



WHITE PAPER

Collaborative Workplace of the Future

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5 Considerations

1. Make Use of Collaboration Technology
2. Embrace Flexible Working
3. Adjust for Workforce Composition
4. Ensure Business Continuity
5. Take Responsibility for Workplace Productivity



The modern day “office” is almost unrecognizable from what it was only a decade ago. Necessities that kept everyone present – for access to central records, monitoring by supervisors, phone usage, and general group work convenience—are simply requirements of the past. Laptop usage has tripled. Mobile phone usage has doubled. And video communication is up 62%. Flexible work environments aren’t just a “nice to have” employee benefit – they are showing nearly 40% productivity gains. It’s no wonder that 84 out of the 100 best companies to work for offer mobile/flexible working.

Today, collaboration, access, and monitoring are just as important, but they do not have to be centralized. Managers are overseeing global teams on multiple continents, employees are seeking out content experts no matter where they may be located, and meetings with vendors, partners and customers can happen around the world, in real-time, and with crystal clear video and sound.

Offices focused on wellness are offering treadmill desks. Businesses in high cost urban areas are keeping budgets low by allowing for remote workers and extremely flexible work “pods.” HR executives can finally offer the best training programs in the world for 1 to 1,000 employees, no matter where they may be located.

More than ever, it is up to Facilities Managers and Corporate Real Estate experts to envision and create these unusual, yet highly effective work environments. In this paper, we’ll outline just five tips to modernize—and future-proof—any company’s workspaces.



1. Make Use of Collaboration Technology

It is now easier than ever to have teams collaborate beyond the physical office walls. It is also shockingly effective. Poor quality and expensive audio conversations have become a thing of the past, and according to a new Wainhouse Research survey of nearly 5,000 enterprise video users around the world, 87% of remote users do not feel disconnected when communicating remotely via video with their colleagues. 71% also prefer to communicate via video with their customers and partners. Top business benefits of video collaboration include increased productivity, increased impact of discussions, expedited decision-making, and reduced travel costs.

Audio and video collaboration technology provides real-time, often face-to-face communication, which supports comprehensive information sharing, decreased cycle-times and quick, positive outcomes. Polycom voice and video collaboration solutions erase barriers to multi-disciplinary projects and boost innovation and productivity, delivering a win-win for both individual workers and the organization as a whole.

So what does this mean for those who are tasked with managing those “physical office walls?” These Facilities managers, along with IT, HR and Marketing teams, must work together to integrate new office designs, employee policies, and collaboration technology. By supporting these workspace transformations and driving forward the company’s strategic vision, Facilities managers won’t be at risk of being left behind, unable to adapt and responsible for hampering these potential productivity gains.

2. Embrace Flexible Working

Businesses and workforces have never been more global. Dispersed teams are benefitting from “borderless” work environments, so much so that geographical location is no longer a factor for organizations seeking the right talent, teams, and leaders.

Location flexibility has given rise to a corresponding increase in the number of people working from home. With voice and video collaboration technology, virtual teams can meet and discuss matters even “face-to-face,” increasing productivity and building the rapport that has historically only come from collocation.

Even performance management is becoming easier, as managers can meet frequently with their team members without the cost and time expense of traveling. It’s these factors that are making high quality teleconferencing and video conferencing the answer for increased productivity and efficiency for virtual workforces.

In a Regus research study that canvassed more than 26,000 business managers across 90 countries, 48% of workers disclosed that they work remotely for at least half of their work week. For Facilities managers, this discovery is invaluable, because it enables a reduction in centralized, physical office space, offering such new opportunities as “hoteling,” where multiple workers divide up a single office based on which day of the week they will be physically present. The cost savings related to this reduction lend themselves to assistance beyond the office, putting these facilities experts in a position to improve everything from communication technology (cell phones are no replacement for high quality audio) to ergonomics at home offices and managed third spaces.

3. Adjust for Workforce Composition

The composition of today's workforce has shifted, and with it has been a change in work styles. Experienced "baby boomer" employees desire more flexible working options in order to ease back from the pressures of the workplace. At the same time, millennials who have recently joined the workforce are demanding flexibility in when and where they work. All the while, Generation X-ers, currently the largest proportion of the workforce, are asking for more flexible working options for better work-life balance.

Luckily for Facilities leaders, many of these shifts come with them the ability to create similar, flexible work environments. Collaboration, open workspaces, hoteling and casual workstations may take greater precedence over defined cubicles or closed offices. Offices may be configured to be movable, flexible spaces where furniture can be easily shifted around to form useful environments for a variety of functions—from meetings to private conversations or informal discussions. VoIP communications bring flexibility to individual desks, adapting any phone to offer an employee's custom settings on any given day – and connecting over Ethernet for cost-effectiveness and high quality.

Facilities leaders who take their new audience into account will build offices unlike those of years past. And as long as they establish internet connectivity throughout, they can use voice and video collaboration technology to make it all seamless. No matter what your physical space looks like, high quality audio and video conferencing can expand or extend it, helping forward-thinking organizations attract and retain employees who have a different idea of what an office looks like and who should share it.

4. Ensure Business Continuity

When British telecom company O2 saw the Summer Olympics on the horizon, they knew that traffic and tourists were soon going to be a huge hindrance to "business as usual." So they made a business continuity plan, developing the largest flexible working pilot the country had ever seen. O2 managed travel disruption and delays by moving more than 2,500 employees out of the office, with only 125 mission-critical staff left in the building.

Business continuity plans are smart whether there is a known need on the horizon or not. By offering alternative work facilities, enabling work-from-home, or offering the infrastructure for mobile working and testing plans through preparedness drills and education, facilities managers can be ready for any challenges that hit "home base." They can enable foolproof voice and video collaboration to connect all workers, while also testing out multiple scenarios in the case of disaster recovery and more, ultimately becoming the expert in keeping business running even when the main office is not.

5. Take Responsibility for Workplace Productivity

New studies show that 70% of workers are not engaged at work. This rampant disengagement is costing the U.S. economy between \$450-550 billion per year! While Facilities managers cannot be blamed for the problem, they have a unique opportunity—even a responsibility—to be a part of the solution.

Through the creation of better workspaces and experiences at the office, Facilities managers can improve employee engagement and morale. A recent Gensler study showed that this directly impacts the bottom line, as top performing companies show employees that are 50% more satisfied with their work than those from average performing companies.

The research behind this is not rocket science—when employees don't have the equipment, support, or knowledge to do their jobs effectively, they conclude that their organization is not paying attention to them. Once they start to believe their work is not important, their interest in doing their best wanes. Conversely, giving people greater autonomy and control over their workday has profoundly positive effects, leading workers to feel trusted and influencing them to do more for the business. From designing effective collaborative workspaces to enabling technology that allows employees to be productive regardless of distance or location, Facilities managers can improve morale, increase productivity, and even help recruit top performers who are disengaged in their current work environments.

Conclusion

With globalization here, flexible working emerging, and unique new work-style opportunities on the horizon, the role of the Facilities manager has never been more important. The challenge is for these workplace experts to create environments that don't just increase productivity and morale today, but are ready for plenty more innovation in the future. To future-proof an office is to realize that the word "office" no longer refers to a building or even considers HQ to be top priority.

The key? Keep the workplace as nimble as the workers themselves. Plan for change, for more technology, and for greater opportunities for collaboration. Take advantage of technology, workspace innovations, and the creative minds of your employees to develop a solution that will work for everyone, no matter how, when, where or why they work and transform the office into an adaptable environment that will satisfy the needs of aging workers, current workers, and those that will enter the office of the future for decades to come.



About the author

Mei Lin Low is Director, Business Functions & Market Development for Polycom worldwide. In her role, she is responsible for driving the company's strategic vision for business functions in areas of enterprise collaboration, smart work, new ways of working and communication-enabled business processes.

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About Polycom

Polycom is the global leader in open standards-based unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) solutions for voice and video collaboration, trusted by more than 415,000 customers around the world. Polycom solutions are powered by the Polycom® RealPresence® Platform, comprehensive software infrastructure and rich APIs that interoperate with the broadest set of communication, business, mobile and cloud applications and devices to deliver secure face-to-face video collaboration in any environment.

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