

# The Agile Work Environment



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## Introduction

The workplace is rapidly changing. Businesses have outgrown the open office, and leaders are waking up to the workplace as a key strategic asset—one that promises a competitive edge through heightened productivity, reduced real estate spending, and a fresh ability to attract top talent. At the same time, data is driving a new age for corporate real estate, providing organizations with more insight than ever before on wasted spaces and their impact on mission success.

Businesses are rushing to agile work environments to drive new levels of cost savings in space and real estate—and to adapt to the needs of the modern workforce, with its elevated expectations for flexible work habits and a better quality of life. Wondering how? This guide breaks down the agile workplace, pinpoints what’s fueling flexible workspaces, and lays out how your business can adopt an agile work environment.



## Chapter 1

# What Is an Agile Work Environment?

Agile spaces replace traditional assigned seating with a diverse range of unassigned settings for a diverse range of work types. Business leaders are waking up to the fact that **60 percent of office space** is unused on any given day making agile workplaces increasingly attractive solutions for addressing costly holes in office efficiency while aligning environments more closely with the habits and needs of modern workers.

## It's About Optimizing Space

Most workers spend around half of their time away from their desks either working remotely, visiting collaborators elsewhere in the office, attending meetings, or simply eating lunch. Fixed seating is only appropriate for a limited range of workplace activity, and the rest of the time, those seats are vacant. Unassigned agile workplaces reverse this model, providing the flexibility for employees to move between different space types throughout the day based on their project needs. **The benefits of this approach are numerous**, but essentially, agile workplaces enhance employee choice, while serving more workers with less space. In fact, agile spaces have been shown to as much as double real estate capacity. To get a handle on the agile work environment, it's a good idea to take a look at some real life examples.

## Modern Examples of the Agile Work Environment

Today, many organizations are discovering that agile workplaces are not just good for nurturing a competitive workforce, but they also generate substantial business returns.

### Suncorp

As a top performer in banking and finance, Suncorp Group employs more than 15,000 workers and owns over \$95B in assets. With more than 650 buildings, Suncorp decided it was time to update its workplace technology and transition to incorporate flexible activity-based workspaces. With the ability to unassign space and right-size flexible seating around its true space needs, Suncorp was able to nearly **double real estate capacity and save \$30M a year ... for three years.**

*“The real success story for Suncorp has been the ability to manage and optimize our portfolio, allowing us to move to a flexible work environment which has significantly reduced annual costs.”*

**- Suncorp’s Executive Manager  
of Workplace Delivery**

### **The Commonwealth Bank**

In the summer of 2011, Commonwealth Bank moved 6,500 staff members into a new, activity-based workspace. It was the **biggest corporate relocation** in history. In the new workspace, there are no assigned seats. Instead, the space includes standing desks, conference rooms, and a layout that encourages interaction.

Soon after the move, **Commonwealth’s then-CFO reported** that the change helped them cut energy consumption and paper use in half.

### **ASB Bank**

**ASB Bank** is another financial group that ditched traditional desks for an activity-based workspace. ASB Bank’s approach to an agile workspace makes use of portable devices. Rather than having assigned desks, employees have mobile devices that they carry with them to the station that works best for the task at hand.

The new layout features booths, task-centered neighborhoods, and closed work stations. The result has been an 80 percent reduction of storage needs, improved efficiency, and more collaboration.

### **Atlassian**

Earlier this year, Atlassian sent a survey to workers to see if they had a need for an agile workplace. The results showed **95 percent of staff** would like to change their work patterns if it meant they could work from home more often. Since then, the company has opened up new chances for completely remote work and recruited for its first fully remote team, and it says it is anticipating growth in remote workspaces. The move appears to be a good one—during a recent recruitment period, the remote team received 25 percent more applicant interest than did Atlassian’s traditional office-based positions.

These modern companies provide a taste of what agile work environments can look like, but to understand where workspace optimization is going, it’s a good idea to pay attention to how it got to its current state.





## Chapter 2

# The Evolution of the Agile Office

For many, the evolution of the modern office can be traced back to the departure from cubicles. Cubicles became popular as a way to maximize space while maintaining the privacy of an office, but the monotonous rows of isolated booths became synonymous with an outdated philosophy of work that discouraged collaboration and disregarded individual well-being.

As digital communications matured, two major solutions emerged to take the place of cubicles: remote work and open offices. Remote work proposed cost savings for organizations and freedom for employees, but it completely eliminated the need for office space.

Open offices, meanwhile, were proposed to encourage collaboration, literally and figuratively tearing down walls while embodying the transparency emblematic of forward-thinking workplace culture. Open offices offered greater density and promised to boost collaboration ... but the results did not live up to their promise.

**Studies show** that open offices reduce productivity, creating noisy environments that decrease collaboration as employees retreat from distraction into their headphones. What's more, in spite of increased density, **data shows** that nearly half of assigned seats are likely to be empty at any given moment.

Today, organizations are evolving into a new phase with agile environments that combine the strengths of the workplaces that came before. Agile offices replace assigned seating with a variety of settings workers can choose depending on their work. These spaces combine the privacy of cubicles and offices with the collaboration of open common areas and the freedom of partial remote work. Just as a need for transparency spawned open offices, flexibility has given rise to agile workplaces.

## Open Office vs. Activity-Based Office

As organizations and workers seek flexibility, efficiency, and a better quality of life, data-driven, activity-based offices have sprung up. This office layout builds on its predecessors, giving workers the autonomy to choose workplace settings that promote efficiency and well-being.

An activity-based office sets up an unassigned environment in which space isn't designated

by the individual but by the activity the space supports. That means employees can access different settings to accommodate their work needs—be it a quiet place for deep focus or an interactive space to team up on a project.

Upon first glance, open office layouts may appear to have some similar features to activity-based offices. However, at their core, they're promoting productivity and flexibility on a completely new level. For instance, consider an open office with designated lounge areas, or maybe even a few ping pong tables. Despite these perks, in essence, it remains a rigid, one-size-fits-all space that ignores the unique workflow needs that vary and shift from project to project.

Rather than forcing workers into an open space, activity-based offices give workers a variety of settings to boost productivity during all stages of the work day. For instance, a worker might start out the day in a meeting, brainstorm in a collaborative space later on, and then finish the day in deep, contemplative work. Today, businesses tend to [search along the spectrum of workspace options](#) for a model that fits their culture, drives productivity, and boosts engagement. In this search, agile spaces are increasingly attractive, uniquely suited to optimize space around the very work that fuels a productive day.



## Looking to the Future

It is impossible to know for certain what the office of the future will look like. However, there are trends that suggest the agile office will continue to help businesses become more efficient, productive, collaborative, and innovative.

With that in mind, clues can be found in the emerging social trends that have been driving the need for activity-based offices in the first place. In particular, the **agile office** aligns with the wants and needs of millennials.

**According to Inc.**, millennials, people born between 1980-2000, will make up 75 percent of the global workforce by 2025. Millennials will likely write the next chapter of the workplace for years to come, and the agile office is uniquely suited to the quirks and needs of this maturing workforce. Wondering how? Here are some key behavioral insights:

### Millennials Want Flexibility

This is no flippant generalization; studies confirm that millennials have a desire for at-work flexibility. In fact, according to a **Deloitte survey**, 88 percent of working millennials would like more flexibility in their schedules. The study also says that 75 percent prefer to work from home or in a location where they feel they can be most productive.

As businesses work to meet this need, agile workspaces are becoming more and more appealing because they promote productivity through specialized spaces.

### Millennials Want to Team Up

The call for collaboration is another concept that is encouraging businesses to turn to agile workspaces. Improved collaboration works on two levels. First, it builds engagement and creates a sense of community among workers. On a second level, this collaboration

improves outcomes by bringing out the best in teams. Millennials want to **build strong connections** with coworkers, and agile spaces are creating new opportunities to turn workspaces into communities.

### Technology Is Becoming Integrated

Regardless of age or generational trends, a broad change is spreading across offices: the integration of technology. More and more, companies are using mobile devices, analytics, video conferencing, and interactive software. They're accessing digital collaboration tools to connect employees to their environments through things such as workstation reservation software, interactive apps, and kiosks for navigating spaces and locating resources. These technologies open up new opportunities for flexible, more efficient work styles.

### Looking Ahead

Although trends are pointing toward agile workspaces, there still doesn't appear to be a single mold for a workplace that fits every business's culture. So what will the future hold?

Chances are, businesses will focus more and more on building plans for customized spaces that improve efficiency and at-work interaction. Some of those plans may be activity-based and others will be hybrid models.

As businesses develop their own plans for modern spaces, they undoubtedly will take into consideration the **benefits of the evolving workplace**.





## Chapter 3

# Benefits of Agile Work Environments

Businesses are waking up to the benefits of agile work environments. According to the *Occupier Survey Report 2017* by CBRE, businesses are expressing **70 percent more interest** in shared space. Below are some of the key drivers behind this push toward more agile work environments.

## Key Business Benefits

### Consolidated Real Estate Footprint

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, 25 percent of employers are moving workers to unassigned seating. Of the rest, 52 percent have plans to unassign seating within three years. A major reason is the space this move can save. When the workplace becomes more flexible, workers move to areas where they are productive. This frees up wasted space that can be repurposed or completely dropped off a lease.

### Reduced Energy Waste

As *Energy Star points out*, it's not hard to find ways to cut down on energy and save money. In fact, **30 percent of the energy** that's used in commercial buildings is wasted. The key is making a commitment to gathering workplace data and plugging energy-

sucking holes. For instance, there may be a heating or cooling system that's running after everyone has gone home. Those small costs can add up—in terms of both business expenses and environmental impact.

### Attracting and Retaining Talent

*Recent studies suggest* candidates will take a pay cut in exchange for workplace flexibility and wellness opportunities. That means strategic business leaders can recruit and hold onto talented employees without breaking the bank. Of course, a fair salary is still important, but workers also want resources and a workplace culture that helps them grow. That might mean things such as open spaces for lunch-and-learns or technology that encourages productivity.

## Key Employee Benefits

### Empowerment

Savvy leaders already know employees don't like to be babied; they want to be empowered. **Research shows** that people who have more autonomy tend to be happier at work. Agile workspaces focus on natural stages of work: focus, collaboration, learning, and socialization. When you build your workspace with these stages in mind, employees have the resources to thrive in their own ways.

### Increased Activity

People want a more mobile workday. In fact, **a Fuze study** found that 70 percent of workers ages 16-44 want to be more mobile at work. However, mobility doesn't always mean shrugging off the office for a completely remote environment. Workers in the office also want the freedom to get up, collaborate, and work the way they're most productive.

*"People want a more mobile workday. In fact, a Fuze study found that 70 percent of workers ages 16–44 want to be more mobile at work."*

### Increased Collaboration

Teamwork drives productivity. **In some studies**, workers on teams stayed on task 64 percent longer than those working solo. Innovative companies are catching on to the power of collaboration. In order to harness this power, they're building workspaces that give employees the resources to work together as well as on their own.

These benefits are driving a push toward agile workspaces. However, moving to agile workspaces might not be for everybody. Before plunging into an agile workspace, you should make sure your company is ready for change.





## Chapter 4

# Is an Agile Workspace Right for You?

Before moving to an agile workspace, it's important to understand what options are out there. When company leaders hear the term "agile workspace," their minds often go to activity-based workspaces. Their assumption would be both right and wrong.

Activity-based workspaces are agile workspaces, but not all agile workspaces are purely activity-based. Most often, the best option for a business's workspace layout will fall somewhere along a spectrum. The key to agile workspaces is **customizing the layout** to optimize the space. That means driving efficiency, lowering costs, and promoting a positive company culture.

Wondering where to start? The first step is getting access to the right data.

## Measuring Space Optimization

There are two important figures businesses should measure to get a grasp on what type of agile work environment is best: employee interaction and space usage. Once the business nails down these figures, it will be in prime position to improve collaboration and interaction.

## Measuring Space Usage

There was a time when measuring space meant looking at an area's cost per square inch. Those days are long gone. Now, in order to optimize a workspace, it is important to analyze cost per person instead.

Gathering these metrics is the first step toward cutting costs, building a lean workplace, and making work more enjoyable for employees. Wondering how to get this type of high-level info? Here's a glimpse into how to gather and organize data:



## **Set up Centralized Tracking Systems**

Centralized systems can track space inventory and assignments. They give you insights into which spaces are being used, which are being neglected, and where employees are working. These systems put all of that data into one central database.

## **Conduct Space Audits**

Space audits let your business analyze usage data. They help your organization confirm space is actually being used and shine light on the way it has been assigned.

## **Dividing Space via Departments**

Once you have information, you'll want to charge back space to internal departments. This will help your organization assign accountability to local departments. That way, departments are responsible for the space they use.

## **Set up Employee Controls**

After you've taken control of data and divvied up accountability, you should set up action-based systems. This means implementing software that lets employees reserve spaces and request moves. These controls will allow you to track day-to-day demand for space.

## **Implement Employee-Facing Software**

Employee-facing software solutions let employees browse available spaces. Workers can usually access this info via kiosks or on their own personal devices. This makes open spaces discoverable, so spaces don't sit vacant just because nobody knows they're available.

## **Deploy IoT Usage Sensors**

Sensors aren't just the icing on the cake; they're an advanced and precise way to gather data. They can tell your organization exactly what spaces are being used and how often they're accessed.

Implementing devices to collect data will show you how workers are using spaces. With this information, businesses can learn where people are gathering and which conference rooms are actually driving engagement. This is a good opportunity to compare the amount of time spaces are booked for meetings to the actual time people spend in those spaces. If your workspace is already agile, data can still help you pick out the "hot spots" that are driving the most interaction and which teams are connecting most often.

Once your business has the right data, it's time to take a deeper look at what it means.



## Evaluating Your Spaces & Interaction

Once you have utilization data, dive into what spaces are being used and what spaces are driving productivity. Think about how to get more out of popular spaces. Are there ways to use those vacant spots?

As you look at underused areas, think about the possible reasons workers are neglecting them. Maybe they're turned off by outdated equipment, or maybe the space is just too large for intimate meetings. Understanding which spaces are in high demand and which spaces are underused provides organizations with the insight they need to align their space planning with the needs of their workforce. In many cases, you'll find simple solutions to seemingly wasted space. With those solutions will come more engagement and collaboration.

Pay special attention to the data below.

- **Daily peak utilization by space:** This is how many people enter an area during the day.
- **Daily peak utilization by business unit:** This is the maximum number of people that enter a business unit during the day.
- **Average peak utilization:** This is the average peak usage of a space over a specified period of time.
- **Frequency of peaks:** This is how often you reach your peak utilization during a month.

When a business starts to consider moving to a more agile workspace, it can be helpful to understand there isn't a one-size-fits-all formula. Some companies have found great success in activity-based models, but many businesses thrive at a less extreme point on the agile workspace spectrum. The key is to look at your business's needs and the data.

Still, even though there isn't a formula for what every agile workspace should look like, there are several methods any businesses can use to successfully create an agile workspace.



## Chapter 5

# How to Create an Agile Workspace

Once you've gathered a baseline, you need to set up a plan, decide what type of agile workplace will benefit your company the most, and **put the plan in motion**.

The first step in forming a plan is gathering data and taking inventory. You need an inventory of all available and occupied spaces, including insight into what types of spaces they are and how they are allocated. Analyze what spaces are being used, what's being neglected, and what's flat-out wasted. As you gather data, there are interactive tools available to help you set up a plan.

## Set up Your Plan with Interactive Planning Tools

Interactive planning tools let planners completely redefine and reorganize a space without physically picking up a single desk or monitor. They can create and test different scenarios through a sandbox interface that uses real data to optimize space floor by floor as well as across buildings and sites. This enables organizations to experiment with allocations and find the right combination of meeting rooms,

assigned seats, and flexible ratio-based seating to consolidate occupancy, maximize capacity, and meet the needs of workers. It's a chance to experiment, play out different scenarios, and analyze how each new layout impacts total space usage.

## Drive Performance with IoT Data and Metrics

Robust data is integral to planning because your plan is only as good as how accurately it reflects the current and future states of occupancy.



Forward-thinking organizations are using IoT technology to validate data accuracy and capture advanced KPIs, such as peak occupancy, that can paint a more detailed picture of space needs than ever before. Thirty workers may be assigned to a floor with a maximum capacity of 30 seats, but IoT sensors may reveal that utilization rarely peaks above 18 filled seats. An organization can therefore assign more than 30 workers to those 30 seats, increasing the capacity of their real estate without worrying about overcrowding.

Beyond capturing real needs, those same data points can also be used to demonstrate improvements in efficiency and cost savings. This is useful not only for developing plans but also for corralling the support necessary to scale strategies and implement future projects.

IoT data can be captured through various sources:

### **Badges and Card Swipes**

Badges and ID cards let you pull in valuable utilization information. Using them is a simple way to track data because it piggybacks off systems that are already in place for security.

### **Sensor Technology**

There was a time when time-consuming manual audits were the norm. Savvy companies are saying goodbye to those days, thanks to sensor technology. Here are some sensor devices you can use to bring in precise space utilization data:

- Low-energy Bluetooth
- Desk sensors
- Lighting sensors
- Dark sensors

### **Wi-Fi as IoT**

The rise of Wi-Fi as IoT lets companies gather data without installing a single sensor. With pure software downloaded onto employee computers, workers can see where colleagues are sitting and organizations can track real-time occupancy.

With a growing need to protect personal data of employees, these technologies have been designed to solve for privacy concerns. They act as true sensors that are walled off from computer data, only able to report where employees are seated within the organization's Wi-Fi network. As the security concerns around Wi-Fi as IoT are better understood, this option offers increasingly attractive, affordable, and effective workplace optimization.

### **Workplace Management Software**

Workplace management software is the cornerstone of workspace optimization. Without it, it is impossible to set up a centralized data system, and all of that information you gathered has nowhere to live. A robust workplace management software system can harness valuable data before, during, and after a business makes a transition to an agile workplace.

If leaders are considering making a case to management about a possible move to an agile workplace, this software is an essential goldmine of data. Without it, your business will be flying blind and you won't realize the size, usage, or possibilities for your space.

After you've set up a plan to gather and analyze utilization data, it's important to **get input across departments**. That means unifying the whole company. Being proactive can stop conflicts or miscommunications before they happen.



## Connect Workers to Their Workplace

Many companies have started to deploy employee-facing workplace apps, directly connecting people to their spaces. Visual floor plan interfaces enable employees to browse their spaces, book rooms and desks, and make requests. This not only empowers employees but also provides managers with further insight into the needs of workers, enabling them to track demand for different spaces and to enhance wellness and safety by tracking requests for moves, maintenance, and other workplace services.

## Move Management Technology

Implementing space plans requires the detailed automation of a robust tool for managing move projects. Large moves are really a collection of smaller move tasks with many stakeholders. Without a robust move management tool, organizations do not have

the ability to keep everyone on the same page, track tasks, and validate completion. This can draw out move projects and lead to delays and ballooning costs.

## Get Key Departments Invested

Technology and humans are both at the heart of a successful move to an agile workspace. Any move can be an adjustment, and the more buy-in your team has, the easier the transition will be.

Wondering how to accomplish this seemingly hefty task?

The solution is simple once you get your hands on it: data.

The single most important way to get cross-departmental buy-in is through centralized business intelligence. Take a look at the needs in action: HR needs one source to record where employees are assigned. IT needs to make sure systems are centralized. Corporate real estate needs consistent ways to track how space is used so they can make informed buying or leasing decisions.

More importantly, centralized data is the only route to scaling a business. As a business grows, it will feel more and more of an aching need for a single-source stream of data. Otherwise, as you grow, you'll risk overlooking chunks of wasted space, and you'll leave the needs of modern workers unmet.

When all teams are on board and moving in the same data-driven direction, it's almost time to put your plan in action. However, there is one important step that's often overlooked: taking time to invest in and reallocate technology.

## Conduct a Technology Audit

Technology drives flexible workspaces. However, outdated or unused technology can slow down productivity. As you gather utilization data and set goals, work with your IT team to examine your technology needs.

### Start with these questions in mind:

1. Does your organization have accurate visibility into its space inventory?
2. Does your organization have any way of tracking important metrics on occupancy, such as space/person?
3. Does your organization have any way of tracking how much assigned spaces are actually being used?
4. Does your organization have any way of tracking how much its spaces line up with the daily needs of employees?
5. Does your organization have any insight into how much employees are satisfied with their workplace?
6. Do your workplaces meet the criteria of a modern world where prospective employees value flexibility as a key driver when selecting a job?
7. Does your workplace support choice and productivity, or does it inhibit collaboration?
8. Does your workplace promote employee freedom?
9. Does your organization help mesh the digital workplace, the physical workplace, and employee behaviors?





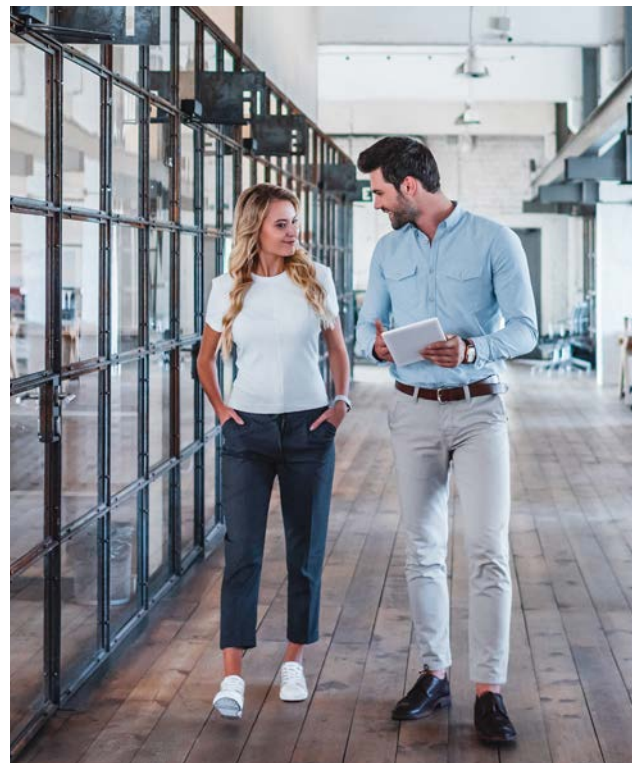
## Chapter 6

# Transitioning to an Agile Workspace

We've helped companies across the world move into more flexible spaces and successfully up their ROI. And we've taken notes all along the way. Here's a final set of advice:

- Don't fly blind. It's impossible to improve without solid data that reveals what you currently have in place and how effectively you're using it.
- Work hard to build a team that shares a unifying vision.
- Actively seek out all-star candidates, but don't be afraid to bring in consultants.
- Focus on designing activity-based neighborhoods that serve a clear purpose.
- Find your balance between flexible spaces, private areas, and collaborative zones.

As you move forward, remember to keep measuring how often spaces are used, and keep driving engagement. The agile workplace might be ever-changing, but space optimization will continue to run on the same fuel. Long into the future, optimization will continue to cut out waste, reveal ways to inspire workers, and push businesses to better outcomes.





## Want to learn how Archibus can support your workplace transformation?

Contact us to talk about your goals and learn how our space utilization solutions can help you achieve them.



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### **Robotech FM Solutions**

*Archibus Implementations for over 30 years*

Hoboken, NJ 07030

Phone: 201-792-6300

info@robotechcad.com

*Our mission is helping you be successful with your Facility Management Operation using Archibus Technology*

**[www.robotechcad.com](http://www.robotechcad.com)**