



Maximizing Your Office Space

Tips and Strategies for
Optimal Workplace Efficiency

deskbird

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Introduction

As flexible work models increase in popularity and rental properties get more expensive, **optimizing office space is crucial**. The space optimization strategy is not only important for cost saving and adaptation to new work models but is also key for **improving efficiency and productivity**. Something as simple as adjusting your office layouts, such as creating collaborative spaces or areas dedicated to rest or socializing, can have a massive impact on how efficient your employees are. Flexible workspace design, furniture optimization, and efficient storage solutions help tackle the challenges imposed by smaller, poorly designed workspaces.

In the current commercial real estate environment, **flexibility is central**.

With a large proportion of people working hybrid, offices need to adapt to the needs of workers who come into the office a few times per week. There is a need to move away from the fully remote work that characterized the pandemic, but workers also reject the idea of coming in every day. To manage these flexible schedules, office design must have the appropriate space, be agile, include the right technology, and inspire collaboration. Further, workplace design trends are leaning towards creating environments that **bring people together**, which many have longed for after being isolated for the last few years.

In 2023, the office's role has shifted to **become a destination**, meaning that workplace design is trending to include more elements of comfort rather than highly structured corporate settings. **This is key for commercial real estate management** because to get people to come in, the workplace must provide additional benefits as well being, and balance at work is top of mind for many employees.

Also important for many employees, especially the growing demographic of **Gen-Z**, is sustainable office design. Companies that prioritize resource conservation and promote the reuse and recycling of materials and technology align with ethical values and recognize the importance of considering the planet in office design, both presently and in the future.



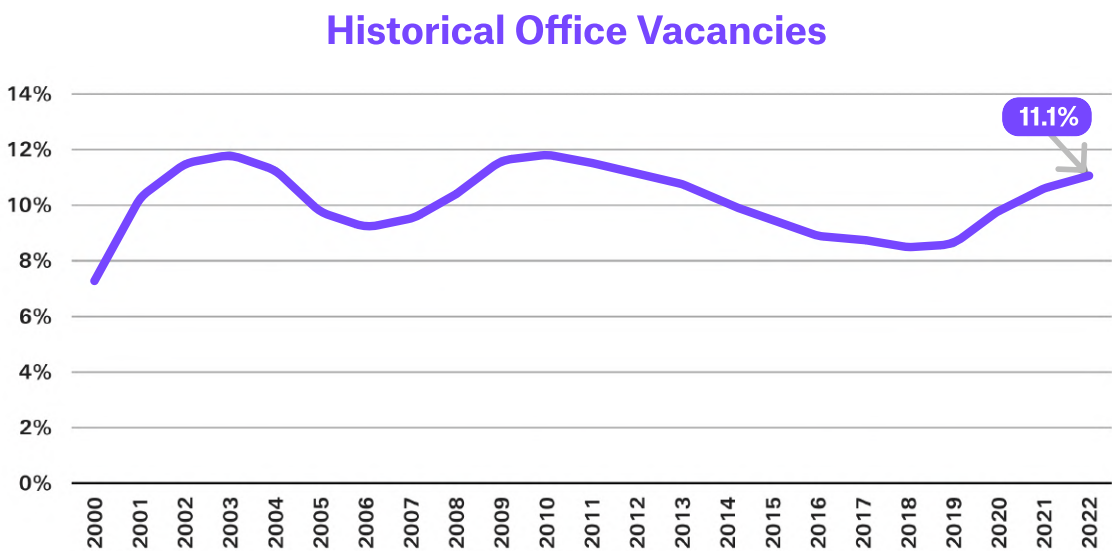


Key Insights from the Future of CRE: Office Report

The ***Future of CRE: Office Report*** outlines two important post-pandemic effects on the CRE space. The first key area of effect is the shift towards a more suburban lifestyle and away from urban life in response to the pandemic and emerging technology. The “**Donut Effect**” phenomenon was coined by remote work thought leader Nick Bloom from *WFH research*. The second effect is the change in the office space status due to the daily percentage of employees in the office. Overall, technological advances and cultural shifts have impacted WFH levels and, in turn, office building occupancies.

One of the key insights from the report is the growth of population and business activity in smaller cities, which is also in line with the general population growth in the suburbs. This greatly impacts space optimization as less office space may be needed in urban rather than suburban areas. Additionally, modern offices must reflect people’s needs, such as allocating the right amount of space per employee and redesigning the office for greater collaboration. This is important for the suburban buildings predicted to be bustling in the near future, as many of them need to be updated to fulfill these needs, considering many are outdated.

The research suggests that monitoring activity, desk booking, using key fobs, and monitoring working time will increase. In practice, considering peak occupancy requirements rather than prioritizing average weekly occupancy rates is key. This is because many employees with hybrid schedules go to the office on Tues, Wed, and Thurs, and WFH on Mondays and Fridays. Although there is variation across different markets, the key metric is ‘office space per employee.’



Source: CoStar, Q4 2022

This can be easily measured using a space planning tool, like a **week planning app**, to collect data on daily occupancy. An efficient office would be one where fewer workstations would cover more employees, reducing overall space needs but still having the necessary capacity for employees.

The report also predicts job growth is strongest for 'office-using' roles, with an overall **3.5 million** increase in jobs from 2019 to 2023. This has major implications for CRE as there is still a need for accessible office space. While this seems to contradict much of the conversation surrounding modern work, which centers around remote work, the market vacancy is also predicted to drop by **1.77%**.

Although many people are working hybrid and remote, there has been a **2.7 million** gain in new jobs which should increase gross space demand.



III

Strategies for Maximizing Office Space

Developing strategies for maximizing office space begins with identifying the common challenges leaders and CRE managers face. One, for example, is **limited square footage**. Smaller offices mean less space for individual employees as organizations grow. Or similarly, as the cost of renting space increases, many businesses will choose to downsize, leaving less space for the team. Additionally, poor layouts and outdated office designs can harm productivity and connection because they are not conducive to changing working styles. Today, the office is a place for **connection and collaboration**, whereas it previously was dedicated to focusing on tasks. An office design must reflect these changes to fulfill business and employee needs.

Addressing these challenges begins with flexible work models. Hybrid work helps circumvent the issue of having less square footage as fewer people come into the office daily, meaning fewer desks and rooms are needed. With flexible work in mind, most people come into the office for collaborative work, as individual tasks can be done efficiently at home. Therefore, workspace design should reflect these changes in the way we work. The right office design can boost collaboration and, in response to the issue of downsizing, can be reimagined to have the right amount of space for everyone, such as common tables or more open spaces. Another solution to these challenges is **furniture optimization**, or reconfiguring furniture to serve the team's needs. This can include placing certain desks to face each other and others to be isolated or have long big tables for meetings. Additionally, to save space, efficient storage solutions can be implemented to leave more room for meeting areas or desks.



IV

Desk-Sharing Ratio

One of the most important elements of a space-maximizing strategy is the desk sharing ratio, which is how many people use one desk in an office. For example, if two people use the same desk at different times throughout the week, this ratio would be 2:1. Traditionally, in offices where employees come in every day, the ratio is 1:1. With hybrid and remote models increasing in popularity, this 1:1 ratio will be less common.

To calculate the ideal ratio, a number of factors need to be taken into account.



- The first is **team size** because the larger the team, the more desks that will be needed. But if this large team is highly distributed, in other words, works from many locations that are not the central office, fewer desks are necessary. So, these two numbers are a good place to start.
- Next, the **function of each team member** needs to be understood, as some roles require more in-person work than others, and some require certain equipment to complete their jobs. It is important to know how much space and what types of resources your employees will need to function efficiently. Knowing the rate of desk usage for your whole team is a key factor in determining the ideal desk sharing ratio. Using analytics, you can determine how often specific teams use desks versus meeting rooms, for example.
- Similarly, your **industry** will affect the desk sharing calculation as the function of the office changes based on the work being done. Ask, "What type of work is my team involved in?" Because this will help determine the type of space required.
- Additionally, the **business phase and projected growth** need to be considered. The faster the business grows, the more space will be needed. Therefore, the desk sharing ratio must be constantly adapted to fit business growth and needs as it expands.

Case Studies

LOOPING GROUP implemented its own space optimization strategy as the company began to grow rapidly, and leadership knew they would eventually run out of space for their employees. They chose a shared desk model, which required an understanding of who was coming into the office and when. This would then need to be organized into a system they could track and manage across multiple locations. Monthly utilization was their key metric, so they also needed a solution to track and measure how their office space was used daily.

The LOOPING GROUP chose deskbird to regulate its flexible work model and better understand office utilization across its numerous locations.

Another example of the impact of space optimization is IU, International University of Applied Sciences, one of Germany's leading education providers. Their first desk booking solution could not handle a large amount of data to cover their 30 different locations, and they needed a way for employees to book desks easily.

IU introduced the deskbird solution in the summer of 2021 for 800 employees in Germany, and employees could make bookings easily through the app or on their desktops. Seeing where colleagues are sitting and booking a desk in that area was great for effectively allocating space.



The Role of Technology in Office Space Optimization

Technology plays an important role in office space optimization, especially since the world and how we work are constantly changing. Staying up to date with the latest CRE and office management trends is the best way to future-proof your office.

The **Deloitte** Innovations in Commercial Real Estate report outlines how companies can optimize their space for the future with the latest tech innovations. One of the priorities of the workplace is employee health and wellness, which was catalyzed by the pandemic but has had continued importance since. This can be maintained through lighting and heating design that provides optimal comfort. Another trend driving innovation in CRE is **IoT-enabled building management technology** equipped with sensors and software to collect relevant data. In turn, these systems can help save costs and improve efficiency. Additionally, 3D printing technology will impact the world of CRE by helping to develop buildings. These printers will help *“reduce construction costs, drive operational efficiency, and enhance the quality of construction¹.”*

There are a number of benefits to implementing technology for office space optimization. First, as previously mentioned, the right tools allow businesses to **collect valuable data** regarding key factors like occupancy and utilization. These real-time analytics provide insight into how and when the office is being used and if it is being used to its full capacity. Tools take the guesswork out of understanding employees’ whereabouts and activity.



¹ "Innovations in Commercial Real Estate Preparing for the City of the Future" - Deloitte

Additionally, **technology helps streamline booking and reservation processes.** Week planning apps allow employees to plan their weeks and see when others will be in the office. This takes additional work off the hands of office managers, who can get an overview of who is in the office and when boosting overall workplace efficiency. With leaders no longer having to input schedules manually, a lot of time is saved, and information about the team’s whereabouts is centralized. Such apps also give employees a sense of autonomy which is important for overall productivity and satisfaction. For example, when employees get to choose where to work, they will likely choose a location that boosts their productivity. This is also task-dependent, meaning each individual can choose where to work based on the type of environment best suits the task. A highly focused task is better done at home with little distraction, while collaborative problem-solving tasks benefit from in-person office interaction.

Now reflecting on the benefits of office hardware, such as sensors, these tools gather real-time occupancy data.



VII

Best Practices for Office Space Optimization

Flexible models are the future of work and are increasing in popularity for several reasons, from helping reduce costs to improving employee happiness. But, they are also highly important to the current commercial real estate environment because workplaces need to adapt to the changing world of work, which places socialization and collaboration at its core. The office is now a destination, not the everyday commute many have begun to see as a chore. But for

corporate real estate and the success of business alike, we need people in our offices. One way to drive this is through space optimization, whether this means resigning offices that suit certain tasks or making them more sustainable for the changing values of the growing younger generations in the workforce.

In outlining the best practices for space optimization, we must determine the main challenges CRE managers face, such as limited square footage, poor office layout, or outdated design. As the office's role becomes more centered around collaboration rather than individual efficiency, these key challenges become even more pertinent. Looking to the future of work, we are becoming even more driven by flexible models, such as hybrid, remote, and distributed work, causing major ripples in corporate real estate.

Space optimization is also improved by implementing a desk sharing ratio to determine how many employees need to use the same desk in the office. Once this is established, it can be managed to use your office space efficiently. Implementing the right workplace technology is the next key to maximizing office space. This can be a desk reservation system or built-in office sensors to calculate occupancy on different days and times.



Recommendations for Space Optimization

- First and foremost, embrace flexibility in the workplace. This can take numerous forms, such as allowing employees to choose when to come into the office or mandating a certain amount of in-office days. Not only does this boost employee satisfaction by providing greater autonomy, but it also creates opportunities to repurpose or re-think the office space.
- Make data-driven decisions. Whether you are conducting a survey to understand better employee experience and satisfaction or gathering occupancy data to create a sustainable office, this data should guide future decision-making. Regarding space optimization, getting clear numerical data makes downsizing or re-designing space easier to justify.
- And finally, invest in space optimization technology. As we have outlined, technological innovation in the world of work is rapidly growing and adapting to meet the needs of the modern workforce. Using sensors, workplace management apps, hot desking apps, and week planning platforms will streamline your space optimization process by automating data gathering and centralizing insights that can lead to major improvements.



Conclusion

Two important post-pandemic effects are driving the future of commercial real estate (CRE). The first effect is the "Donut Effect," which describes the shift towards suburban living and away from urban areas due to the pandemic and the rise of remote work technology. The second effect is the changing status of office spaces, influenced by the percentage of employees working in the office daily. Therefore, there is a need to optimize space in urban areas and update suburban buildings to meet modern office requirements. Monitoring tools like desk booking and key fobs will become more prevalent, focusing on peak occupancy rather than average weekly rates. Despite the growth of remote work, research, such as the Future of CRE: Office Report, predicts strong job growth in "office-using" roles, leading to increased demand for accessible office space and decreased market vacancy rates.

Optimizing office space is crucial for achieving workplace efficiency and productivity. By implementing the strategies and best practices outlined above, businesses can maximize their available square footage and create an environment that fosters collaboration, creativity, and employee well-being.

As **deskbird** data and the "**Future of CRE: Office Report**" exemplify, regional and industry differences are important to consider, and strategies need to be tailored accordingly. But in all cases, maximizing office space begins with addressing the common challenges of flexible workplaces, such as limited square footage, poor layout, and outdated design.

However, designing spaces for greater flexibility, furniture optimization, and developing a desk sharing ratio not only mitigate these challenges but also brings workplaces into the future. Ultimately, optimizing office space requires considering each business's specific needs and circumstances.

By adopting these practices, businesses can create an efficient and productive work environment that supports their organizational goals. Technology plays a vital role in office space optimization, and the latest innovations in commercial real estate and workplace management offer numerous benefits, including enhanced workplace efficiency and productivity.

deskbird can streamline desk bookings, optimize space allocation, and improve the workplace experience.

Try our desk booking app for free today
to improve your office space usage



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