



Successful Hoteling: GSA's 10 Tips

10 Keys to Office Hoteling Success

Hoteling is the office management strategy that considers certain office resources, such as workspaces and equipment, to be shared assets, rather than assets 'owned' by specific individuals within an organization. By sharing assets between employees, an organization can optimize the efficiency of their offices; reduce their real estate costs by employing more people in the same space, and increase employee satisfaction and retention by giving them access to workspaces and resources whenever and wherever they need them. Hoteling is typically characterized by reservation and check-in processes, and includes VOIP telephone switching functionality.

Hoteling is different from hot-desking or free addressing in which the office is considered to be like a parking lot – workspace available on a first come, first serve basis. With free addressing, there is no advance reservation capability, no check-in ability, and phones are typically forwarded instead of switched.

Hoteling offers this functionality and service.

Office hoteling has become one of the most significant trends in professional office management. Its success, however, is dependent on many details in its daily implementation. Here is a summary of the most important factors for the most successful implementation of office hoteling.

1. **Recognize what employees participating in hoteling are giving up. Show what they are gaining**

A personal office is more than just some partitions and furniture. It represents stability, a sense of place in the organization, a way to express individuality, and a hard earned symbol of rank. If the organization appears to be divided between those who have an office or assigned space and those who do not it takes thought and effort to fully recognize those who may feel they are in the 'have not' category.

Nevertheless there are many gains for an individual who does not want an extended commute, who is self-motivated, who is willing to try out a new way of working, and who wants a more flexible schedule with performance being evaluated on outcomes and not 'face time'. (See the information sheet on benefits of teleworking many of which apply to hoteling).

2. Articulate and implement hoteling as part of broader agency mission and goals

Hoteling brings many benefits to both the GSA and individuals. Among the benefits are:

- Greater mobility and productivity
- Enabling teleworking
- Flexible use of satellite offices
- Quicker creation of client or project specific work teams in close proximity
- Improved wide area networking
- A more compact and efficient office
- An improved central files/service system
- Reduction in carbon emissions
- Real property cost savings

3. Plan for peak, rather than average, demand

Airlines do not expect to fill every seat on every flight. Car rental agencies do not expect to have every car rented every day. Planning for hoteling should be for peak rather than average demand – you will expect to see some unfilled seats.

Part of planning for peak demand is having a well organized set of procedures for when capacity does fill.

Possible measures for peak demand days include extra room checks for unused reservations and temporarily converting conference rooms into multiple overflow offices.

4. Benchmark your service quality against other travel related companies

Consider your employees experience with other travel reservation entities: Airlines, Car Rental, Hotels, etc. These form a very clear and consistent image of a professionally run reservation desk. If it does not match their experience with office reservations it will be perceived as amateurish. This can also apply to having too much service. Travelers understand that complaining will not cause an airline to change

another person's seat assignment to accommodate them. This is not seen as poor service because it is expected and it proves that in the future they will not be inconvenienced by someone else's demands. Part of high service quality is politely applying the rules firmly and consistently.

5. Treat problems as opportunities to demonstrate service quality and the core principles of hoteling

Mistakes will be made. The real test is how you react to them. Respond quickly and professionally, admit and apologize for your error if there was one, but do not reward noncompliance with hoteling procedures. Rehearsing typical situations to identify and iron out possible issues is highly recommended.

6. Organize your office BEFORE implementing hoteling

With a permanent office many employees develop work habits involving generating and keeping excessive local files. The need to move in and out efficiently from a hoteling office requires a much leaner, more organized, and prioritized approach to paperwork. Many long time participants admit that the change was beneficial to their productivity but difficult. Develop standard methods for prioritizing, labeling, and digitizing files, reviewing records procedures, and so forth.

7. Have a method for accommodating extremely short visits

Very often people will need to stop by the office for some very quick but necessary work on their way to, from, or between customers. These visits are characterized by their length being shorter than their potential variance (i.e. 10 minutes sometime in the next hour). Thus they do not schedule very well since the reservation would have to cover the entire possible time. Unless there is some space for these visits, employees will make reservations for the entire day or half day. Many different terms have been used to describe these stations. They work best when they are not ordinary cubicles for two reasons.

1. Their simple needs (work surface, phone, network, power, task lighting, supplies, seat or stool, coat hook, and waste bin) take half the space of a full cubicle. Thus there can be twice as many of them.
2. If they contain amenities suitable for a longer stay (file storage, white board, etc) they will be dominated by longer visits by people not bothering to make reservations. Thus they will be unavailable for the true drop-by visitors.

8. There is no substitute for daily walk-about checks

It is possible to have a well ordered reservation system with no relationship to reality. People make reservations 'just in case' they need them. Unreserved persons make themselves at home wherever seems empty. Those with room assignments find someone at their desk and have to waste time moving them out or finding another empty office. They will all wind up regarding the office reservation process as a joke.

Twice daily walk-about checks against the occupant report must be followed by action both to give them and Hoteling credibility. Persons without a reservation should be given one (and moved if necessary) and persons not using their reserved offices should be asked whether they still need the room and reminded that there are others who need (or will need) the space.

9. Establish protocols around hoteling e.g. for finding people who are on site and locating people who are off site

Establish methods of finding people who are on site and locating people who are off site because one of the recurring questions on hoteling and teleworking is 'How do I find people?' Sometimes administrative staff act as this source of information. Hoteling software can also do this. Knowing when people are on site or off site can be valuable in knowing whether a particular reservation is still needed.

These types of protocols also help in maintaining networks and communities of people. (See also the information sheet on teleworking).

10. Never forget you are a service to the participating employees

It may be that people will never look upon hoteling as being as nice as having a permanent office. If they perceive it as being firmly, fairly, efficiently, and professionally run they will regard it as important and necessary. They will then work with the system rather than against it. Treat hoteling as if it were a semi-voluntary program. Even though there may be a specific mandate for particular employees to participate there are too many ways to circumvent and hinder it.