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The Shifting Workplace

Strategies to Help You Accomplish
Your Workplace Goals in 2023

According to a Gallup poll,

53%

of employees expect their employers to continue to support a hybrid arrangement and 24% expect to work exclusively remotely.

> "These changes will result in an office environment like we have never seen before, nearly doubling the number of people who will be working remotely at least part of their week (compared with pre-pandemic numbers)."
> – Gallup 2022

This shift has provided the need to revisit space and workplace management strategies, and (most importantly), rethink the purpose of the workplace. To support employees during this process, executive teams need to consider:

→ The reason behind when and why employees should return to the office.

→ Employees are looking to have purposeful engagements when in person–not attend virtual meetings. The kinds of configurations, tools, and amenities that support this newly defined purpose

→ How to plan and rationalize their real estate portfolio and spaces in the future

The following article walks through some strategies, best practices, and tools that space planning and real estate teams should consider when looking toward the future.

Revisit the Purpose of Your Workplace

It's important to step back and determine the purpose of your physical workplace. Employees are simply not coming to the office to perform tasks they can accomplish at home. Employers need provide purposeful reasons for employees to physically come in. During these engagements, employees want to engage and collaborate with colleagues, and the office layout should reflect that.

Because of this, executive, facilities, real estate, and space teams face the challenge (and opportunity!) of determining the best use of their spaces.

Will the purpose of your workplace be to have meetings with clients? If so, it might be beneficial to open small satellite hubs located throughout the country in locations that make the most sense when looking at employee and customer location data, as opposed to having one large HQ location. This is often referred to as the hub and spoke model. The hub locations should be designed to accommodate client meetings, offering private rooms rather than an open floorplan.

Or will your workplace be a collaborative space where employees primarily brainstorm together? If that's the case, space management teams should consider the best layouts that facilitate this kind of teamwork.

So, how can teams make these kinds of decisions?

One approach is to run surveys and have open communication with employees. Space management teams can gather this information in many ways:

→ Conducting anonymous interviews of workers

→ Dropping in on team meetings

→ Setting up forums to see what employee expectations are and to get a feel for what's working (and what's not) about their office spaces.

This way, executive teams can take this input into account when setting a workplace strategy, and workers feel confident that their voices are being heard.

Another approach is to capture space analytics and then use this data to inform your decisions. With the right data, you can:

→ See how your teams are using your buildings, enabling you to put departments that often collaborate close to each other, or rework areas that have lots of vacancies.

→ Visualize how much open space you have and how much space each of your departments is using.

Ultimately, these kinds of analytics allow you to get better insights into your workspaces, so you have accurate data to inform the strategy and purpose of your buildings going forward. This leads us to our next section.

Choosing the Tools to Help You Revisit the Purpose of Your Workspace

Technology that captures space utilization data in real time enables you to accurately see how your spaces are being used. If you choose a tool that connects directly to sensors that monitor occupancy, you can visualize exactly how full your buildings are at any given time. This is especially important with the rise of hybrid work, as it can enable you to better manage your real estate portfolio. For example, you might find you no longer need one seat per employee, since 100% of the workforce isn't always in the building at the same time. Having the data to make informed decisions on your corporate real estate enables you adjust up or down as needed.

Additionally, space management tools that connect to sensors let you see which spaces are being used most frequently, so you have a sense of how valuable each kind of space is to your teams. If you see lots of traffic to specific types of brainstorming spaces, you might be able to infer that your employees are frequently collaborating, which could help inform your strategy.

Reconfigure Office Spaces to Fit New Workplace Goals

Once you've decided on the purpose of your workplace based on employee input, usage data, and space needs, you can take steps to reconfigure your office spaces to meet these new requirements.

In one recent example, Premera Blue Cross rethought their buildings after opening their campus. They adopted a more flexible working strategy, where employees could be either fully or partially remote. This meant evolving their office to accommodate desk hoteling (where employees can reserve working spaces), so their campus was no longer optimized for individual workspaces. It also meant looking at badge data to evaluate building occupancy levels, so they could get insights into how their buildings were being used.

Video clip

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"Once we finish our return to campus in the fall, we plan to open up the option to the company where they can hotel. So we built out the solution in Nuvolo…. Hoteling is becoming more important for a return to work strategy."
— Premera Blue Cross

Choosing the Technology to Help You Implement Space Changes

It's important to consider the tech you need to implement these changes across your organization. Not having the right data and insights could lead to consequences such as overestimating how much office space you need, or making the choice to consolidate an office where the space was being used.

But how do you determine what solutions are necessary to help you carry out your mission? As mentioned, technology can help you to track your space usage in real time, and it can provide a better picture into how and why your workspaces are being used. If you see one type of conference room being used frequently, you should consider creating more of those kinds of spaces.

Software also helps you plan and implement your moves easily. For example, if your workplace management tool integrates directly with applications like AutoCAD, you can create new layouts, add individuals or departments, simulate employee moves, and visualize different floor plans.

Another best practice is to choose technology that integrates directly with, or is part of, a real estate management and facilities management solution. This way, you can connect your facilities, space planning, and real estate teams, so that once you've reconfigured your spaces virtually, you can submit work orders to carry out those moves smoothly.

Having these tools connected also allows you access to data from different areas of the business to make big decisions. It's nearly impossible to consolidate data from siloed, disconnected solutions and manual logs.

Similarly, a tool that integrates with ServiceNow or another ITSM solution makes this process even easier—when a desk is moved, you can create automatic workflows that trigger IT to set up the necessary IT equipment, as well.

Choosing the Tools That Make It Easier to Accommodate Hybrid Work

Another important aspect to reconfiguring your office spaces is making it easier for your hybrid workers to be productive in the office.

While their focus will probably be on collaboration, your workers will also need spaces where they can do focused, individual work when they're not in meetings.

Because of this, it is crucial to find tech solutions that:

→ Include the ability to reserve workspaces, desks, collaboration areas, and equipment easily from employees' phones or email. That way, they have all the details they need before getting to the office. They can ensure the people they need to collaborate with will also be there, they are sitting near them, that they have a reserved desk and monitor, and that their group has the space they need to collaborate.

→ Incorporate room reservation technology that integrates with other existing applications like Outlook, as this ensures no spaces are getting double-booked.

→ Include the ability to track room no-shows and then release the space (for example, if no one arrives at the meeting space at the designated time), which enables the space to be used productively in other ways.

Lastly, to make things easier for your employees who aren't on-site as often, your space management solution should include mobile wayfinding capabilities. This enables workers to see the office layout, understand where things are located, and then navigate to conference rooms, co-workers' desks, break rooms, restrooms, and more. With the right wayfinding tech, users can see floorplans right from their fingertips and get push notifications for important updates. They can search for people, places, and things—and employers can designate and specify any off-limit areas.

Hybrid work is shaking up corporate real estate and space planning. With the right tools in place, you can meet this new challenge head-on and feel confident you're giving your employees what they need to succeed.
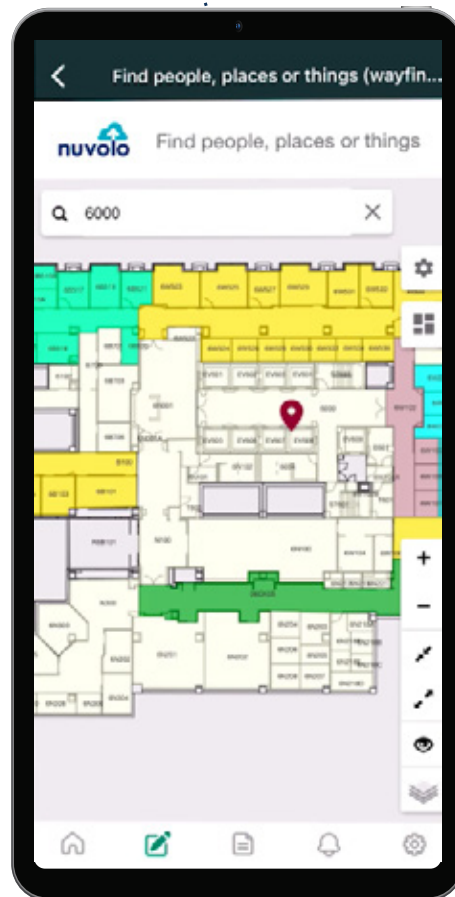
Rationalize Your Real Estate Portfolio

Real estate costs are often a business' second largest expense after labor. After you have determined your goals and made necessary changes, teams will need to work together to continuously optimize your real estate portfolio to make the best long-term decisions—ideally based on data. This is where having the right technology comes into play.

Choosing the Right Tech to Help You Rationalize Your Real Estate Portfolio

A technology platform that consolidates all your space usage data, maintenance data (like asset or building energy performance) and real estate data (such as leasing and owned property information) gives you more insight into how your organization is operating and how space is being used.

Having an accurate view into your lease data ensures you don't miss a critical date. The ability to receive real-time notifications on leases due to expire ensures you won't miss the opportunity to consolidate your portfolio if you know that space is no longer needed.

Having technology that's connected gives you a holistic view into the total cost of ownership—from lease costs to energy use to asset expenses. That data can be compared against how much the space is being utilized by employees, enabling you to either justify the cost or consolidate properties.

Ultimately, the combination of data across different departments provides a cross-functional picture that executive teams can use to make real estate decisions.
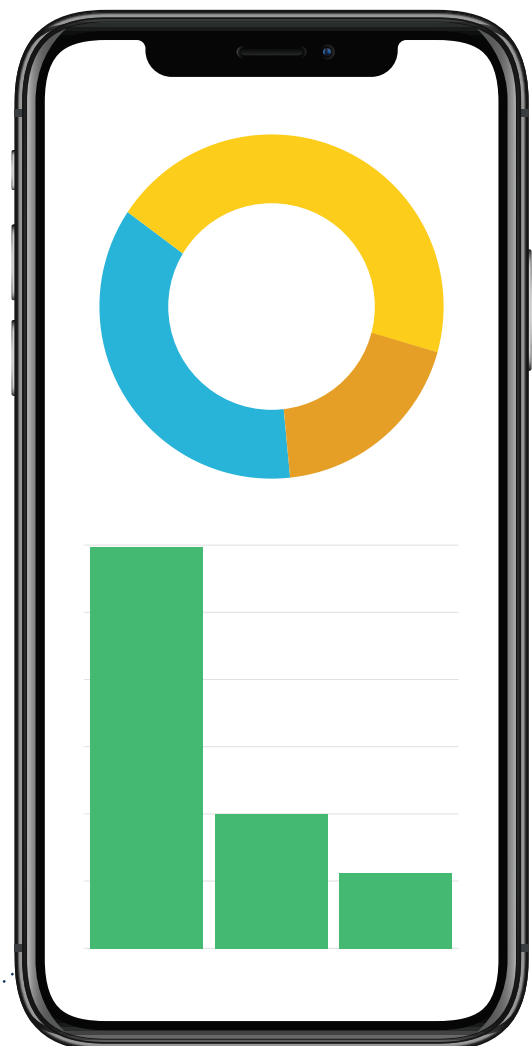
One Connected Platform for Your Space Management Needs

It's clear that workplaces are evolving—and the way you manage them should, too. Effective workplace software helps you track your spaces, buildings, business processes, and more.

Nuvolo Connected Workplace enables you to manage your space usage data and redesign office layouts—but also go beyond that to manage your facilities processes, real estate needs, and much more. A connected solution delivers a clear picture into your business so you can plan, deliver, and operate all your enterprise services data and collaborate across teams. Plus, we are built on ServiceNow, which makes connecting departments seamless.

See how Nuvolo can help you achieve a holistic view of your assets, processes, and spaces to make better business decisions.