free access, CCTV surveillance, alarm systems, regular disinfection protocols, and after-hours security.

The workspace boasts exceptional customer satisfaction, reflected in its stellar ratings—5.0/5 on Coworker, 4.9/5 on Google, and 4.7/5 on LiquidSpace—alongside glowing testimonials praising its calm environment, immaculate cleanliness, ergonomic furniture, and attentive staff. The bilingual environment further complements Montreal's cosmopolitan business landscape.

Networking is organically encouraged through an open-concept design, regular community events, and informal networking opportunities in shared spaces and a sun-drenched lounge area facing the canal. Additionally, the building hosts a retail café and provides convenient proximity to gourmet eats at Atwater Market and recreational activities such as kayaking along the stunning canal boardwalk.

Flexible month-to-month terms and transparent online booking streamline scalability for growing startups, with suites available for up to 12 desks to accommodate future expansion effortlessly. Recognized as one of Montreal's top coworking spaces, 2727 Coworking enjoys broad visibility across major platforms including Coworker, LiquidSpace, CoworkingCafe, and Office Hub, underscoring its credibility and popularity in the market.

Overall, 2727 Coworking combines convenience, luxury, productivity, community, and flexibility, creating an ideal workspace tailored to modern professionals and innovative teams.

DISCLAIMER