Workspace Utilization Metrics in Corporate Real Estate

Published August 26, 2025 60 min read

Maximizing Workspace Utilization in Corporate Environments

Introduction

In the modern hybrid workplace, businesses are rethinking how to **maximize workspace utilization** – ensuring that every square foot of office real estate is effectively used to support employees and business goals. Workspace utilization broadly refers to how office spaces are occupied and leveraged over time (Source: officespacesoftware.com). It encompasses everything from the occupancy of individual desks and conference rooms to the use of common areas like lounges or collaboration zones. High utilization can lead to cost savings, improved collaboration, and a smaller environmental footprint,

whereas low utilization means wasted space and resources. With remote and hybrid work now common, many offices sit half-empty on any given day (Source: cfodive.com), pushing corporate leaders to find smarter ways to use space and **make the office a destination, not an obligation**(Source: linkedin.com).

Workspace utilization is typically measured by metrics such as occupancy rates (the percentage of seats or area occupied at a given time) and utilization rates (how effectively a space is used over time) (Source: officespacesoftware.com). While occupancy tells **how many people** are in a space, utilization digs deeper into **how** those people use the space (Source: officespacesoftware.com). For example, an office floor might average 50% occupancy, but utilization data could reveal that certain areas (like meeting rooms or lounges) are heavily used while dozens of desks sit empty (Source: officespacesoftware.com)(Source: officespacesoftware.com). Understanding these patterns is critical. By analyzing when and how spaces are used – peak usage times, popular areas, frequency of desk bookings, etc. – facilities managers can identify inefficiencies and opportunities to optimize the layout (Source: officespacesoftware.com)(Source: officespacesoftware.com). In the sections below, we define key utilization metrics, examine common challenges, and explore strategies – from modern workplace design concepts to IoT technology – that leading organizations use to **boost space utilization** and drive both financial and productivity benefits.

Defining Workspace Utilization and Key Metrics

Maximizing workspace utilization starts with clear **definitions and metrics** to measure how space is used. A core metric is the **occupancy rate**, typically a snapshot of the percentage of seats or area filled at a given time (Source: officespacesoftware.com)(Source: officespacesoftware.com). For instance, if an office floor has 100 desks and 45 are occupied on average, the occupancy rate is 45%. By contrast, **utilization rate** looks at usage over time – for example, what portion of the workday or week a space is actively used, or how many hours a desk is occupied versus available. In practice, companies often track both peak and average utilization. Peak utilization measures the highest occupancy (say, the busiest hour or busiest day of the week), while average utilization captures typical use. In today's hybrid offices, these can differ markedly – many workplaces see mid-week peaks and near-empty offices on Mondays or Fridays (Source: medium.com). In Q3 2024, one study showed that offices were **nearly half full on a typical Tuesday (mid-week peak ~45% occupancy) but only 24% occupied on Fridays**(Source: medium.com). Such fluctuations mean that simply looking at daily peak occupancy can be misleading without context of the lows.

Another important metric is **space density**, often defined as square footage per person or per seat. Before hybrid work, companies targeted dense layouts around 150 square feet per employee, but this is evolving. According to a global JLL survey, many employers are now aiming to shrink the average space per person from about **165 sq. ft. down to 132 sq. ft.** per person (Source: cfodive.com). This reflects a

push to eliminate underutilized space and **right-size offices for hybrid work**. Similarly, the **seat sharing ratio** is a key metric: it represents how many people share each desk or workstation. Pre-pandemic, a 1:1 ratio (one person per desk) was common, but now organizations are planning for higher ratios (e.g. **1.3 people per seat** on average, up from roughly 1.1) (Source: jll.com)(Source: cfodive.com). In other words, not every employee has an assigned desk – desks are shared or used by multiple people at different times. A higher seat-sharing ratio, enabled by hot-desking or hoteling (explained later), lets companies accommodate more employees with fewer desks, banking on the fact that not all employees are in the office simultaneously.

To quantify utilization, companies employ a mix of methods. Many gather **occupancy data** through **badge swipes**, Wi-Fi logins, or sensor counts to see how many people are present and where (Source: jll.com)(Source: jll.com). Some calculate utilization as an average of daily peak occupancies or use weekly peak metrics (Source: jll.com). For instance, an organization might report that its offices are utilized 50% on an average day (half of desks occupied) and perhaps 80% at the busiest point of the week. These figures can then be benchmarked against industry standards. Recent global data shows office utilization (on average) is still hovering around **50-60% of capacity** in 2025, which is an improvement from the lows of the pandemic but still below pre-2020 norms (Source: jll.com)(Source: jll.com). *Globally, office seats are occupied only about **54%** of the time on average, up from 49% in 2024 but short of the ~61% seen pre-pandemic (Source: jll.com).* Notably, targets are rising – many companies are now setting goals to reach ~70–80% utilization to eliminate waste (Source: jll.com). These metrics form the baseline for measuring success as organizations implement changes to maximize how their workplaces are used.

Common Challenges and Inefficiencies

Despite the clear benefits of higher space utilization, **many organizations struggle with underutilized offices and inefficiencies**. A frequently cited figure is that **up to 30–40% of office space is unused at any given time**(Source: density.io). This means thousands of desks, offices, and meeting rooms sit empty while the company continues to pay rent, utilities, and maintenance for them. In fact, research in the U.S. estimated that about **$3.36 billion is spent annually on electricity for spaces that aren't being used**, translating into **32 billion kWh of wasted energy and over 22 million metric tons of CO_2 emissions each year** to power, heat, and cool empty offices (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). This startling inefficiency has financial, environmental, and cultural implications.

Several factors contribute to low utilization. **Rigid, assigned-seating office layouts** often lead to empty desks when employees are traveling, on leave, or working remotely. Before flexible policies, it was common to see an office where every employee had a dedicated desk, yet on any given day a significant percentage of staff were absent (vacation, client visits, sick days, etc.), resulting in rows of unused workstations. One case study in New York City's government found they were **paying for 13.6% more**

desks than needed – simply because that many assigned desks were vacant on average – and eliminating that excess saved the city $13 million a year (Source: ash.harvard.edu). Similarly, the **traditional Monday-Friday 9-to-5** mindset no longer holds true. **Hybrid work patterns** create "peaks and valleys" of attendance – mid-week crowding and near-empty offices on other days (Source: medium.com)(Source: medium.com). If everyone decides to come in Tuesday through Thursday, a company might still maintain enough desks for 100% of employees, even though on Mondays and Fridays half those desks sit idle. Balancing this **"midweek mountain" vs. empty Friday problem** has become a major challenge (Source: medium.com)(Source: medium.com).

Another challenge is the **mismatch between space types provided and actual employee needs**. Many offices suffer from the paradox of *"half of desks are empty, but all meeting rooms are booked."* Inflexible layouts with too many cubicles and not enough collaborative areas lead to underutilization in one area and frustrating shortages in another. A 2024 survey noted that while half of office seats were empty, employees still spent time hunting for open conference rooms because the few available were always in use (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). Inefficient **space allocation** – e.g. large dedicated executive offices that sit unused when those executives travel, or oversized reception areas with no visitors – further drag down utilization. In response, many companies are now **"jettisoning reception areas, file storage, and copy rooms"** (spaces that saw low use) and repurposing that square footage into additional meeting rooms, phone booths, and breakout spaces that better support day-to-day work (Source: cfodive.com)(Source: cfodive.com).

Finally, **human factors and change resistance** present a non-technical challenge. Office utilization isn't just a real estate math problem – it's about people's work habits and comfort. Employees may resist giving up assigned desks due to attachment to personal space or fear of not finding a spot (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). Without proper change management (discussed later), initiatives like hot desking can initially make staff feel "unmoored" and lower morale (Source: density.io). Additionally, too much flexibility without structure can breed chaos: if employees can roam anywhere with no norms, it might lead to noisy areas next to quiet work, or teams unable to locate colleagues. As one workplace software firm noted, *"while flexible spaces support hybrid work, too much flexibility can lead to inefficiency"* without balancing it with some structured guidelines (Source: officespacesoftware.com) (Source: officespacesoftware.com). Thus, a key challenge is finding the sweet spot between rigid structure and free-for-all flexibility – giving employees choice while ensuring space is used efficiently and effectively.

Modern Strategies for Optimizing Space Utilization

To tackle these challenges, organizations are adopting **modern workspace strategies and methodologies** that fundamentally rethink office design and usage policies. Three prominent approaches are **Activity-Based Working (ABW)**, **hot desking (and hoteling)**, and strategic **space zoning**. These methods, often combined, aim to create a more dynamic office that aligns with how employees actually work throughout the day.

Activity-Based Working (ABW)

Activity-Based Working is a philosophy that recognizes employees engage in a variety of tasks – from intense focused work to collaborative brainstorming – and thus need a **variety of work settings** to choose from (Source: ibm.com). Under ABW, the office is zoned into different types of spaces tailored to activities: e.g. open collaborative areas for team meetings, quiet zones or pods for solo focus work, formal meeting rooms for clients, informal lounges for ad-hoc discussion, and so on. **Assigned seats are de-emphasized or eliminated**; instead, employees select an environment that suits their current task. *"The new, activity-based workplace is all about flexible, dynamic spaces that can change as the needs of the business and workforce change,"* explains an IBM workplace design expert (Source: ibm.com). In practice, this means an ABW office might have significantly fewer traditional desks than employees, offset by more shared amenities: think of an office with 100 people but only 60 desks, supplemented by multiple collaboration areas, café spaces, focus rooms, and phone booths. People move throughout the day to whatever space fits their activity – working at a quiet station in the morning to write a report, then moving to a huddle room for a team call, then perhaps a lounge for an informal brainstorm.

This approach **boosts utilization** by ensuring each space is purpose-built and likely to be used for its intended purpose, rather than one desk per person sitting empty. It also improves employee experience by giving autonomy and the *"right space for the right task."* For example, global tech firms like Microsoft embraced ABW to improve collaboration and break down silos. Microsoft shifted to an activity-based workplace when they found their old assigned-seating environment hindered communication (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). After implementing ABW, *"if you asked people what they love, it's the flexible environment,"* said Microsoft's Director of Business Groups, noting the cultural shift from monitoring time-at-desk to empowering teams to work creatively and be accountable for results (Source: density.io).

Successful ABW implementations often go hand-in-hand with investments in **technology and culture change** (for example, deploying tools for locating coworkers or booking rooms, and establishing norms like quiet hours in focus zones). There is no one-size-fits-all formula; each company must tailor ABW to its work patterns (Source: ibm.com)(Source: ibm.com). However, common tactics include starting with a **detailed analysis of work activities**, piloting new layouts on a small scale, and **iteratively refining the**

space mix. The end result should be an office where space **morphs to support work** – e.g. removable walls or modular furniture to reconfigure areas as needs evolve – and where employees genuinely have choice. When done right, ABW can significantly raise utilization (by enabling higher shared-desking ratios) *and* improve engagement. A senior architect involved in designing Deloitte's Amsterdam office (often cited as a pinnacle of ABW) noted that **only 75% of that building's floor space is allocated to desks** – *"a quarter of the building is not desk space, it's a place to meet,"* focusing on community and collaboration (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). Deloitte's goal was a workplace more about *"making a working community, a place people want to come to"* than rows of owned desks (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io), an approach that has since been emulated by many.

Hot Desking and Hoteling

Hot desking and hoteling are practical implementations that often support concepts like ABW or flexible hybrid work. **Hot desking** is a system where employees do not have assigned seats; instead, they can choose any open desk in a designated area on a first-come, first-served basis (Source: serraview.com) (Source: serraview.com). **Hoteling** is similar, but typically involves **reservation of desks** or rooms in advance (via an app or booking system) to guarantee a spot (Source: serraview.com)(Source: serraview.com). Both approaches enable **desk sharing**: for example, 100 employees might share 70 desks, knowing that not everyone is in-office every day. These strategies directly increase utilization by reducing the number of underused desks – a desk that used to belong to an employee who is absent 2 days a week can now be used by someone else on those days, raising its occupancy from 60% to closer to 100%. Many organizations start by determining an appropriate **sharing ratio** (like 1.2 or 1.5 employees per desk) based on attendance data, and then removing excess desks accordingly (Source: serraview.com)(Source: serraview.com).

Hot desking gained popularity in part because **open floor plans** and mobile technology made it feasible for people to work anywhere. It is common in co-working spaces and tech offices, but now even traditional firms are trying it to trim costs. **However, hot desking must be managed carefully** to avoid pitfalls. Without any structure, employees might feel anxiety about finding a workspace each day or end up in unsuitable spots (e.g. someone needing quiet focus sits next to someone making sales calls). Best practices include creating team "neighborhoods" or zones – e.g. sales and marketing sit in one area, finance in another – to preserve some consistency (Source: serraview.com)(Source: serraview.com). Some companies designate **"quiet zones"** where anyone can work but where loud calls are prohibited, ensuring hot-deskers who need concentration have an appropriate zone (Source: serraview.com). The key is understanding the work needs of different groups and **zoning the space accordingly**, so that hot desking doesn't feel like a daily free-for-all scramble (Source: serraview.com)(Source: serraview.com). For instance, a firm might reserve one floor for mostly quiet, individual work and another for buzzing collaboration, allowing employees to choose environment by task without conflicting with neighbors.

Another critical component is providing **user-friendly booking and wayfinding tools**. In a hoteling model, employees typically use an app to see which desks or rooms are available and reserve one, perhaps even selecting a desk near colleagues they plan to work with (Source: serraview.com)(Source: serraview.com). Modern desk booking systems and interactive office maps (kiosks or mobile apps) make it easy to find a free spot, check in, or even locate where a particular teammate is sitting that day. These tools alleviate the uncertainty of unassigned seating. As a result, employees gain flexibility – they *"have some comfort of knowing in advance that they'll have a place to sit,"* as one workplace consultant notes (Source: serraview.com)(Source: serraview.com) – while the company gains efficiency by dramatically reducing the number of idle desks. Companies that have implemented hoteling often allow advance reservations for a day or a week at a time, and set rules (e.g. if you don't check in by 10am, the desk is released for others) to prevent "ghost reservations" holding spaces unused (Source: jllt.com)(Source: jllt.com).

Hot desking and hoteling, if implemented well, can **significantly cut real estate needs**. For example, **Deloitte** reduced one office's space by 40% by moving to a flexible seating model (dubbed "free address" or Workplace 360) and reported that after the adjustment, *93% of their employees said they would not want to return to the old fully assigned-seating model*(Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). This underscores that initial resistance can turn into acceptance once people experience the benefits (like more choice of where to work, and usually a more vibrant, well-designed office). Similarly, many other global companies have embraced unassigned seating: **Square**, a tech company, operates with a *"completely open plan"* and various environments to choose from, allowing staff at all levels to mingle and collaborate freely (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). And **LEGO**'s London office eliminated assigned desks in favor of **flexible work zones** – open booths, huddle rooms, writable walls – giving employees the freedom to move as needed (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). LEGO's team found that breaking the old notion of desk ownership led to better communication and quicker adoption of improved work practices (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io).

Change management (addressed in detail later) is especially vital here: employees need to be prepared and supported through the transition to hot desking. Clear policies (such as how to find a desk, etiquette for using shared spaces, and provision of lockers for personal storage) help smooth the shift. When done properly, hot desking can bolster both utilization and employee satisfaction, by **offering flexibility and choice** in how and where to work while cutting out wasteful excess space (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). It aligns naturally with hybrid work – employees who only come to the office occasionally don't need permanent stations, and those in daily get to enjoy an office with more diverse spaces instead of a static cubicle farm.

Space Zoning and Designated Areas

Space zoning refers to strategically dividing the workspace into zones or areas designated for specific purposes or work modes. In a sense, both ABW and well-managed hot desking rely on effective zoning. The idea is to **create differentiated spaces** – for example, a floor plan might include "quiet focus" zones (no talking, library atmosphere), "collaboration zones" (team tables, whiteboards, encouraging interaction), "social hubs" (pantry, coffee point with casual seating), and standard workstations – and make it clear which is which. This way, employees can self-select into an area that suits their immediate need, and the office avoids the conflict of incompatible activities in the same space. Zoning improves utilization by ensuring each type of space is used by the right activity: conference rooms aren't misused as individual offices, quiet areas aren't accidentally empty because people thought they couldn't talk there, etc.

An element of zoning is also **neighborhood planning**, wherein departments or project teams are allocated home zones (even if desks within are unassigned) to encourage proximity and chance encounters within teams while still allowing cross-pollination. For instance, a company might cluster its marketing team's desks near each other and near a collaborative lounge, whereas engineers might have a cluster adjacent to a quiet zone for deep work. One benefit of this approach, as noted earlier, is preventing problematic adjacencies – e.g. if accounting needs silence and sales is often noisy, zoning can ensure they work in separate areas to reduce friction (Source: serraview.com)(Source: serraview.com).

Beyond work-mode zoning, **space zoning for efficiency** can involve grouping similar utilization spaces together for facility operations. For example, one research study explored grouping rooms with similar usage patterns (like all high-usage areas in one zone, low-usage in another) to better control HVAC and lighting – essentially shutting down or reducing service to underused zones during off-peak times (Source: medium.com)(Source: medium.com). An example of this in practice: if Fridays are low occupancy (say 20% office-wide), a company could consolidate everyone who comes in on Friday to one or two floors and **close off other floors entirely on that day**, saving on lighting, cooling, and cleaning in the closed areas (Source: medium.com)(Source: medium.com). Some firms indeed are doing this – keeping certain floors "dark" on known low days – which directly raises the utilization of the *open* floors while cutting costs on the unused ones.

Modern offices increasingly incorporate **multi-purpose and reconfigurable spaces** as part of zoning strategy. Rather than permanently assigning a large conference room for occasional big meetings, they might use movable walls or modular furniture to allow that space to convert into two smaller rooms or a lounge when not needed as one large room. **Twilio**, a cloud communications company, provides a creative example: they planned to convert roughly *30% of previously desk space into "hackable" communal spaces with reconfigurable furniture*, explicitly to add variety and accommodate changing needs (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). Twilio's workplace manager noted that collaboration in shared spaces sparks innovation and community, so they invested in *"dynamic spaces… where furniture*

is reconfigurable. It's no longer one-size-fits-all"(Source: density.io). This kind of flexible zoning means the space can adapt from day to day or project to project, keeping utilization high by not letting any area sit idle for lack of adaptability.

In summary, **zoning and thoughtful design** ensure an office has the right mix of spaces and that each area is clearly purposed. This reduces the likelihood of large swathes of the office being "dead space." It also improves the employee experience: people know exactly where to go if they need quiet versus a brainstorm, and they have confidence that those spaces exist. By creating distinct zones (and communicating their intended use), companies like **LEGO** have successfully fostered a culture where employees move to the appropriate zone throughout the day – boosting overall usage as every corner of the office serves a meaningful function for someone (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). When paired with a flexible seating strategy, zoning becomes a powerful tool to maximize utilization without compromising the varied needs of a diverse workforce.

Shared open workstations in a modern office. Bench-style desk layouts and unassigned seating are increasingly common as companies seek to ***optimize space utilization*** *and reduce real estate costs (Source: cfodive.com). Such flexible layouts allow multiple employees to make use of the same desks at different times, significantly raising overall occupancy of each workstation.*

Integration of Technology for Smarter Workspaces

Technology has become an **indispensable enabler** of higher workspace utilization. In the past, companies relied on periodic manual surveys or badge entry counts to estimate space use. Today, a host of **IoT sensors, analytics platforms, and smart workplace software** can provide real-time, granular data and automation to optimize how space is used. From counting people to automatically turning off lights in empty rooms, these technologies both **inform decision-makers** and directly adjust the environment for efficiency.

IoT Sensors and Occupancy Analytics

IoT occupancy sensors are small devices (often mounted on ceilings or under desks) that detect presence – via motion, heat, camera (with AI), or pressure – to determine if a space is in use. By deploying hundreds of these sensors, organizations can capture live utilization data for every desk, room, or area. This real-time data is transformative: one facilities director likened it to having a "utilization x-ray" of your office. **Patterns that were invisible before become clear**, such as exactly which desks are rarely used, or how meeting room utilization spikes at 2 PM daily. Armed with such data, companies can make evidence-based changes. For example, **Fresenius**, a health solutions provider, installed over 300 wireless occupancy sensors across two office sites and quickly discovered extensive underutilized space (Source: jllt.com). The sensor data was so persuasive that they **terminated the lease on one entire**

building and consolidated staff to the other, yielding an estimated **$6 million in annual savings**(Source: jllt.com). This is a prime example of technology pinpointing excess capacity that was simply costing money with little benefit.

Beyond informing big real estate moves, sensors improve day-to-day efficiency. They can detect **"passive occupancy"**, meaning if a meeting ends early or someone leaves their desk for lunch, advanced sensors won't mistakenly mark the space as free immediately (Source: jllt.com). Instead, they track continuous inactivity over a threshold before declaring a space available. This level of detail helps eliminate "false availability" and feeds into **room booking systems**: if a conference room reservation is a no-show, sensors can update the system to free the room for others (Source: jllt.com) (solving the common "ghost meeting" problem of booked rooms sitting empty). Sensors also reveal **traffic patterns** – identifying areas where people tend to congregate or bottlenecks in the office layout (Source: jllt.com). Facility planners can use this to add amenities in popular spots or redesign layouts to improve flow and safety (for instance, if one lounge is consistently overcrowded, making it larger or creating a second one can spread usage).

Another key benefit is **integration with building systems**. Occupancy sensors can tie into HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) and lighting controls. If a sensor knows a room is vacant, it can trigger the lights to turn off, the thermostat to setback to an eco-friendly level, and even equipment like monitors to power down. This addresses that earlier statistic about 30% of energy being wasted on unused spaces – with sensors, those spaces won't draw power when empty (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). In effect, the office becomes **"smart" and responsive**: lights only where people are, climate control only in occupied zones. Some companies implement this on a zone basis (e.g. an entire floor's lighting adjusts based on general occupancy after hours), while more advanced setups do it room by room. According to one analysis, leveraging occupancy sensors in this way can significantly cut utility costs and reduce emissions, directly tying utilization improvements to sustainability goals (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). As an example, a sensor-triggered system might ensure that if by 6:00 pm only one corner of the office has people, only that corner remains fully lit and cooled, while the rest dial back to minimum settings – **saving money and energy without manual intervention**.

Workplace Analytics Platforms and Space Management Software

Collecting data is only half the battle; making sense of it is where **workplace analytics platforms** come in. Many organizations use dedicated software – sometimes part of an **Integrated Workplace Management System (IWMS)** or specialized **workplace analytics dashboards** – to aggregate data from sensors, badge systems, Wi-Fi, and booking apps into actionable insights. These platforms provide charts, heatmaps, and reports that help answer questions like: *Which spaces are most and least utilized? What are the peak days and times? How is our overall occupancy trending month to month?* According to JLL, more companies are adopting such data visualization tools and **advanced analytics to drive**

occupancy planning decisions(Source: jll.com)(Source: jll.com). The goal is to accelerate and improve decisions on portfolio size, workspace design, and daily management by having facts rather than anecdotes.

Modern IWMS solutions often combine many functions: space allocation plans, move management, asset tracking, and utilization analytics in one. They allow facility managers to **simulate scenarios** ("What if we converted 20% of desks to team spaces? What if we closed the 4th floor on Fridays?") using real data. An **Integrated Workplace Management System** can centralize all this information, enabling data-driven decisions about office layout changes or lease reductions (Source: officespacesoftware.com)(Source: officespacesoftware.com). On the other hand, **Workplace Experience (WEX) platforms** focus on the employee-facing side – they often include mobile apps for desk/room booking, finding colleagues, and services like wayfinding or service requests (Source: officespacesoftware.com)(Source: officespacesoftware.com). These WEX tools generate valuable data too (like desk booking trends, popular amenities usage) while also smoothing the employee experience in a flexible office (Source: officespacesoftware.com)(Source: officespacesoftware.com). Together, IWMS and WEX systems give a comprehensive view: IWMS provides the facility optimization lens, and WEX ensures employees can easily navigate the new flexible environment.

Increasingly, **artificial intelligence** features are being layered on top of utilization data. AI algorithms can digest large volumes of occupancy data and detect patterns or make predictions. For example, AI might forecast future space needs based on historical trends and headcount projections, or automatically identify an inefficient space (e.g. a conference room that's never more than 2 people – suggesting it could be downsized to a huddle room) (Source: officespacesoftware.com)(Source: officespacesoftware.com). Some AI tools now offer **"recommendations engines"** for workspace changes, or even real-time optimization – akin to how smart traffic systems manage flow, a smart office could dynamically reassign underutilized spaces or prompt users ("The west wing is crowded, try the east quiet zone"). While still emerging, AI promises to further enhance how we fine-tune space utilization, by finding insights humans might miss. As one facility management commentator put it, *AI and analytics allow managers to "forecast trends, identify inefficiencies, and suggest actionable improvements faster than ever."*(Source: officespacesoftware.com)(Source: officespacesoftware.com).

Smart Scheduling, Booking, and Flexible Infrastructure

Another tech component is the suite of **smart scheduling and booking systems** that directly facilitate flexible use of space. These include **desk booking apps**, **room scheduling panels**, and even automated occupancy-based reservation adjustments. In a hot-desking environment, a robust reservation system is crucial so employees can plan their in-office days confidently. Modern systems not only let you reserve a specific desk but often show a live map of the office, indicate where teammates are sitting, and integrate with your calendar. This reduces the friction of finding a workspace and encourages people to actually

use the office (thus raising utilization, since one deterrent to coming in – uncertainty of a workspace – is removed). As mentioned, these systems can be augmented by sensor data to auto-cancel bookings if no one shows up within e.g. 15 minutes, freeing the space for others (Source: jllt.com).

Smart scheduling extends to other resources: parking spots, lockers, and equipment can all be managed with similar tools, ensuring they are allocated on days of need rather than assigned full-time to individuals regardless of use. For meeting rooms, many companies use digital panels or mobile apps that display current status and upcoming schedule, making it easy to claim an empty room on the fly. Advanced meeting room solutions detect if a room is occupied (via sensors or check-in) and if a booking is unused, will release the room after a set period (Source: jllt.com). This directly boosts actual utilization of these spaces – no more half-day blocks where a room sits empty due to a forgotten calendar entry.

Additionally, **flexible infrastructure** plays a role. This includes movable walls, modular furniture, and multi-purpose installations. For example, some offices use demountable wall systems to resize rooms based on demand (two small rooms can turn into one big one, etc.), effectively **matching space capacity to usage needs in real time**. Others have furniture that can transform a space: a set of mobile tables and partition screens can turn an open collaboration area into a seminar setup or into individual cubicles as needed. These physical innovations, while not "digital" tech, are enabled by better data: by knowing how often certain configurations are needed, companies can justify investing in reconfigurable setups that they actively adjust. For instance, if data shows a large training room is only used once a month but small meeting rooms are in short supply daily, a company might install an operable wall to split that training room into two smaller rooms most of the time, and open it up on the rare occasions a big room is needed. Such flexibility ensures **no space is locked into a single use that leaves it underused**.

In summary, technology provides both the **visibility and control** to maximize workspace utilization. IoT sensors and analytics give precise data on how space is used (or not used), enabling informed decisions from the strategic level (e.g. how much space to lease) down to minute-by-minute operations (e.g. turning off an empty room's lights). Workplace management software centralizes this information and often automates execution of changes – for example, a space management dashboard might highlight a cluster of underutilized workstations, and a manager can initiate a plan to convert them to a lounge through the same interface, even coordinating furniture vendors and move tasks. The integration of these technologies means **workspaces can be managed with the same rigor as supply chains or finances**, using real-time data and analytics to eliminate waste. Organizations that leverage these tools report not only cost savings but also a better ability to respond to employee needs and changing work patterns (Source: officespacesoftware.com)(Source: officespacesoftware.com). As hybrid work continues to evolve, the offices that thrive will likely be those that are **instrumented and intelligent**, continuously optimizing themselves through technology.

Change Management and Employee Engagement

Implementing changes to workspace utilization is as much a **people challenge** as it is a technical one. Many well-intended optimization initiatives have stumbled because they overlooked the human element – how employees feel about and adapt to new ways of working. Thus, **change management and employee engagement** are critical components of any workspace strategy. This means proactively managing the transition, involving employees in the process, and addressing cultural or behavioral hurdles so that new practices (like unassigned seating or new technology tools) are embraced rather than resisted.

A fundamental step is to **clearly communicate the "why"** behind changes. Employees need to understand the benefits – not just to the company's bottom line, but to *their* daily work experience. For example, explaining that freeing up underutilized space allows the company to invest in better amenities, or that a desk-sharing system will fund a new collaboration hub that everyone can use, helps garner buy-in. Engagement often starts with gathering employee input: surveys, workshops, or pilot programs that solicit feedback on pain points in the current office and wishlists for the future. If employees feel heard in the redesign of their workspace, they are more likely to support the outcome. A case in point is **CBRE's "Workplace360" program** (a global ABW initiative across dozens of offices). CBRE involved employees in the vision of a more flexible, tech-enabled office and addressed their concerns in the rollout; after the change, an internal survey showed *"across 90 offices, 93% of our people said they would not go back to the old model"* of assigned seating (Source: density.io). Importantly, this success was attributed in part to a strong change management plan that helped employees gradually adjust and see the advantages (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io).

Managing the emotional and cultural adjustment is crucial. One common hurdle is employees' attachment to personal desks and the sense of identity or security they provide. Change management experts note that it's important to *"bring employees along the curve"* and respect their need for predictability (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). Tactics to ease the transition include:

- **Pilot trials**: Start with one department or floor switching to a new way of working, gather lessons and testimonials, then expand. Early adopters can become change champions who share positive experiences with peers.
- **Opt-in flexibility**: If possible, give employees some choice during transition – for example, a period where both old and new systems run in parallel (with gradually decreasing allocated desks). This reduces the shock and lets people acclimate.
- **Education and etiquette training**: Provide clear guidelines on how to use the new spaces or tools. If moving to hot desking, have a training on how to find and book desks, and etiquette like cleaning up after oneself. If introducing new collaboration areas, clarify norms (e.g. phone calls in phone booths

only, or how to signal a room is in use).

- **Providing alternatives for concerns**: If a key worry is loss of personal space, ensure there are lockers or personal file cabinets where employees can store items. If noise is a concern in open areas, provide noise-cancelling phone booths or headphone policies. These show responsiveness to employee needs.

Crucially, **leadership and company culture** should reinforce the change. Managers should model the new behaviors (e.g. executives also give up private offices and use shared spaces – this symbolic act can greatly validate the change). HR policies might need updates too: for instance, performance should be measured by outcomes, not by visible "seat time," otherwise employees may feel pressure to be present and occupying a spot even when not necessary. Some organizations formalize hybrid work guidelines – like designating "in-office collaboration days" for teams – to create a structured cadence that balances flexibility with team needs. This can address the "everyone comes on Wednesday" problem: HR and team leaders can coordinate schedules to *"distribute office attendance so teams aren't all in on just one day,"* thereby easing crowding and flattening those midweek peaks (Source: medium.com)(Source: medium.com). That kind of intervention requires careful communication so employees see it as a benefit (more space and resources available when they do come in) rather than a mandate.

Continuous feedback loops are also part of effective engagement. After changes are implemented, companies often run pulse surveys or set up an easy channel (like a Slack feedback group or a suggestion app) for employees to voice what's working or not. This feedback can guide further tweaks – for example, if many employees say there aren't enough quiet spaces, the company can respond by converting another area into a quiet zone. Showing that you're willing to refine the solution builds trust that the new workspace truly has everyone's interests in mind, not just cost-cutting.

Another element is **creating a positive experience around the office** so that employees *want* to use it. The office should be positioned and designed as a place that offers something their home office can't: better collaboration opportunities, social connection, access to technology or spaces (like specialty labs, studios, or simply more ergonomic equipment), or a sense of community and company culture. Some firms brand their new offices with this in mind – offering perks on in-office days (events, free lunches, etc.), or highlighting sustainability and wellness features that make the environment healthier and more enjoyable. In essence, if employees feel the office is a valuable place to be, they will come by choice, organically raising utilization. As one IBM workplace strategy article noted, employers are rethinking *"the workplace as a destination, a place people will want to go – giving them a reason to be there because it provides something they don't have elsewhere"*(Source: ibm.com), whether that's collaboration, special equipment, or just human connection. This mindset shift – from seeing office attendance as an obligation to an opportunity – is key in engagement.

Finally, celebrate and communicate successes. If, after six months of a new seating policy, the data shows space utilization improved from 50% to 70%, share that with employees along with what it enabled (e.g. "We saved $X which we are reinvesting in an employee wellness center"). Recognition can also be at the team or individual level – recognizing departments that adapted well or champions who helped others. Positive reinforcement helps cement the new ways as the norm.

In summary, **change management in workspace optimization** revolves around transparency, support, and participation. It's about acknowledging that **workplace change is a cultural change**. By engaging employees early, addressing their concerns (often it's about maintaining a sense of control and comfort), and leading them gradually through the transition, organizations can turn initial skepticism into enthusiasm. Indeed, many companies find that once employees get used to the freedom and perks of a well-optimized, flexible workplace, they don't want to revert to the old, rigid office model (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). High utilization then comes not from enforcement, but from genuine employee buy-in and usage of the spaces provided.

Case Studies: Success Stories in Workspace Optimization

Examining real-world examples provides insight into how leading organizations have tackled workspace utilization challenges. Below, we highlight several **case studies** from different industries, illustrating the strategies and outcomes of their efforts:

- **Karger (Publishing)** – *Fixed to Flexible*: Karger, a scientific publishing firm in Switzerland, transitioned from a traditional fixed-desk office to a hybrid model using desk booking technology. Before, every employee had an assigned desk, leading to many empty desks on a typical day (Source: kadence.co)(Source: kadence.co). By gradually introducing a hot-desking policy and leveraging occupancy data, Karger discovered their office was only **30–40% occupied on average**(Source: kadence.co). They decided to **downsize their office space by 80%**, going from multiple floors to just 1.5 floors (Source: kadence.co)(Source: kadence.co). With about 200 employees mostly working remote or hybrid, this was achievable by sharing desks and carefully coordinating in-office days. The result was a massive reduction in real estate costs (an 80% footprint cut) without harming productivity (Source: kadence.co). In fact, employees benefited from a more vibrant, right-sized office when they did come in, and the company reaped significant savings and efficiency.

- **Fresenius (Healthcare)** – *Sensor-Driven Consolidation*: Fresenius installed **IoT occupancy sensors** (over 300 of them) in two Boston offices to get a clear picture of space usage (Source: jllt.com). The sensors revealed that one of the buildings was severely underutilized – much of its space sat empty. Using this hard data, Fresenius made a bold move to **terminate the lease of one building and consolidate staff into the other**(Source: jllt.com). This consolidation, directly informed by utilization

data, saved an estimated **$6 million per year in real estate costs**(Source: jllt.com). It's a striking example of how data can drive decisions: before sensors, such a move might have been met with uncertainty or employee anecdotes; after sensors, they had the evidence that everyone could fit comfortably in one location with improved utilization. This case also underscores quick payback on tech investment – the sensors likely cost a fraction of $6M, making the ROI very high.

- **New York City Government** – *Portfolio Rightsizing*: A government initiative in New York City looked at reducing the city's office footprint. They found that **13.6% of city office desks were vacant** on average (due to inefficiencies in allocation) and that the city was unnecessarily paying for that space (Source: ash.harvard.edu). Through data collection, benchmarking against best practices, and inter-departmental coordination, the team eliminated those vacancies by consolidating agencies and releasing surplus space. In the first 3 years, NYC reduced its office space by about **400,000 square feet**, yielding **$15 million in annual rent savings**(Source: datasmart.hks.harvard.edu). This public sector example mirrors what many corporates do: systematically analyze which offices or parts of offices are not needed, then sublease or exit those to save taxpayer (or corporate) money.

- **Deloitte (Professional Services)** – *The Edge, Amsterdam*: Deloitte's Amsterdam office, nicknamed "The Edge," is often cited as one of the smartest and greenest buildings. It was designed from the ground up for ABW and sustainability. In this building, Deloitte implemented **100% unassigned seating**, extensive IoT integration, and app-based workplace services. Notably, **only 75% of the building's space is for desks** – the rest is purposely made into cafes, meeting spaces, and open collaboration areas (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). One architect noted *"a quarter of this building is not allocated desk space, it's a place to meet"*, reflecting the emphasis on interactions over individual space (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). The outcome was a highly utilized, highly efficient office that employees love. It also achieved a stellar sustainability rating (helped by high utilization efficiency and smart tech cutting energy waste). Deloitte reports that this approach has increased knowledge sharing and employee satisfaction, and they have since rolled out similar concepts globally.

- **Microsoft (Technology)** – *Embracing ABW*: Microsoft's Asia-Pacific headquarters in Singapore is an example of transitioning an existing office to ABW. Facing siloed teams and underused space, Microsoft redesigned the office into an activity-based layout with no assigned offices (even leaders gave up private rooms). The goal was to improve collaboration among employees and with customers (Source: density.io). After the change, Microsoft's internal feedback was very positive – employees cited the **"flexible environment" as a key benefit**, and the culture shifted to more trust and empowerment (managers focused on results, not whether people were at a desk) (Source: density.io). Microsoft found that giving people choice of environment led to higher engagement, and cross-team mingling improved as well. From a space perspective, they could accommodate the same workforce in a smaller area by eliminating unused private offices and rows of empty cubes. This case illustrates the cultural shift that goes hand in hand with space optimization.

- **Square (Financial Technology)** – *Open Plan and Variety*: Square's San Francisco offices took the concept of variety to heart. They have a **completely open floor plan** with no assigned seats, but importantly they provide a *variety of environments* – high-top tables, traditional desks, couches, quiet corners – all within an open space (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). Employees from interns to the CEO choose where to sit each day, often ending up side by side. This flattened layout has reportedly increased transparency and the flow of ideas. One employee noted *"there are always different people sitting at my desk… it makes me feel more in touch with my co-workers and what's going on in the company."*(Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). Square's example shows that even without walls, careful planning of mixed furniture and zones can cater to different work styles and keep utilization high (nearly every corner is attractive to use by someone).

- **LEGO (Consumer Products)** – *Playful, Zoned Workplace*: LEGO's London office applied unassigned seating aligned with their playful brand. They created **flexible working zones** – no one has a fixed desk, and employees move between open collaborative booths, small meeting rooms, or private nooks as needed (Source: density.io). The design even includes fun, on-brand elements like writable walls and creative decor, making the space inviting. A project leader from LEGO remarked that maintaining *"momentum"* was key – they continuously iterate on the workspace and encourage employees to break old habits (like owning a desk) to find better ways of working (Source: density.io) (Source: density.io). LEGO's case underlines that a strong cultural narrative (in their case, creativity and play) can help employees embrace new workspace concepts enthusiastically. Utilization improved as people freely use all the different spaces instead of staying put in one spot.

These case studies collectively demonstrate several themes. **First**, accurate data and measurement often kickstart the change – whether through sensors or surveys – revealing hard truths about underuse that justify action. **Second**, most successful examples pair space changes with **policy and cultural changes** (e.g. leadership modeling, flexible work arrangements, and employee-centric design). **Third**, the benefits are tangible: from millions saved in rent, to higher employee satisfaction, to more collaboration and innovation. Perhaps most importantly, they show that **maximizing utilization is not about cramming people in**; rather, it's about **designing smarter and often smaller spaces that people *want* to use**. When employees enjoy and fully use the workspace, utilization naturally follows. As these organizations learned, a well-utilized office is typically one that strikes a balance – efficient in footprint, rich in functional variety, powered by data, and responsive to its users.

Industry Benchmarks and Data Trends

To put everything in context, it's useful to look at **industry benchmarks and recent data** on workspace utilization. These figures provide a baseline for organizations to gauge their performance and set targets for improvement.

- **Average Office Utilization**: As noted, global office utilization rates (post-COVID) have been climbing but remain around **50-60% on a typical day**. JLL's 2025 global survey reported an average utilization of **54%** (i.e. just over half of all desks are occupied on average), which is up from 41% in 2023 but still below the ~61% seen in 2019 (Source: jll.com)(Source: jll.com). North America tends to lag with lower rates (around 40-50% average in 2024) compared to regions like Europe which have rebounded closer to 60% (Source: jll.com)(Source: jll.com). These numbers highlight a sizable "utilization gap" – many companies have a goal to get back to ~70%+ utilization, either by bringing more people in or (more efficiently) by reducing excess space to match the lower demand. In fact, JLL noted that **organizations have raised their target utilization to around 79% in 2025, up from 74% prior**, reflecting an aggressive push to optimize (Source: jll.com).

- **Peak vs. Average**: Mid-week peaks in many offices can reach **80-90%** occupancy, especially in high-end buildings or on collaborative "anchor" days (Source: srraresearch.org)(Source: allwork.space). For example, some top-tier U.S. office towers saw Tuesday/Wednesday peak utilization above 90% in 2023 (Source: srraresearch.org). However, Monday and Friday often dip below 30%. One metric firms track is the ratio of peak to average – a high ratio indicates uneven usage (e.g. peaks double the average), which can signal an opportunity to spread out attendance or consolidate space on low days. As an illustration, an index by an Australian firm found **Wednesdays 87% (peak day) vs Fridays 49% (low day)** in one period (Source: cbre.com). Many companies now explicitly measure occupancy by weekday to manage this "midweek mountain" effect (Source: jll.com). **Flattening the curve** (more even distribution of office use across days) is becoming an occupancy planning goal, often tackled via policies or incentives to come in on traditionally low days.

- **Space per Person**: Densification trends show a long-term decrease in space per employee – a common pre-2020 benchmark was ~200 square feet per employee (including shared spaces), which dropped to ~150 sq ft or less in many designs. The JLL data we cited indicates companies aim for **~132 sq. ft. per person** on average (Source: cfodive.com). This varies by industry and office type: tech firms and call centers might go even denser (100 sq ft or less per seat in extreme cases), whereas law firms or companies with many private offices will be higher. The **global trend** is clear though: nearly 80% of surveyed companies plan to reduce the size of individual workstations (e.g. more compact desks or benching setups) and many are shrinking private offices to 100-125 sq ft or eliminating them (Source: cfodive.com)(Source: cfodive.com). Achieving 132 sq ft per person often assumes a significant portion of staff work hybrid (hence not all present at once) and that the layout is predominantly open and shared.

- **Sharing Ratios and Mobility**: Pre-pandemic, sharing ratios above 1.2:1 were relatively rare outside of consulting firms or highly mobile sales teams. Now, a ratio of 1.5:1 (i.e., 1 desk for every 1.5 employees) is common in new designs, and some organizations go further for certain groups (2:1 or higher for those mostly remote). In JLL's 2025 survey, the average reported was about **1.1 people**

per seat currently, with a target of 1.3(Source: jll.com). It's worth noting some aggressive examples: certain consulting companies have ratios like 4:1 since consultants are on client site most of the time. Industry benchmarks for *mobility* (how often employees are away from their primary office) show roughly: 10-20% of workforce might be almost always remote, 50-60% hybrid (in 2-3 days/week), and maybe 20% in daily. The JLL survey found **18% fully remote, 15% fully in-office, and 67% hybrid 1-4 days/week** across respondents (Source: cfodive.com)(Source: cfodive.com). This explains why sharing ratios above 1:1 make sense – if two-thirds of people are only in half the week, you can theoretically cut desks by one-third or more.

- **Collaborative vs. Individual Space**: Another benchmark is the mix of space types. Traditional offices might have been 70% individual space (desks, offices) and 30% collaborative (meeting rooms, lounges). Progressive workplaces are shifting that balance. Industry guidance now often suggests aiming for at least 50% of space dedicated to collaborative and amenity areas in a hybrid office (Source: jll.com)(Source: jll.com). Some cutting-edge companies invert it (30% individual, 70% shared). In practice, JLL notes that **while collaboration space remains vital, companies must also meet demand for individual/focus space** for when people do heads-down work at the office (Source: jll.com). The takeaway is to have a healthy variety and not swing the pendulum too far to all-open collaboration, lest people find nowhere to concentrate – a lesson learned from the open office era. Many organizations are adding phone booths and small focus rooms; as the CFO of a major bank quipped, *"half of our offices are phone booths now"* – an exaggeration, but reflecting the trend of converting large open plans into more subdivided niches for calls and virtual meetings.

- **Utilization of Amenities**: With more emphasis on the office as a collaboration and culture hub, metrics around **amenity utilization** are emerging. For instance, companies track how often breakout spaces or informal lounges are used, or average attendance in on-site events. There's anecdotal evidence that investing in popular amenities (good coffee bars, comfortable lounges, outdoor terraces) increases overall attendance, which in turn raises utilization. Some benchmarks from workplace surveys show that employees who come to office primarily to collaborate and socialize will do so if the space supports it – e.g. if there's a great café space, it might be busy 80% of the day versus a poorly provisioned lunchroom that sits empty. This is a softer metric but increasingly part of the conversation: utilization isn't just about desks, but about all the **"experience spaces"** and whether they are active or empty.

- **Environmental Impact Metrics**: As utilization ties to sustainability, some organizations set **energy per occupant** or **carbon per square foot** benchmarks. An interesting data point from Density (a sensor company) was that **40% of office space globally is vacant yet still consuming energy**, leading to 22 million tons of CO_2 waste annually (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). In response, metrics like "energy intensity per seat" are used – essentially measuring how much energy is used relative to actual occupied seats rather than total seats. By that measure, a highly utilized, sensor-optimized building will score much better than a half-empty always-on building. Expect to see more

integration of utilization data into ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) reporting, where companies might boast that through workspace optimization, they cut their carbon footprint by X% (because they reduced space or automatically powered down unused areas).

In summary, the **industry benchmarks** indicate that many offices today operate around only half capacity on an average day (Source: jll.com). The best performers (or those who have aggressively optimized) are pushing toward 70-80% average utilization of their now smaller footprints (Source: jll.com). Sharing ratios are increasing, space per person is decreasing, and the composition of offices is tilting more toward collaborative and flexible-use areas. There is also a clear emphasis on **data-driven management**: more organizations are tracking these metrics rigorously and comparing across portfolios. A survey noted **utilization data is now the highest-ranked metric for workplace planning** among global corporate real estate leaders (Source: jll.com)(Source: jll.com), whereas traditionally metrics like simple occupancy or cost per square foot may have dominated. This shift to focusing on utilization reflects the new reality: maximizing the use and utility of space (rather than just cost-cutting or seat counts) is the top priority in the era of hybrid work.

Environmental and Financial Benefits

Improving workspace utilization isn't just an operational tactic – it carries significant **environmental and financial benefits** that align with broader corporate goals. By using space more efficiently, companies can reduce their real estate footprint and resource consumption, which translates to cost savings and a smaller carbon footprint.

From a **financial perspective**, real estate is often one of the largest expenses for a business (second only to personnel for many firms). Office leases, maintenance, utilities, and associated costs can consume a big portion of overhead. Therefore, **cutting excess space directly saves money**. We've seen examples: New York City saving $15M/year by trimming unneeded offices, or Deloitte saving millions by consolidating and renting less space in expensive cities. Even incremental improvements can add up. Consider a company that has 20% of its desks consistently unused; if they can eliminate that 20% by subleasing a floor or downsizing during a lease renewal, that could mean 20% savings on rent. **Rent and occupancy cost savings of 10-30%** are commonly reported after workplace optimization projects (Source: deloitte.com)(Source: deloitte.com). Deloitte's research estimated that moving to a "flex office" (unassigned seats with 30-50% fewer desks than employees) can save up to **40% of space** and equivalently around **40% of facility costs** in an optimized scenario (Source: deloitte.com). They gave an example: reducing a 10,000 m² office to 5,900 m² (41% reduction) saved about €2 million per year in rent, which would be ~€18M over a typical 9-year lease (Source: deloitte.com). That is a massive financial return.

Beyond rent, there are savings in **operational costs**. Fewer square feet means lower electricity and heating/cooling bills, less janitorial area to clean, and reduced security and maintenance needs. Earlier, we highlighted that just in the U.S., about **$8.4 billion is spent on office electricity** and roughly 40% of that might be wasted on unused spaces (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). So potentially there is a $3B+ aggregate savings if all offices were optimized – at an individual company level, this could mean hundreds of thousands of dollars saved in utilities by using sensors and smart systems to cut power to empty areas (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). One firm's analysis quantified it as *"$3.36 billion is spent on electricity for spaces that aren't used"* across U.S. offices (Source: density.io). By improving utilization, a company ensures they are paying for energy only in spaces actually being used. If a company reduced its footprint by 20%, it could likely also reduce a significant chunk of its energy bill (maybe not a full 20%, but close, especially with energy-efficient adjustments).

The **environmental benefits** are closely tied to these energy savings. Buildings account for a substantial portion of greenhouse gas emissions – about 36% of global emissions come from construction and building operations (often cited by the World Economic Forum) (Source: density.io)(Source: density.io). Corporate offices are a notable part of that. By consolidating space, companies may avoid constructing new buildings or can shut down older, less efficient ones, directly reducing emissions. More immediately, the reduction in electricity usage and HVAC demand from turning off unused space leads to a drop in carbon output. The **22 million metric tons of CO_2** figure for wasted energy in unused U.S. office space gives a sense of the stakes (Source: density.io). Each company that tackles this is contributing to lowering that number. Many firms have public sustainability targets (carbon neutral, net-zero, etc.), and **workspace optimization is becoming a key strategy to hit those targets**. For example, instead of buying carbon offsets or investing solely in renewable energy, a company might say: let's eliminate waste first – make sure we aren't lighting, heating, and cooling empty rooms. It's both low-hanging fruit and financially smart.

An interesting perspective is **"right-sizing real estate = reduced embodied carbon"**. If companies collectively lease or build less office space due to better utilization, fewer new office buildings might need to be built over time, avoiding the significant carbon emissions tied to construction materials and processes. Some studies on new workplace models suggest that co-working or space sharing can lead to *10-20% reductions in embodied carbon per user* because of more efficient use of shared infrastructure (Source: journal-buildingscities.org). While a single company's decision might not immediately impact global construction, the widespread shift to hybrid work could reduce demand for new offices, hence a macro environmental benefit.

There are also **employee-level and societal benefits** to consider (often tying into ESG factors). A well-utilized space often correlates with a more thoughtfully designed space, which can improve employee well-being. For instance, fewer empty offices might mean more daylight for everyone in an open plan, or savings reinvested in ergonomic furniture or air quality improvements. Some companies channel real

estate savings into creating greener, healthier offices – adding plants, better ventilation, etc., which boosts employee health and productivity (that's more an indirect benefit but noteworthy). Also, if fewer people commute every single day due to shared seating and hybrid schedules, that reduces commuting emissions and potentially stress on infrastructure.

From a **business continuity perspective**, trimming excess space can make companies more agile. In times of downturn, they are less burdened by fixed real estate costs; in times of growth, they know how to scale space efficiently. Also, an optimized portfolio can free up capital – perhaps a company can reinvest what it saved on rent into revenue-generating initiatives. Real estate consultants often frame it this way: *Every dollar saved in occupancy cost can be a dollar invested in core business or talent.* With many companies reeling from the pandemic's impact and then reconfiguring for hybrid, those savings are more important than ever.

To illustrate environmental impact with a concrete number: A sensor-driven approach might allow a company to shut off a floor's HVAC on low occupancy days, saving thousands of kWh per year. Multiply that by dozens of floors or buildings and the carbon avoidance adds up. Many companies are now publicizing such achievements. For example, **Cisco** has reported how using occupancy-driven energy management in its offices contributed to significant energy efficiency improvements, aligning with its climate goals (Source: spaces.cisco.com). And **room booking solution providers** market their products partly on sustainability – one advertises "collect occupancy data to optimize workspace usage, lower your office's carbon footprint, and achieve significant energy savings" (Source: roomz.io)(Source: roomz.io).

In summary, the **financial benefits** of maximizing workspace utilization include substantial rent/lease cost reductions, lower utility and operating expenses, and avoiding capital expenditures on unnecessary expansions. The **environmental benefits** include lower energy consumption (hence lower carbon emissions), more sustainable use of resources, and the ability to repurpose or reduce space which can contribute to broader sustainability objectives. These go hand in hand: what is good for the bottom line in this case is also good for the planet. As a result, CFOs and sustainability officers alike are championing space optimization initiatives. A well-utilized workplace is not just leaner financially – it's **greener**, aligning corporate real estate strategy with the urgent need for climate action. In an era where companies are expected to do more on ESG, tackling the "empty office problem" is a clear win-win solution.

Best Practices and Actionable Recommendations

Drawing from all the insights above, here are **best practices and actionable steps** for professionals looking to maximize workspace utilization in their organization:

1. Measure and Analyze Current Utilization: Start with data. Conduct a thorough **workspace utilization study** – whether through badge swipe records, occupancy sensors, or manual observation – to establish baseline metrics. Identify peak vs. off-peak usage, underutilized areas, and any glaring mismatches (e.g. conference rooms nearly always empty or always full). This baseline will help build the case for change and target specific inefficiencies. *For example, you might find one floor is at 30% occupancy – a candidate to consolidate – or that large meeting rooms are used only 10% of the time, indicating you could convert some into smaller rooms.* Having concrete data (like "Desk X is used 2 hours a day on average") turns subjective debates into objective decisions (Source: jllt.com)(Source: jllt.com).

2. Set Clear Goals and Get Stakeholder Buy-In: Define what "success" looks like in terms of utilization. Is it increasing average occupancy from 50% to 70%? Reducing rentable square feet per employee by 20%? Cutting real estate costs by $1M? Clear targets help guide the project. Secure support from top leadership by linking these goals to business outcomes – cost savings, but also improved collaboration, employee experience, and sustainability (whichever resonates most with your C-suite). Involve key departments early: IT (for tech needs), HR (for policy and change management), and business unit leaders. A cross-functional approach ensures all concerns are addressed and leaders become champions rather than blockers (Source: jll.com)(Source: jll.com).

3. Adopt a Human-Centric Design Approach: Redesign your space with employees' work activities and preferences at the forefront. **Conduct employee workshops or surveys** to gather input on what types of spaces they need (more quiet zones? more project rooms? social spaces?). Use **Activity-Based Working principles** to provide a variety of work settings (Source: ibm.com)(Source: ibm.com). Ensure that for each activity – focused work, phone calls, team meetings, brainstorming, quick huddles – there is an appropriate space. A general best practice is to aim for a balanced mix: perhaps 50% of space as open/individual workstations (ideally unassigned) and 50% as alternate work settings (meeting rooms, collaborative areas, breakout zones, etc.), adjusting to your organization's specific needs. Importantly, design for **flexibility**: choose modular furniture and mobile partitions so spaces can adapt over time. As one leader put it, *"It's no longer one-size-fits-all… dynamic spaces where furniture is reconfigurable"* allow you to meet people's changing needs (Source: density.io).

4. Implement Flexible Seating (Hot Desking/Hoteling) Thoughtfully: If moving away from assigned seats, plan the implementation carefully. **Determine a reasonable sharing ratio** using your data (e.g. if on average 60% are present, a 1.2:1 ratio could work to start). **Pilot test** unassigned seating in one department or area first. Ensure you have a **user-friendly reservation system** in place – whether it's an app or online portal – so employees can easily find and reserve workspaces (Source: serraview.com) (Source: serraview.com). Establish ground rules: Will there be team zones? How far in advance can one book a desk? What is the protocol for personal items (provide lockers)? By **creating "neighborhoods" and quiet zones** as discussed, you mitigate the chaos potential of hot desking (Source: serraview.com)

(Source: serraview.com). Communicate these protocols clearly and have support staff or "floor ambassadors" available in the early days to help people adjust (showing someone how to use the desk booking app or where the nearest phone booth is, for example).

5. Leverage Technology and Data Continuously: Invest in the appropriate **workplace technology** for ongoing management. This could include occupancy sensors, an IWMS platform, desk and room booking software, and analytics dashboards. Use these tools not only for one-time planning but continuously – monitor the data trends on a monthly/quarterly basis (Source: jll.com)(Source: jll.com). For instance, if sensors show a new collaboration area is rarely used, investigate why (is it in the wrong location? do employees know it's available?) and adjust. Use **analytics to identify opportunities**: maybe a certain team consistently has low in-office attendance, suggesting you could shrink their dedicated space and share it with another team. Make data-driven tweaks: nothing about workspace optimization is static. Continuous improvement is key – treat the office like a living asset that you tune and re-tune. Some companies hold quarterly space review meetings to decide if they need to re-stack floors, change layouts, or update policies based on the latest utilization reports.

6. Engage Employees and Manage Change Proactively: Weave in the **change management plan** from day one. Communicate transparently about why changes are happening (emphasize benefits like better spaces, more collaboration, and yes, efficient use of resources). Involve employees in planning – e.g. set up a representative committee or solicit name ideas for new spaces to build a sense of ownership. Provide training sessions on new technologies or new ways of working. For example, run a demo of how to book desks or a "practice day" where everyone in a pilot group tries the new seating arrangement and then gives feedback. Address concerns empathetically: if someone is anxious about losing their desk, perhaps designate a few **"anchor desks"** that can still be reserved for those with special needs or gradually phase the change. **Leadership should model the behavior** – if executives are also floating without assigned offices, it sends a powerful signal (like at one firm where even the CEO used the open plan hot desks, boosting credibility of the program). Celebrate early adopters and share success stories: e.g., highlight a team that used the new collaboration space to solve a problem faster, or an employee who met a new colleague because of the seating mix-up (illustrating serendipitous benefits). Essentially, make employees *partners* in the transformation, not just passive subjects of it (Source: serraview.com). Over time, as people adjust, acknowledge their adaptability – and perhaps do a post-implementation survey to gauge satisfaction and show improvements (for instance, "80% of you report it's now easier to find a meeting room than before" if that was a goal).

7. Optimize Supporting Amenities and Services: High utilization goes hand-in-hand with a well-functioning workplace. If you invite more people to use less space, you must ensure **support services scale up** to prevent friction. This includes robust Wi-Fi everywhere, plentiful video conferencing setups (so people can take calls in many spaces), enough lockers for storage, and frequent cleaning of shared desks (especially important in hot desking for health reasons). Consider implementing **"smart cleaning"**

– cleaning crews use occupancy data to focus on used areas (some IWMS/IoT setups do this: if a desk was unused today, maybe it needs less frequent cleaning). Ensure there are sufficient supplies (coffee, printer paper, sanitizer, etc.) in the higher traffic areas. Another tip: use digital signage or dashboards to keep everyone informed – like screens that show real-time room availability or noise level indicators in quiet zones. These touches improve the day-to-day experience and prevent the little frustrations that can cause employees to retreat to working from home.

8. Align Policies with Utilization Goals: Review your HR and workplace policies to make sure they encourage the desired outcomes. If you want people to come in and use the space, ensure policies support a good reason to (e.g. designate team days for face-to-face collaboration, schedule on-site all-hands meetings, or simply cultivate a culture where coming to office is for meaningful interactions, not because of an old rule). At the same time, discourage presenteeism – people coming in just to show face. One strategy is to **focus on outputs in performance reviews** and explicitly state that flexible work is supported. Also, consider **incentives**: some companies have provided lunch or commuting subsidies on less popular office days to spread attendance. Make sure any **remote work or hybrid policies** are clear on expectations so that space planning can align (for example, if everyone can work anywhere 2 days a week, encourage teams to coordinate so not everyone comes on the same 3 days). The goal is a steady, predictable usage pattern that the space can accommodate efficiently (Source: medium.com)(Source: medium.com).

9. Monitor, Iterate, and Benchmark: Once changes are in effect, continuously **monitor the utilization metrics** and solicit employee feedback. Perhaps set up a dashboard that key stakeholders can view, showing weekly occupancy rates, most booked rooms, least used spaces, etc. Be ready to **iterate**: maybe you initially removed too many desks and find the office hitting 100% capacity on certain days – that's a sign to adjust (maybe bring back a few desks or further stagger schedules). Or you may find an unexpected choke point, like not enough phone booths for private calls, which you then address by adding more. Use **benchmarks from industry** to compare: are you now at 70% utilization and peers in your industry average 50%? That can be a competitive bragging point and also motivation to maintain momentum. Conversely, if you're still behind industry benchmarks, analyze why – do you have more remote work than others (which might be fine), or is there still wasted space to target? Keep an eye on evolving trends, like any new technologies or best practices other companies are using as hybrid work matures.

10. Foster an Ongoing Workplace Strategy: Finally, treat workspace utilization as an **ongoing strategic initiative**, not a one-time project. Many organizations are creating *"workplace strategy"* roles or committees that continuously align the physical workspace with business needs and workforce trends. The office should evolve with your company. If you hire a new team or shift your business model, revisit

space allocation immediately rather than inheriting legacy layouts. Make utilization and employee experience metrics part of regular business reviews. This ensures the workplace remains agile and avoids sliding back into underutilized patterns.

By following these best practices, organizations can create a **high-performance workplace** that maximizes every dollar and square foot, while also providing a platform for employees to do their best work. It's a combination of *right-sizing the space, equipping it with smart tech, and nurturing the culture to use it well.* As one JLL insight succinctly put it, *"Closing the utilization gap"* is now a top priority in the hybrid era (Source: jll.com)(Source: jll.com) – and those who succeed will enjoy leaner costs, happier teams, and a more sustainable footprint.

Conclusion

Maximizing workspace utilization is an interdisciplinary challenge that blends **data-driven planning, innovative design, technology integration, and thoughtful change management**. In an age of hybrid work, the question is no longer "How many desks do we need for our people?" but rather "How can we make our space as effective, efficient, and engaging as possible for our people's evolving needs?" High utilization is not about packing people in – it's about **eliminating the waste of empty space and transforming offices into vibrant, adaptable ecosystems** that actively support productivity and collaboration.

The research and examples in this report show that with the right strategies – from activity-based layouts and flexible seating to IoT-powered analytics – even large organizations can significantly increase their workspace efficiency. Many have achieved 20-40% reductions in space and costs while actually **improving employee experience and output**. The key is to align the physical environment with the reality of modern work: dynamic, mobile, and collaborative. That means providing the right mix of spaces, backed by real-time data on how they're used, and continuously tuning the setup. It also means engaging employees at every step so that the workplace is not just optimized *for* them, but often *by* them through feedback and participation.

For facilities managers, corporate real estate leaders, HR and operations executives, the mandate is clear. **Invest in understanding your utilization metrics**; they are the compass that will guide you to opportunities for improvement (Source: jll.com). **Embrace new workplace models and technologies** – whether it's a sensor that shows you exactly which rooms sit idle, or a reservation app that makes flexible seating feasible at scale. And perhaps most importantly, **build flexibility into both your space and your mindset**. The way we work will continue to evolve, so the most "utilized" workspace is one that can change and grow with minimal friction.

In the end, maximizing workspace utilization delivers a triple win: operational efficiency (lower costs, better ROI on real estate), employee effectiveness (spaces that truly support how they work best), and environmental responsibility (less waste and lower carbon footprint). The office of the future is one where **every square foot has a purpose and is actively contributing to the organization's goals** – and getting there is within reach by applying the practices outlined in this report. By learning from industry leaders and leveraging today's tools and insights, any organization can reimagine its workspace not as a fixed expense, but as a dynamic asset – one that drives both business success and a thriving, engaged workforce.

Sources: Organizations and studies referenced include JLL's Global Occupancy Planning Benchmark reports (Source: jll.com)(Source: jll.com), Deloitte's workplace transformation perspectives (Source: deloitte.com), IBM's insights on activity-based work (Source: ibm.com)(Source: ibm.com), and case studies from Density, OfficeSpace, and others that illustrate real-world outcomes (Source: density.io) (Source: kadence.co). These provide quantitative data and expert observations supporting the strategies discussed, demonstrating the tangible benefits of optimizing workspace utilization in corporate and commercial environments.

Tags: workspace utilization, hybrid workplace, occupancy rate, facility management, corporate real estate, space planning, office metrics

---

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.
