Activity Based Planning

A Workplace Matters Series publication
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INTRODUCTION TO
THE WORKPLACE MATTERS SERIES

As a resource, the workplace is considered *effective* when it promotes the achievement of organizational business goals, as well as supports employee work performance. Creating such a workplace requires a rich understanding of the organization itself — the day-to-day operations, the work styles of the employees, and the desired culture that will shape the organization's overall direction.

For many organizations, investigating such factors will turn towards a broadening of the "workplace" definition. Working from home and other mobility programs can effectively supplement traditional office space, when combined with robust human resources and technology programs. Telework becomes the means to create a flexible workplace setting and a resilient organization. Consideration must also be given to how the workplace should change in response to internal factors, such as mission realignments or reorganizations, as well as those external factors that may be outside the organization's control. The workplace as a resource becomes more than the built office environment. It includes any location and any situation where an organization's mission can be accomplished effectively and efficiently by its workforce.

To assist federal agencies in their discovery of the next future workplace, GSA offers the **GSA Workplace Matters** publication series. Each publication focuses on a specific aspect of workplace. This guide describes the features and benefits of Activity Based Planning, a method of workplace planning and design that examines the nature of work regardless of its location and organization.

The **GSA Workplace Matters** publication series also explores the topics of Acoustics, Change Management, Return on Investment, and Technology. These and future Workplace Matters publications can all be obtained from the GSA Total Workplace Program Management Office by e-mailing a request to workplace@gsa.gov.

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PART ONE:
WHAT IS ACTIVITY BASED PLANNING
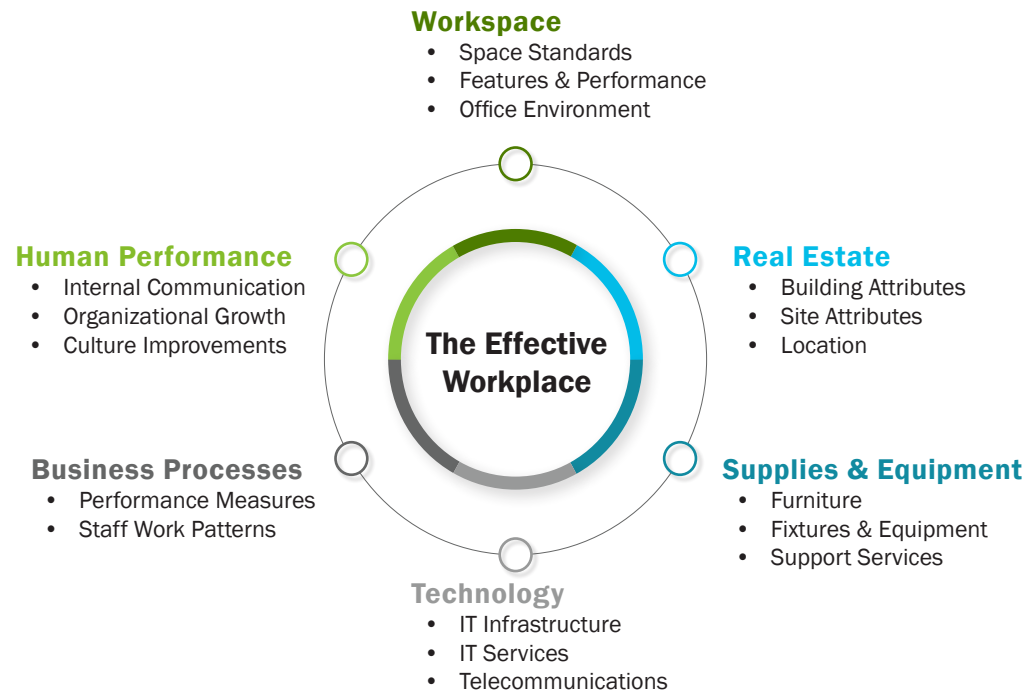
WHAT IS ACTIVITY BASED PLANNING?

Activity Based Planning (ABP) is a strategic approach for workplace planning and design. Through an examination of organizational metrics and employee work styles, the workplace becomes an environment where individuals choose the most effective method for accomplishing work. This bespoke workplace strategy approach is in contrast to the "one size fits all" notion, where a single desking standard or workplace design is used and the occupant must adjust their work practices within it. ABP is grounded on the principal that a rich variety of spaces is often necessary to support the organization's equally diverse range of activities and work styles.

A fundamental tenet of Activity Based Planning is that the workplace should offer choices to the occupant that are appropriate to the task at hand. By providing a variety of individual and support spaces, workplace flexibility is created that serves the current and anticipated future needs of the worker. For instance, small semi-enclosed areas can support concentrative heads-down work, while open seating can provide areas for informal discussion and collaboration.

Choice is not limited to the office space under Activity Based Planning. Considered are all locations where work is conducted - the office, off-site work locations, and the home. As a part of ABP, telework and desk sharing strategies are often evaluated as potential methods to both improving workforce effectiveness and reducing office space requirements. Collaboration tools, communication protocols, and other methods for improving the effectiveness of a distributed organization are also examined under ABP.

The workplace recommendations created through Activity Based Planning are based on a multi-faceted diagnostic research approach. A keen understanding of the organization's business goals, the work styles of the staff, and performance of the current workplace is achieved through a structured engagement of on-site employees and leadership. In addition to guiding workplace planning decisions, this research becomes equally useful for developing change management strategies that will guide the organization to any potential new ways of working.

Workplace Matters: Activity Based Planning

Workspace
- Space Standards
- Features & Performance
- Office Environment

Human Performance
- Internal Communication
- Organizational Growth
- Culture Improvements

The Effective Workplace

Real Estate
- Building Attributes
- Site Attributes
- Location

Business Processes
- Performance Measures
- Staff Work Patterns

Supplies & Equipment
- Furniture
- Fixtures & Equipment
- Support Services

Technology
- IT Infrastructure
- IT Services
- Telecommunications

A workplace strategy maximizes workplace efficiency, workforce productivity, and organizational performance.

WHY IS ABP SO IMPORTANT?

Through a robust diagnostic research approach, Activity Based Planning evaluates the totality of workplace factors and recommends strategies that maximize workplace efficiency, workforce productivity, and organizational performance. For example, an ABP strategy could be using desk sharing as a method to both reduce real estate costs and increase organizational agility. Another ABP strategy could recommend increasing employee access to natural light by placing enclosed spaces, such as offices and meeting rooms, away from the exterior windows. A shift from private offices to open workstations could be another ABP strategy as means to increase workplace camaraderie and facilitate knowledge sharing. Tailored insights such as these make ABP an especially valuable workplace planning tool.

While the Activity Based Planning process is customized to meet both organizational goals and preferences, the overall benefits are consistent with every project regardless of size and location. Organization that use ABP are able to achieve:

- Optimized space utilization in a manner that reflects organizational mission and employee work activities, while also minimizing real estate costs.

- Business process and collaboration improvements that maintain the fidelity of knowledge transfer.

- Increased organizational resiliency to internal and external changes through expanded workplace flexibility.

- Engaged leaders and employees that know they are positively contributing to the creation of their new workplace.

- Enhanced organization culture through increased communication, collaboration, and transparency.

- A workplace where existing employees and new talent want to work, through its flexible workplace options and responsive capabilities.

PART TWO:
THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND ACTIVITY BASED PLANNING

WORKPLACE PRINCIPLES

Activity Based Planning can help an organization recognize and address the needs of a workplace that is complex, multifaceted, and constantly changing. When attempting to tailor a workplace to best support an organization, one should consider the extent of its complexity: a workplace contains its own distinct culture, community, norms, business processes, flows of internal and external people, organizational dynamics, and physical environment. None of these are fixed. The influence of technological change on both business processes and ways of working ensure that the workplace is in a constant state of flux.

Unlike most investments, a workplace investment needs to consider the organization as a whole, from the perspectives of finance, business processes, real estate, technology, and human performance. Activity Based Planning using the following four guiding principles to assess and select an effective workplace strategy:

Use organizational business goals to determine workplace changes.

Ensure the new workplace recognizes and supports current and future employee work practices.

Consider multiple perspectives when developing workplace strategies, especially from leaders and employees.

Consider multiple workplace strategies for the new workplace. Don't focus on just one approach.

Workplace Matters: Activity Based Planning

WORKPLACE PRINCIPLE 1:
USE ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS GOALS TO DETERMINE WORKPLACE CHANGES

The workplace can be a powerful tool for accomplishing organizational business goals. Its success is dependent on an interconnected system of people, place, process, and technology. A common mistake in this pursuit is to undervalue human capital. For example, if an organization is solely interested in achieving lower real estate costs and reduces the workspace size without taking into account its impact on human performance, this could hinder the ability of employees to perform effectively.

When considering a workplace investment, an organization should carefully consider how to best support the ways people work. Strategies should take into account all influencing drivers, such as organizational dynamics, available resources, and level of employee engagement.

One method for conducting this assessment is the Modified Balanced Scorecard. This approach provides a balanced understanding of organizational performance and can guide future improvements. It considers four key perspectives of organizational success:

• **financial** performance goals
• internally focused **people**-oriented goals that address employees and stakeholders
• improvements to **business processes**
• external **customer** experience goals

Organizational leaders first identify their organization's unique business goals, aligning them with each four key perspectives. Business strategies are then identified that support the achievement of the business goals. Finally, workplace tactics and desired impacts are determined.
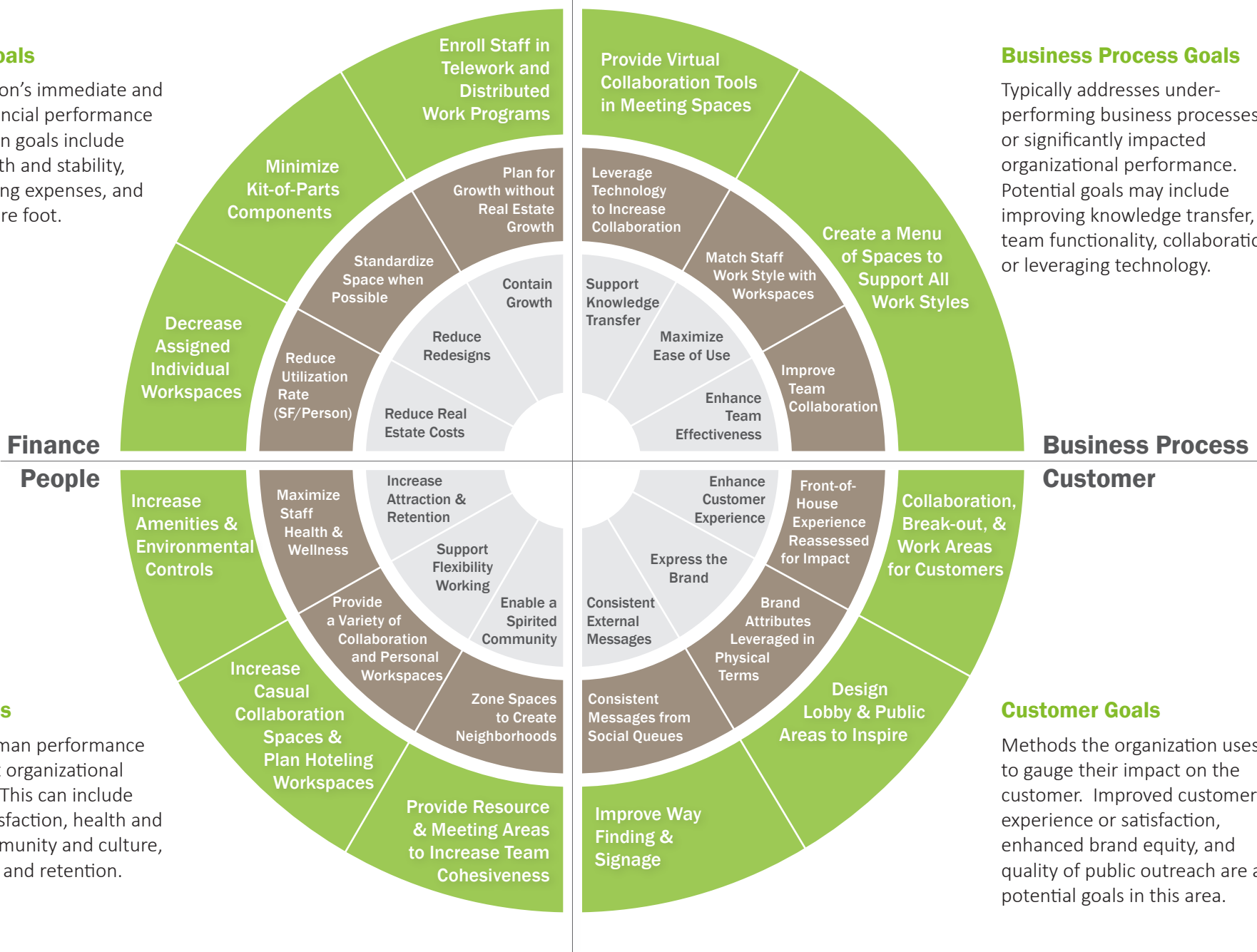
From this map, future workplace strategies are implemented that explicitly support organizational success, in a well-rounded and comprehensive manner. It also establishes a case for making the workplace changes, allowing leaders to address multiple perspectives and goals. An example of how this approach can be used is on the following page.

Financial Goals

The organization's immediate and long-term financial performance goals. Common goals include financial growth and stability, churn, operating expenses, and costs per square foot.

Business Process Goals

Typically addresses under-performing business processes or significantly impacted organizational performance. Potential goals may include improving knowledge transfer, team functionality, collaboration, or leveraging technology.

Finance
People

Business Process
Customer

Wheel diagram — Finance quadrant

Tactics:
- Enroll Staff in Telework and Distributed Work Programs
- Minimize Kit-of-Parts Components
- Decrease Assigned Individual Workspaces

Strategies:
- Plan for Growth without Real Estate Growth
- Standardize Space when Possible
- Reduce Utilization Rate (SF/Person)

Goals:
- Contain Growth
- Reduce Redesigns
- Reduce Real Estate Costs

Wheel diagram — Business Process quadrant

Tactics:
- Provide Virtual Collaboration Tools in Meeting Spaces
- Create a Menu of Spaces to Support All Work Styles

Strategies:
- Leverage Technology to Increase Collaboration
- Match Staff Work Style with Workspaces
- Support Knowledge Transfer
- Improve Team Collaboration

Goals:
- Maximize Ease of Use
- Enhance Team Effectiveness

Wheel diagram — People quadrant

Tactics:
- Increase Amenities & Environmental Controls
- Increase Casual Collaboration Spaces & Plan Hoteling Workspaces
- Provide Resource & Meeting Areas to Increase Team Cohesiveness

Strategies:
- Maximize Staff Health & Wellness
- Provide a Variety of Collaboration and Personal Workspaces
- Zone Spaces to Create Neighborhoods

Goals:
- Increase Attraction & Retention
- Support Flexibility Working
- Enable a Spirited Community

Wheel diagram — Customer quadrant

Tactics:
- Collaboration, Break-out, & Work Areas for Customers
- Design Lobby & Public Areas to Inspire
- Improve Way Finding & Signage

Strategies:
- Front-of-House Experience Reassessed for Impact
- Brand Attributes Leveraged in Physical Terms
- Consistent External Messages
- Consistent Messages from Social Queues

Goals:
- Enhance Customer Experience
- Express the Brand

People Goals

Aspects of human performance that can affect organizational performance. This can include employee satisfaction, health and wellness, community and culture, and attraction and retention.

Customer Goals

Methods the organization uses to gauge their impact on the customer. Improved customer experience or satisfaction, enhanced brand equity, and quality of public outreach are all potential goals in this area.

The diagram above illustrates the Modified Balanced Scorecard approach by using example goals, strategies, and tactics. It is not prescriptive. To best utilize this decision-making framework, the organization must identify the mix of goals, strategies, and tactics that is appropriate for them.

■ Tactics ■ Strategies □ Goals

WORKPLACE PRINCIPLE 2:
ENSURE THE WORKPLACE SUPPORTS EMPLOYEE WORK PRACTICES

One of the most fundamental attributes of a workplace is its ability to support the ways in which people work. Creating an optimal environment is more complicated than at first glance, as work styles vary from person to person, and often, from task to task. Effective execution of a task depends on such factors as appropriate furniture systems and arrangements, lighting, floor zoning, and technology. Providing highly customized environments to support a range of work activities allows employees to choose the best space to work in, improving the performance of the individual and in turn, the organization.

To optimize a workplace, the organization needs to understand both how employees currently work and how they can best work in the future. Where is an employee primarily working: inside or outside the office? How do they interact with others? What is the nature of their work? These are all questions that can help identify employee work styles. With this data, an organization can make informed design decisions ranging from the selection and arrangement of individual furniture systems, design of team neighborhoods, and zoning of the office. Some workplace strategies that should be considered include:

Configuration of individual workspaces
Furniture systems and their arrangements have a direct impact on how people perform their work and on the work style of the team. For instance, a bullpen arrangement of four workstations with a central meeting space is more conducive to face-to-face collaboration than a row of workstations.

Variety of collaboration support spaces
Thoughtful consideration of meeting and other collaboration spaces is a fundamental element of Activity Based Planning. The individual should be able to choose the best environment to support how they work.

Planning and zoning considerations
Appropriate zoning of the office, which includes the placement of enclosed meeting spaces and individual workspaces, can maximize daylight, define team neighborhoods, optimize adjacencies, and strengthen the cohesion of the office.

Appropriate technology
Technology is critical in supporting both new and current ways of working. Whether inside the office or working from home, proper technology is central to effective business processes, communication, and collaboration.

Telework and desk sharing
Enabling employees to telework from home can lead to improved work-life balance and reduced commuting costs and time. When paired with desk sharing, it can also be an effective way to promote user choice of work locations, as well as reduce overall office space needs.

Acoustics
Poor acoustics are perhaps the most common concern when moving to an open office plan, with worries focused on preserving privacy and the ability to concentrate. Thoughtful placement of enclosed spaces and personnel, furniture systems, and sound-masking devices can all be used to minimize disruptions and enhance employee performance.

Access to daylight
Maximizing access to daylight throughout the office, particularly in open workstation areas, leads to increased productivity and employee well-being.

Workplace protocols
Clear etiquette protocols guide occupants on how to use the new workplace as it was designed. These instructions should be crafted by the occupants themselves to ensure they are followed over the long-term.

Common Misconception:
A single workstation size is best

In a complex organization, a one-size-fits-all approach for individual workspaces can hinder organizational performance and needlessly increase real estate costs. If the standard one-size workstation is too large for the nature of work to be accomplished, it will result in excess space. Conversely, if the one-size workstation is too small to support the work, it will create work inefficiencies.

Activity Based Planning avoids these risks by basing the workplace design on the work to be accomplished. Workstation and private office sizes and allocation are driven by the nature of interactions occurring in the individual workspace. Support spaces, such as meeting rooms, are identified based on the nature of collaboration activities. Under this approach, equity of individual workspace assignments are not determined by ensuring each employee receives the exact same sized desk. Rather, it is determined by how well the desk supports the employee's ability to accomplish their work.

Acoustical comfort is achieved when the workplace provides appropriate acoustical conditions for interaction, confidentiality, and concentrative work.

Common Misconception:
High paneled workstations are quieter than those with low panels

Acoustical distraction is one the most frequent complaints about an open workplace. A common misconception is that solving this is best accomplished with high paneled workstations. The opposite is typically true: while higher workstation panels provide some acoustical shielding, lower paneled workstations are actually more effective as they enable the occupant to see their neighbors and better self-regulate speaking volume. Conversely, high paneled workstations give an illusion of privacy that can cause occupants to speak louder as they are less aware of others in their vicinity.

Acoustic strategies are most effective when designed around the nature of the work being accomplished. As illustrated right, the tasks will vary in the amount of interruption and distraction that is tolerable to the occupant. Activity Based Planning keeps these acoustic considerations in mind throughout the entire strategy development process (for more information, see GSA's publication "*Sound Matters*").

"ORGANIC," CREATIVE, NON-ROUTINE TASKS

SPEECH WRITING/ RESEARCH

BRAINSTORMING/ CRITIQUE

NON-INTERRUPTIBLE/ LOW DISTURBANCE LEVEL

INTERRUPTIBLE/ SOME DISTURBANCE ACCEPTABLE

DATA ANALYSIS/ SPREAD SHEETS

EMAIL WRITING

MECHANICAL ROUTINE TASKS

Workplace Matters: Activity Based Planning

Determining How People Work:
The GSA Work Pattern Approach

The GSA Work Pattern approach is an effective framework for determining employee work styles and identifying future workplace needs. Work Patterns consider two facets of work activity: employee work locations and activities conducted at the desk. This data informs the selection and arrangement of individual furniture systems, the design of team neighborhoods, selection of supportive technology, and the zoning of the office to enhance organizational performance. It is a consistent and equitable methodology that generates insight into the ways employee work can be best supported in the future.

The GSA Work Pattern approach classifies employee job functions (i.e., their job position in the organization) into one of six work patterns. This is first accomplished by determining the job function's extent of mobility inside and outside of the office:

Desk-Bound
Job functions where 75% or more of the time is spent at the individual workspace, such as workstations or private offices.

Internally-Mobile
Job functions where less than 25% of the time is spent outside the office and less than 75% of their time is spent at the individual workspace.

Externally-Mobile
Job functions where more than 25% of the time is spent outside the overall workplace, such as teleworking or being on a job site.

Within each of these categories, the job function's work pattern is further refined based on the predominant activities conducted by the employee in the individual workspace:

Interactive
Job functions where typically over 50% of the desk time is spent talking with others in person or on the phone.

Concentrative
Job functions where typically over 50% of the desk time is spent accomplishing concentrative work, such as computer-based tasks, composing e-mails, reading, and writing reports.

The combination of these two sets of information produces a total of six unique work patterns:

Desk-Bound, Interactive

Desk-Bound, Concentrative

Internally-Mobile, Interactive

Internally-Mobile, Concentrative

Externally-Mobile, Interactive

Externally-Mobile, Concentrative

Within each of these work patterns, further refinements can be made so it accurately reflects the work being accomplished. For concentrative work patterns, distinctions are made between highly concentrative focused work versus work that entails processing of information which may need less concentration. For interactive work patterns, distinctions are made concerning the nature of the interactions, particularly if the interaction is in person or remote, such as over the phone.

Refined work patterns become the primary guide to workplace planning decisions. The selection of meeting rooms and collaboration areas, the placement of team neighborhoods, and the configuration, allocation, and sizes of individual workspaces are all shaped by those work patterns found in the organization. In this manner, the effectiveness of the workplace is increased as it now supports all job functions, regardless of variety.

Planning Considerations

The placement of individual workspaces and support spaces in a workplace plays a significant role in the success of a workplace strategy. By considering both organizational and design factors, the new workplace will support job function work patterns, project drivers, and organization efficiency. Below are a few of the workplace strategies that are evaluated when an organization utilizes an Activity Based Planning approach:

- **Strengthen the sense of community**
  Adjacencies within and across groups strengthen a sense of community, as well as increase the speed and efficiency of business processes. Break out spaces for socializing and informal collaboration can be especially effective.

- **Maximize access to daylight**
  Locate open workstations and collaboration areas along the building perimeter to increase access to daylight and promote employee productivity and well-being. Conversely, place private offices, meeting rooms, and other enclosed spaces along the building core.

- **Enhance team visibility**
  For neighborhoods with more interactive and mobile work patterns, increase visual access to teams. This will provide employees a greater sense of awareness of co-workers and visitors, as well as aid them in self-regulating sound volume. Transparent glass fronts for offices and meeting rooms are an effective strategy for team visibility, especially when acoustic privacy is also needed.

- **Support multiple work patterns**
  Zone neighborhoods by work patterns and place neighborhoods with similar work patterns adjacent to each other to minimize disruptions. Place enclosures perpendicular to the building core to buffer neighborhoods.

- **Balance collaboration and concentration**
  Enable both quiet focus work and collaborative work by providing specific individual workplace attributes and amenities for each work pattern. Applying a generic approach, regardless of interaction level, could create acoustic disruptions for those that predominantly accomplish concentrative work.

- **Create flexibility for future adaptations**
  Provide modular spaces that can be easily reconfigured for individual offices or meeting rooms. This is especially useful for those organizations that anticipate significant mission or reporting structure changes.

- **Manage actual and perceived density**
  When possible, limit the number of workstations in a single bay to less than seven to ensure access to daylight and avoid creating a feeling of over-densification. If a bay has more than five workstations, provide a circulation path to increase porousness between team neighborhoods.

- **Express brand identity**
  Provide team boards and branding elements to differentiate team neighborhoods and strengthen team identity. Select finishes and graphics to reflect the organization's culture. Opportunities for branding should be integrated with team expression whenever possible.

An effective workplace can only be created when both organizational and design factors are considered.
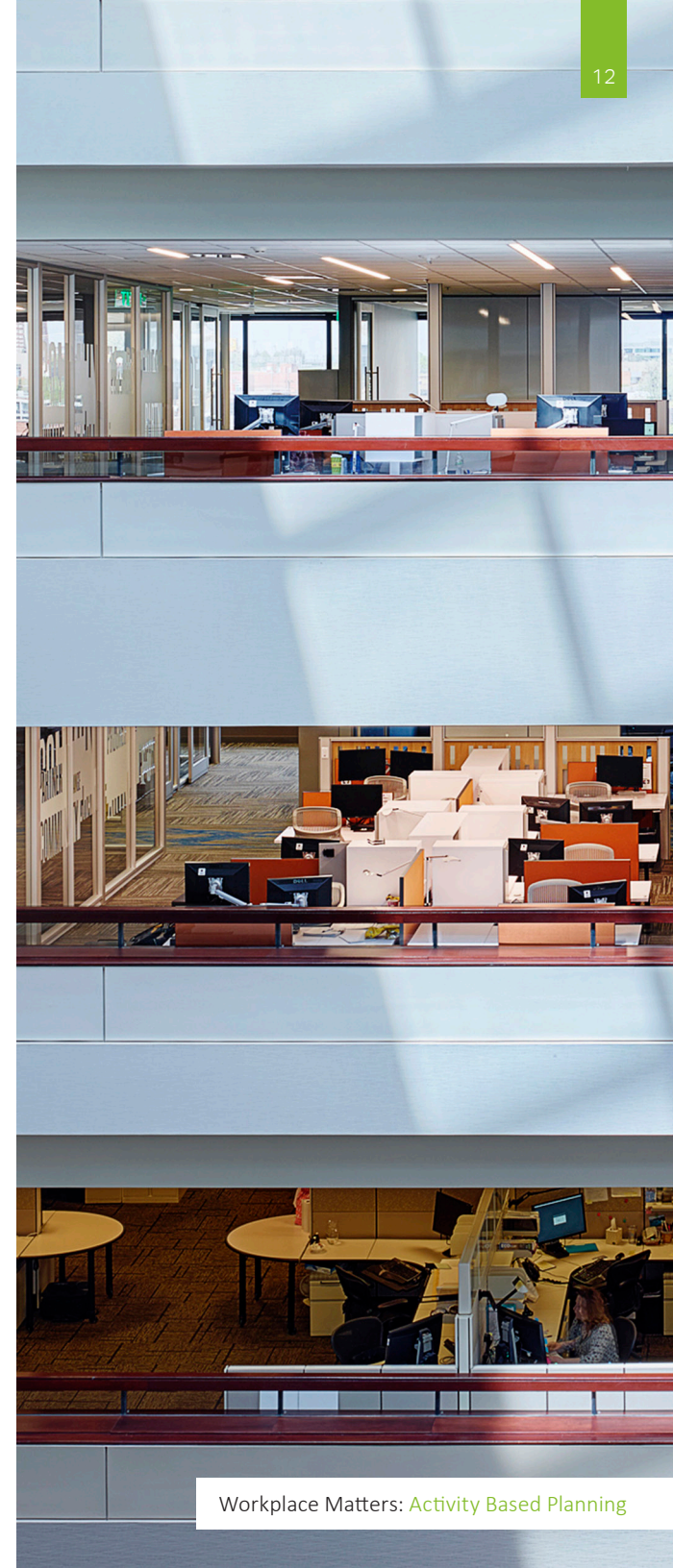
WORKPLACE PRINCIPLE 3:
CONSIDER MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES, ESPECIALLY FROM LEADERS AND EMPLOYEES

Throughout the course of a workplace project, it is imperative to appreciate perspectives from all levels of the organization. Leaders steer the course of workplace change. They provide the overarching vision and mission for the workplace, organizational goals and objectives, and establish measures for project success. Employees offer a lens into work performance, satisfaction, organizational culture, and work processes. Collecting these perspectives through both qualitative and quantitative research techniques creates a credible foundation from which to develop workplace strategies.

Combining these "top-down" and "bottom-up" perspectives allow the entire organization to participate in the workplace project. Particularly important for diagnostic research, it provides a comprehensive understanding of such critical drivers as operational inefficiencies, business unit adjacencies, business goals, appetite for change, and the vision for the future workplace. Engaging both leaders and employees builds consensus around workplace priorities, validates organizational and cultural understanding, and increases employee participation. Conversely, when multiple perspectives are not collected, a workplace project can suffer from organizational misalignment and an increased risk of failure.

Engagement across an organization can also reveal a lack of alignment between leaders and employees. This can detect underlining organizational or cultural issues that need to be addressed before or during a workplace strategy. It helps an organization identify any future road blocks that must be considered. It also shapes the extent and intensity of any change management efforts.

Workplace Matters: Activity Based Planning

WORKPLACE PRINCIPLE 4:
CONSIDER MULTIPLE STRATEGIES FOR THE WORKPLACE

As each organization is unique, so should be its workplace strategies. Activity Based Planning lends itself to customization by offering a wide range of options to best suit business drivers, work patterns, and organizational culture. A common misstep however, is to implement a strategy from another organization and expect it to render the same effects. Subscribing to a one-size-fits-all model of success increases risk of project failure. It also doesn't take advantage of the workplace's strategic role in enhancing organizational effectiveness and productivity.

Considering a range of workplace strategies increases the likelihood that project goals can be met. This is especially true when the strategies are vetted by those business unit leaders who participated in the underlying diagnostic research (for more information see the *Leadership Interviews* section on page 16). Eliciting feedback provides the opportunity to course correct in the event that the recommendations were based on incorrect evaluation data. Involvement of business unit leaders can further refine strategies and build consensus in the selection of the final workplace strategy.

Multiple workplace strategies should be explored before making the final selection. Three of the most common are:

Individual Workspace Allocation
Individual workspaces include private offices, workstations, and benching systems. Before selecting these spaces for a new workplace, organizations should ensure it aligns with business goals, project drivers, and collected diagnostic research findings. Impacts on organizational transparency, collaboration, and culture should also be considered. The work patterns of each job function must also be kept in mind, as some furniture systems lend themselves to either interactive or concentrative work patterns.

Individual Workspace Standards
It is critical that an organization understand the true nature of work being performed prior to determining individual workspaces sizes, allocations, and attributes. Space standards should be designed to increase organization performance by tailoring the overall workplace to support employee work patterns. In some cases, offices may be ideal while in other cases, a benching system or large workstation might be equally viable, such as when individuals need more space to review large drawings. The more customized the standards, the better an organization can accommodate the diverse work being accomplished.

Desk Sharing
Desk sharing is an arrangement in which two or more individuals share use of a single benching location, workstation, or office. Depending on the desk sharing approach, individuals can either reserve a desk through a hoteling program or select a non-reservable free address desk that's happens to be open at that time. In order to be successful, desk sharing environments must also consider:

- support space needs, such as collaboration spaces, storage lockers for mobile workers, and focus booths for private conversations

- technology that allows employees to work outside the office, as well as reserve desks when in the office

- change management strategies to prepare the organization for any new ways of working, including in an asynchronous manner

Desk sharing allows organizations to quickly adapt to operational changes, without the need to physically alter the space. It can also improve space utilization by allowing a greater amount of personnel to benefit from the new workplace. When appropriately implemented, desk sharing is a powerful tool to increase organizational agility, as well as employee choice and engagement.

Considerations for Desk Sharing:

When implementing desk sharing as a workplace strategy, three factors should be considered: organizational alignment, appropriate technology, and supportive processes. Activity Based Planning includes a comprehensive assessment of each factor to help ensure the desk sharing program is successful for both the organization and its employees.

#1: Organizational Alignment

An effective desk sharing program is reliant on strong organizational alignment. This ranges from business goals, employee participation, communication, and change management efforts. While business goals serve as the rationale for change, employee participation becomes the foundation for implementation, as it helps to identify the extent of future change management efforts and potential problems in execution. Communication and change management are essential for project acceptance and success, as they prepare employees for new ways of working and address potential cultural issues.

Human resources and unions organizations should also be involved as the program is being developed and throughout implementation. Both of these stakeholders will have an interest in how mobility programs reshape existing policies and any union agreements.

#2: Providing Appropriate Technology

Just as technology is a central driver for changing how people work, it also plays a critical role in supporting new ways of working. All desk sharing programs are dependent on laptops, tablets, and mobile devices that enable individuals to work anywhere at any time. A secure virtual private network (VPN) for remote access to applications and data is often necessary to enable employees to work while outside the office.

In the office, all workspaces should have laptop docking stations and wireless headsets that enable taking calls from multiple locations in the office. Other technology, such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), enable employees to easily transfer their telephone number to wherever they are located. Remote meeting software is also essential, allowing employees to conduct meetings and share materials without being in the same physical space.

#3: Establishing Supportive Processes

Policies around telework, personal property, and office protocols are key considerations in implementing desk sharing. Enabling employees to work from home through telework also necessitates policies be in place that establish rules and procedures to prevent misunderstandings and potential abuse. Policies concerning personal property ensure that government and personal property are protected, such as using lockers and other storage solutions in the workplace. Office etiquette and protocols provide clear instruction on how the new workplace should be used. A shared understanding throughout the organization of these processes can help mitigate workplace disruptions and tension among employees, and maintain tidiness and a sense of order in the office.

PART THREE:
COLLECTING DATA FOR
ACTIVITY BASED PLANNING DECISIONS

DIAGNOSTIC RESEARCH TOOLS

Workplace projects that utilize the Activity Based Planning approach will be most successful when decisions are based on a rich understanding of the current workplace's performance, the nature of working being accomplished, and the factors that may influence that work in the future. Utilizing a mix of research tools, such as employee surveys and one-on-one interviews with leaders, this diagnostic research can inform workplace strategy, planning, and design, as well as subsequent change management efforts.

Diagnostic research can provide a wealth of insights. Employee concerns can be discovered early, increasing the likelihood of addressing them before the workplace changes are executed. Job function work patterns and optimal business unit adjacencies can be identified, helping in the selection of individual and shared amenities that best support how people work. With respect to office planning and design, research findings can also help inform space programs, office layouts, and furniture systems and arrangements.

With this knowledge, leaders are best equipped to make evidence-based decisions on the workplace. Some specific benefits that come with conducting diagnostic research include:

- increased organization alignment and consensus by gathering both leadership ("top-down") and employee ("bottom-up") perspectives

- organizational and work performance are enhanced through an understanding of employee work patterns and optimal business unit adjacencies within and across groups

- long-term real estate costs are reduced when supported by leadership vision, data indicating any under-utilized space, and an understanding of work patterns and organizational culture

- greater employee engagement in the workplace project process through their participation in focus groups and surveys

- project opportunities and risks are identified before the workplace changes are implemented

- change management efforts are identified that will help the organization successfully use the new workplace

- potential discrepancies between employee perceptions and actual performance of the workplace are discovered, helping leaders identify the source of problems when perceptions are inaccurate

- workplace performance are measured before and after the workplace change, allowing leaders to assess the success of the initiative

While diagnostic research provides these benefits to all workplace projects, regardless of size or scope, the methods used to collect the research data will vary. Large complex workplace changes will likely require a robust set of research tools. Small workplace changes that are less dramatic may require less of a research effort. The following pages describe the most common research tools that are used and their specific benefits.

Visioning Session

"How do leaders see the future of their business?"

A Visioning Session is a type of research focus group that encourages leaders to interactively explore immediate and long-term business objectives, as well as identify how the future workplace can support these objectives. It can offer insight into the strategic direction of the organization, establish a vision of the future workplace, and build alignment across organizations.

Due to its nature, Visioning Sessions should be attended by the highest level leaders of the organization that's about to go through the workplace change. Special consideration should be given to the size of the group, anticipated group dynamics, and adequate representation. While Visioning Session activities are not prescriptive, it is advisable to consider the Modified Balanced Scorecard (see pages 6 & 7) which provides a balanced approach to understanding business performance and guiding future improvements. During planning and coordination, leadership accessibility should be kept in mind, with sufficient advance notice given to ensure maximum turnout.

Benefits:

- Forms the first step for developing the direction of the workplace initiative
- Kick-starts the workplace initiative by confirming business drivers and goals
- Builds consensus around the direction of the project through activities and discussions

Leadership Interviews

"What do leaders think is most critical in their workplace?"

Interviews with organizational leaders are a crucial research method for identifying future business directions and impacts on the workplace, as well as exploring the connection between component organization units and the goals established in the Visioning Session. Through either a one-on-one or group interview format, interviews can test alignment among leaders, provide input on what constitutes a successful project, and identify barriers to change. Interviews can also give insight into business processes and serve as a forum to gather important organizational data such as headcounts, business unit adjacencies, and workplace culture.

Prior to conducting the interviews, a questionnaire should be distributed and completed by the leaders. The questionnaire should include questions about organizational information, the primary mission or function of the organization, organizational goals, work patterns, adjacencies, future changes to the organization, and the current physical workplace. The gathered information then becomes the basis for further discussion in the interviews.

Benefits:

- Creates a shared understanding of organizational goals
- Identifies diverging and converging priorities
- Gathers organization data and insight into business unit culture and processes

Workplace Matters: Activity Based Planning

Pre-Occupancy Surveys

"What do employees think?"

The Pre-Occupancy Survey is an effective and efficient diagnostic research tool that gathers data on employee perceptions of the workplace. Questions cover such topics as how work is performed, collaboration patterns, telework and mobile working preferences, desired support spaces, customer and visitor interactions, and overall workplace satisfaction. The survey also asks about the importance and relative performance of aspects of the workplace, giving insight into what employees deem most valuable and which aspects are under performing. This input is of prime importance when evaluating workplace tactics that can best improve occupant productivity, satisfaction, and performance.

Once completed, the Pre-Occupancy Survey data can be compared against the information collected in the Visioning Session and Leadership Interviews, offering insight into possible misalignments and divergent priorities between employees and leaders. The data is also analyzed to determine the extent the workplace is positively or negatively impacting productivity, satisfaction, and culture. They also establish baseline metrics for comparison to Post-Occupancy Evaluation Surveys, which are distributed after the workplace change has taken effect as a means of evaluating project success.

To help achieve a statistically acceptable survey participation level, a robust communication approach should be used by the organization when announcing the survey. A variety communication methods should be implemented, with messaging focusing on the context of the workplace project, how the data will be used, assurance of user anonymity, and the expected time to complete the survey.
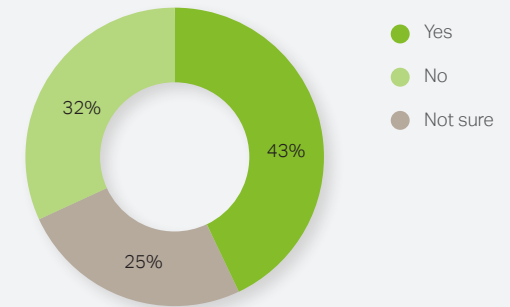
The survey implementation schedule should include time for any leadership and union reviews of the survey instrument. For the survey open period, a minimum of 2 work weeks is recommended. This allows employees who may be on a vacation or work travel to have an opportunity to participate.
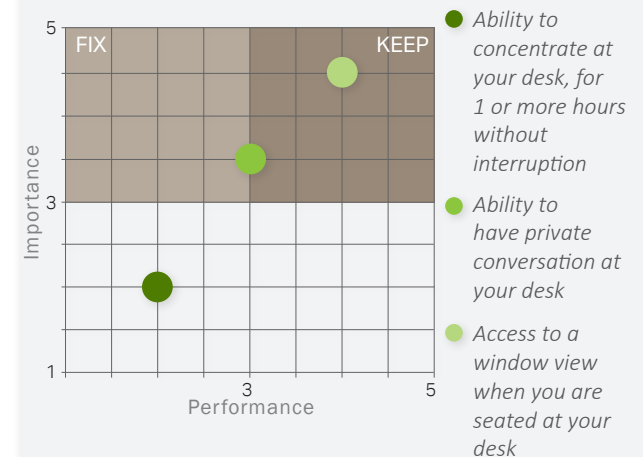
Benefits:

- Gathers a wide variety of data such as employee work patterns, performance, productivity, and satisfaction in a single tool
- Prioritizes areas that need more in-depth analysis through further research
- Establishes baseline metrics for post-occupancy comparisons to evaluate the success of a workplace project
- Engages the entire organization in the workplace project

Example Survey Question

If you had access to alternative work spaces in your office - quiet work spaces, standing-height work areas, drop-in private spaces, etc. - would you use them?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

43%
25%
32%

Example Survey Findings

- *Ability to concentrate at your desk, for 1 or more hours without interruption*
- *Ability to have private conversation at your desk*
- *Access to a window view when you are seated at your desk*

Employee Focus Groups

"What does the team think?"

Employee Focus Groups enable staff to have a greater sense of involvement when the new workplace is being defined. Focus group sessions allow employees to expand their responses to the Pre-Occupancy Survey by elaborating further about how they currently work, how they would like to work in the future, and what concerns they may have. Organizations develop a more detailed understanding of employee work patterns and business processes that may be impacted by workplace changes. In addition to informing workplace strategy decisions, focus group insights can shape future change management efforts, as well as identify opportunities and obstacles for a future workplace investments.

Focus groups are most productive when a balanced representation of business units is achieved. Consideration should also be given to the number of participants and anticipated group dynamics. Attendance is central to the success of this research activity. Staff should be informed of the context of the workplace project, assured that their opinion will remain confidential, and reminded of the unique opportunity to shape the future of their workspace.

Benefits:
- Validates and refines other research findings, such as the Pre-Occupancy Surveys
- Informs the change management strategies that will be conducted throughout the project
- Identifies opportunities and obstacles for future workplace investments

Current Space Analysis

"How is everyone adapting to their current environment?"

The Current Space Analysis is an on-site visit activity where the utilization and performance of the space is assessed by a third-party space programming or interior design expert. This perspective provides valuable conclusions that would not otherwise be reached through a self-analysis by the organization. For example, employee feedback might yield complaints about a lack of desk storage space while the Current Space Analysis could find that the existing storage methods are sufficient, but not being fully utilized. This perspective helps organizations identify the source of workplace issues and provide the basis for further exploration during employee focus groups.

Physical in-person access to the space is critical to this tool being effective. Floor plans should be obtained prior to the Current Space Analysis being conducted, enabling the third-party evaluators to plan the most efficient route through the space. The evaluators should also be able to photograph selected areas of the workplace during their visit. The photographs will serve as a visual reference when the research findings are prepared.

Benefits:
- Validates data from other research sources, such as Pre-Occupancy Surveys
- Identifies underlining sources of problems in the workplace
- Provides an audit of how space is currently being used

Example Current Space Analysis Findings

Room booking systems are complicated and rooms get block-booked irrespective of actual use

A high number of desks are located next to primary walkways, which can result in distraction

A number of desks were unoccupied but unavailable to others for the duration of the study, either because they were unallocated or the 'owners' were on long term projects

Time/Space Utilization Analysis

"What do we actually observe everyone doing?"

Time/Space Utilization Analysis is an observation-based research method that measures the occupancy levels and utilization of specific spaces in the workspace. Collected data affords an opportunity to validate and compare observational data against self-reported workplace attendance data collected from employees and leadership, such as through the Pre-Occupancy Survey.

One limitation of this diagnostic research tool is that it provides only a snapshot of space utilization. The results are not necessarily representative of how a space is used throughout the year. Data is typically collected over a work week, stating on a Monday and ending on Friday. Despite this limited duration, steps can be taken to maximize the accuracy of the collected data.

The observation time period should be carefully selected to avoid unusually busy times of year, such as when seasonal employees work in the space for a month, or during the holiday season when staff attendance is low. These atypical highs and lows in office utilization will skew the analysis. Observations should also be conducted during all work hours, with data collected a minimum of six times a day, including peak working hours. These measures ensure a balanced and thorough assessment.

Before launching the study, employees should be informed of the nature of the study, how it is performed, and how the data will be used. They should be assured that their individual
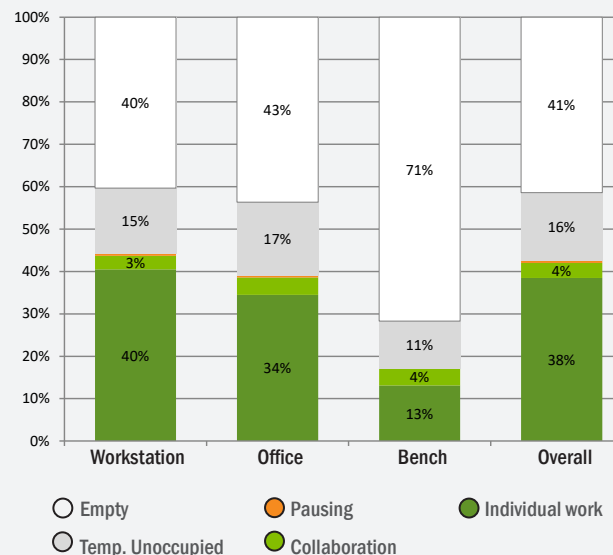
work performance is not being evaluated. Before monitoring each individual space, strong communication is required to mitigate staff anxiety and fear. Given the significant investment of time and human effort to conduct the Time/Space Utilization Analysis, it is most appropriate for large-scale workplace investments and population sizes.

Benefits:

- Measures utilization and occupancy levels

- Identifies opportunities to potentially increase space efficiency and thereby reduce real estate and operational costs

- Validates Current Space Analysis data against self-reported data, such as Pre-Occupancy Surveys and Leader Interviews

Example Time/Space Utilization Data
Average Utilization of Assigned Workspaces – by Space Type

Legend:
- ○ Empty
- ○ Temp. Unoccupied
- ● Pausing
- ● Collaboration
- ● Individual work

Workstation: Empty 40%, Temp. Unoccupied 15%, Pausing 3%, Individual work 40%
Office: Empty 43%, Temp. Unoccupied 17%, Individual work 34%
Bench: Empty 71%, Temp. Unoccupied 11%, Pausing 4%, Individual work 13%
Overall: Empty 41%, Temp. Unoccupied 16%, Pausing 4%, Individual work 38%

The chart below summarizes the benefits and considerations of the various diagnostic research tools.

	TOOL	BENEFITS	CONSIDERATIONS
TOP DOWN	**Visioning Session**	• Kick-starts the workplace initiative by confirming business drivers and goals • Builds consensus around the direction of the project through activities and discussions	• Leadership accessibility • Balanced representation
	Leadership Interviews	• Creates a shared understanding of organizational goals • Identifies diverging and converging priorities • Gathers organizational data and insight into business unit processes and culture	• Leadership accessibility • Balanced representation
BOTTOM UP	**Pre-Occupancy Survey**	• Gathers data on staff work, patterns, performance, productivity, and satisfaction • Prioritizes areas that need additional in-depth analysis through further research • Establishes baseline metrics for post-occupancy comparisons to evaluate the success of a workplace project • Engages the entire organization in the upcoming workplace change	• Leadership approval • Stakeholder approval (e.g., Unions, Human Resources)
	Employee Focus Groups	• Gauge the scope of a potential change management effort • Creates a platform to validate and further refine research findings • Identifies opportunities and obstacles for future workplace investments	• Balanced representation • Group dynamics
	Current Space Analysis	• Opportunity to validate and compare observation data against self-reported data • Identify underlining sources of problems in the workplace • Provide an audit of how space is currently being used	• Access to the space • Available floor plans • Ability to photographically document the space
	Time/Space Utilization Analysis	• Measure utilization and occupancy levels • Identify opportunities to potentially increase space efficiency • Opportunity to validate and compare observation data against self-reported data	• Significant investment of time and effort

Scalable Diagnostic Research Efforts

Diagnostic tools should be selected based on their ability to collect credible data, without being overly burdensome on the organization. Not all research tools are appropriate or necessary, especially for smaller or more straight-forward projects. Generally speaking, the ideal mix of research tools will vary depending on overall level of workplace investment, driven by both population size and project goals.

SCENARIO	ACTIVITIES	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Minimal Workplace Investment Projects impacting less than 50 people within a single-focused business group. The most significant advantage is that it is a high-impact expeditious deployment, with a minimal research investment. The primary disadvantage is that it excludes statistical data, which can increase the risk that employees will challenge the chosen workplace strategies. In turn, this also increases the need for change management so the employees are engaged in the workplace project.	• Visioning Session • Leadership Interviews • Employee Focus Groups • Current Space Analysis	• High impact with minimal investment • Streamlined interaction • Quick synopsis and deployment	• No statistical data • Minimal diagnostics; strategies could be challenged • Potential greater level of change management
Moderate Workplace Investment Projects impacting 50 to 300 people, where holistic changes are desired across multiple business units. Research advantages include quantitative data to inform workplace strategy decisions, inclusion of staff concerns, and quick deployment. Disadvantages include research data that may not be broad enough to identify a full range of cultural and organizational issues.	• Pre-Occupancy Survey • Visioning Session • Leadership Interviews • Employee Focus Groups • Current Space Analysis	• Quantitative data supports workplace strategies • Allows for targeting specific concerns • Quick synopsis and deployment	• May not be broad enough to identify all cultural and organizational issues • Requires strong leadership and vision
Significant Workplace Investment Projects impacting more than 300 people or seeks significant change to an organization's culture or way of doing business. Research advantages include a thorough organizational analysis, defensible solutions and strategies, and the framework for global deployment of standards and training. Disadvantages include a substantial financial investment and a longer execution period.	• Pre-Occupancy Survey • Visioning Session • Leadership Interviews • Employee Focus Groups • Current Space Analysis • Time/Space Utilization	• Defensible solutions and strategies • Detailed view of entire organization • Sets up for global deployment of standards and training	• Substantial financial investment • Longer execution period • Significant time commitment by the organization

PART FOUR:
IDENTIFYING WORKPLACE STRATEGIES FOR THE ORGANIZATION

Through diagnostic research, all levels of the organization attain a robust understanding of the factors that should be considered for the new workplace. Methods for improving the workplace experience are identified, including the alignment of strategies with anticipated future employee work patterns. In addition, the extent to which interconnections exist between people, place, process, and technology are keenly understood.

For example, an organization's Pre-Occupancy Survey data and Employee Focus Group results may indicate that employees are skeptical of telework and desk sharing due to a fear of being "left out" of group discussions and activities. Workplace strategies that could address this include providing increasingly robust remote conferencing applications (technology), creating protocols for team members to virtually connect on a professional and social basis (business processes), and adopting methods for collecting employee feedback that could be used for further improvement strategies (human performance).

While the nature of workplace connections is unique to each project scope and organization, the Work Pattern Approach (see page 10) is a useful framework for analyzing these connections in a consistent manner. Distinctions in the work patterns of employees emerge, depending on where they typically perform work and the degree to which they interact with colleagues. These distinctions become a starting point for identifying other workplace strategies, creating an explicit connection between the workplace and the nature of work.

To illustrate potential approaches, the balance of this section presents potential work space configurations for each work pattern. Recommended individual workspace and support space elements that best support the specific work pattern are also indicated. The presented configurations are not intended to be taken alone. Rather, they are to be combined with other workplace strategies, such as mobile work and telework readiness, technology provisions, and workplace etiquette and protocols.

It should be noted that these examples may also not be appropriate for every workplace project. Ultimately, workplace strategies must be tailored based on the diagnostic research findings that are unique to the organization undergoing the workplace changes.

Workspace

Real Estate

Human Performance

The Effective Workplace

Business Processes

Supplies & Equipment

Technology

Workplace Matters: Activity Based Planning

Workplace Configuration for
Desk-Bound / Interactive Employees

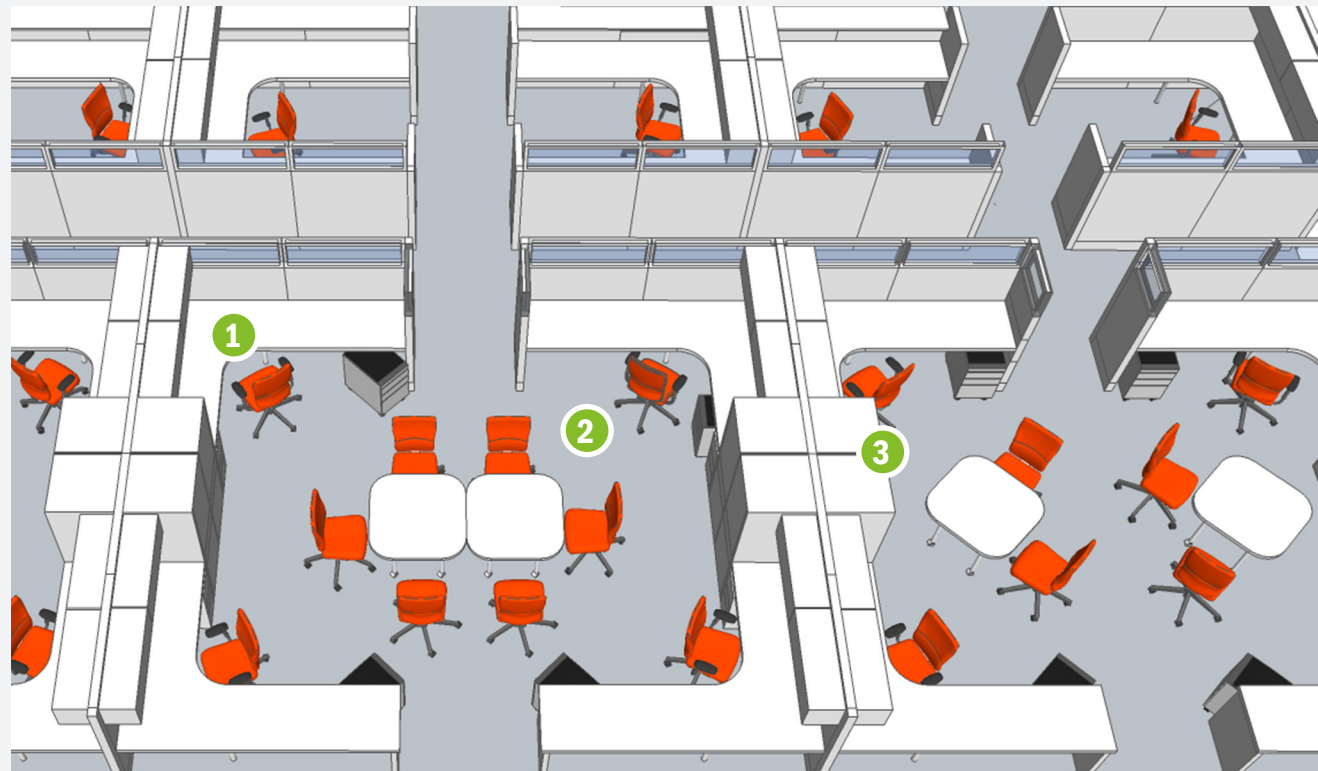**Greater than 75% time at their own desk**

Greater than 50% of desk time working with others at their desk

Employees with a desk-bound interactive work pattern spend a significant amount of work time at their desk talking with others, either on the phone or in person. When planning for this work pattern's workplace, it is important to consider the nature of the interaction and the acoustic impact it may have on other less interactive, more concentrative positions located nearby.

In addition to the strategies noted below, employees with this work pattern should have views of fellow team members to help them regulate speaking volume. A variety of enclosed spaces should be offered for private conversations, taking calls on the speaker phone, and having meetings. Mobile tables should also be offered to those employees whose interaction is primarily face-to-face as they will likely have more visitors in the individual workspace.

Potential Strategies

1. Desks should be L-shaped, rather than U-shaped, to increase the ease of interacting with colleagues while seated.

2. To support collaboration, utilize a bullpen configuration for workstations and include open seating in the center for ad-hoc meetings between team members.

3. Individual workspaces for desk-bound interactive employees can include file drawers, low height workstation panels, and mobile screens.

The image above illustrates a potential space configuration and is not the only method for accommodating this work pattern.

Workplace Matters: Activity Based Planning

Workplace Configuration for
Desk-Bound / Concentrative Employees
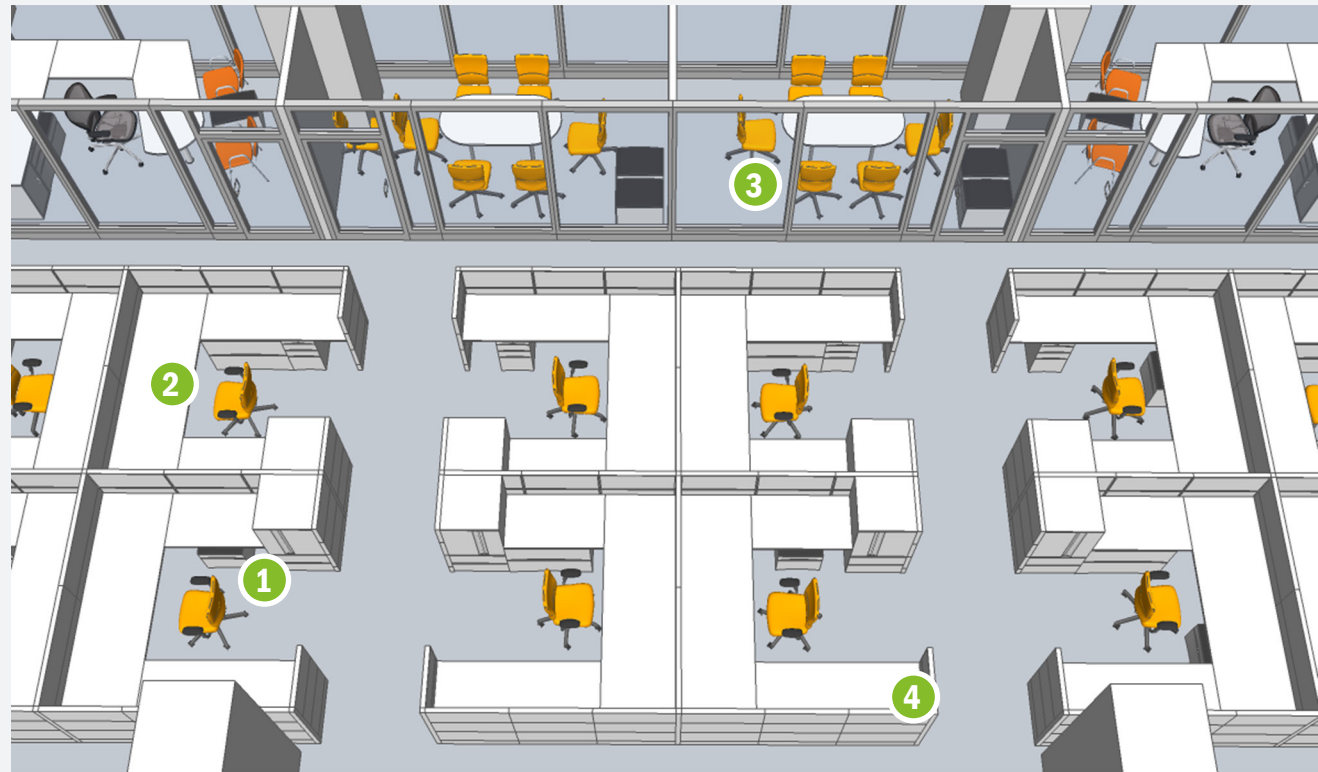
Greater than 75% time at their own desk

Greater than 50% of desk time working individually

Job functions under this work pattern spend a significant amount of time at their workstation or office desk, with the majority of this time being concentrative in nature. This can be computer-based tasks, such as composing e-mails or programming code, or tasks spent reviewing documents. When faced with interruptions or other acoustic disruptions, these employees may find it difficult to complete their work in an efficient manner.

The overall zoning approach for this work pattern's workplace is that quiet concentrative tasks are at the desk, while louder tasks are taken to other locations. As illustrated below, a variety of collaboration spaces are a crucial piece of the workplace. Storage is also fundamental and should be configured for multiple uses such as dividing space, creating privacy, or providing vertical surfaces to display work.

Potential Strategies

1 Individual workspaces should include file drawers, mid-height workstation panels, retractable work surfaces, mobile screens and side panels.

2 Instead of L-shaped desks, U-shaped can also be offered for increased privacy.

3 Access to shared quiet rooms and phone booths is recommended. Louder interaction activities can occur at these alternative locations without disturbing other concentrative workers.

4 For those employees that primarily accomplish highly focused work, where visual distractions are of equal concern to acoustic disruptions, slightly higher panels can be provided. The panel height should be limited though so as to still allow natural light to penetrate the space.

The image above illustrates a potential space configuration and is not the only method for accommodating this work pattern.

Workplace Configuration for
Internally-Mobile / Interactive Employees

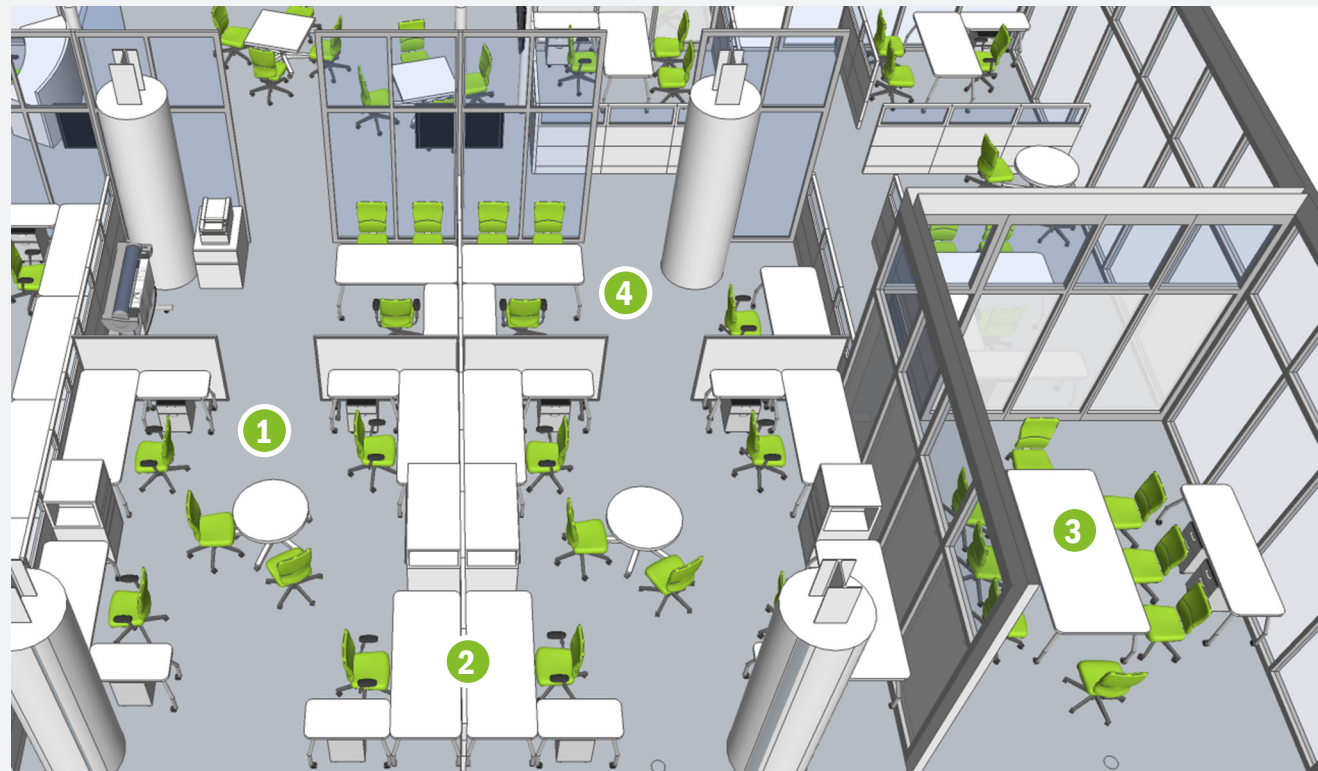**Less than 75% time at their own desk; Less than 25% outside the office**

Greater than 50% of desk time working with others at their desk

These individuals spend the majority of their work time in the office. This time is divided between working at their individual workspace desk and occupying support spaces, such as meeting rooms. This increases the importance of choosing the optimal mix of support spaces for the work being accomplished. Unlike concentrative job functions, these employees spend the majority of at-desk time interacting with others on the phone or in person.

Workstations should include mobile screens to provide temporary visual privacy when needed. In most cases, storage can be located in the circulation area and not at the workstation. Mobile technologies should also be offered, such as wifi, to fully support workplace mobility. From the zoning perspective, this work pattern should be located away from more concentrative functions to help minimize acoustic disruptions.

Potential Strategies

1. Workstations should be designed to facilitate employee collaboration, such as clustering them into groups and providing L- shaped work surfaces.

2. Lower partition panels should be used to increase awareness and view of the team.

3. Team rooms, quiet rooms, video conferencing rooms, and other meeting spaces should be provided throughout the workplace.

4. Employees with frequent face-to-face interaction could also be given guest seating, mobile tables, and an optional whiteboard depending on the tasks being accomplished.

The image above illustrates a potential space configuration and is not the only method for accommodating this work pattern.

Workplace Matters: Activity Based Planning

Workplace Configuration for
Internally-Mobile / Concentrative Employees

Less than 75% time at their own desk; Less than 25% outside the office

Greater than 50% of desk time working individually

Overall, this work pattern is very similar to the desk-bound concentrative work pattern. Employees in both categories spend the majority of their desk time accomplishing solo work. Zoning is also very similar for both patterns. Concentrative employees should be located away from the interactive job functions, or have buffers between them, such as from meeting rooms. The critical difference is the importance of support spaces.

Internally-mobile employees spend more time in other office space locations than their desk-bound colleagues. The mix of support spaces must be appropriate for the work being accomplished, as well as conveniently located to prevent interactive tasks from being conducted in the concentrative individual workspace area. Mobile work should be further supported through wifi and other mobile technologies.

Potential Strategies

1 Workstations should be designed to limit visual distraction, such as utilizing a U-shaped work surface with mid-height workstation panels or mobile screen components.

2 To prevent employees from being visually cut-off, translucent screens should be used in lieu of end panels.

3 Focus rooms, library areas, or other quiet areas should be provided as an alternative work location away from the workstation.
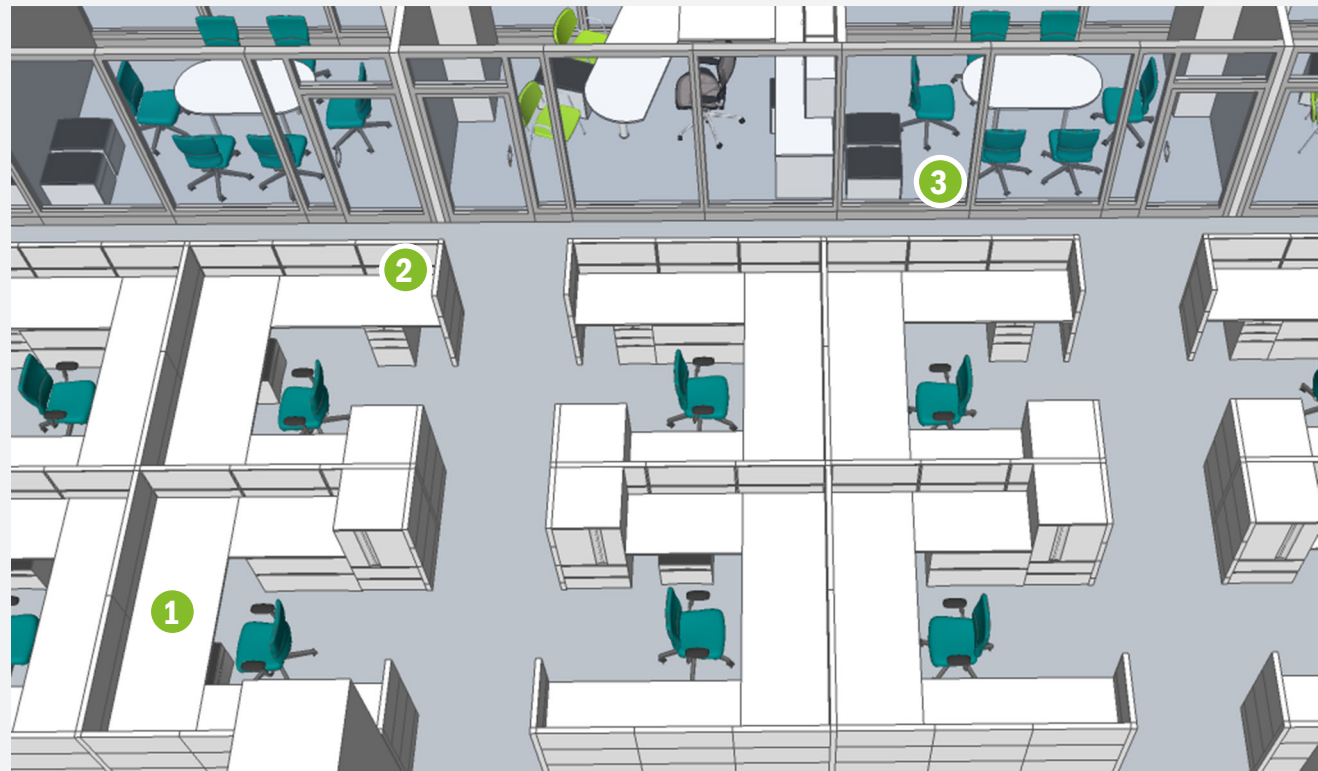
The image above illustrates a potential space configuration and is not the only method for accommodating this work pattern.

Workplace Configuration for
Externally-Mobile / Interactive Employees

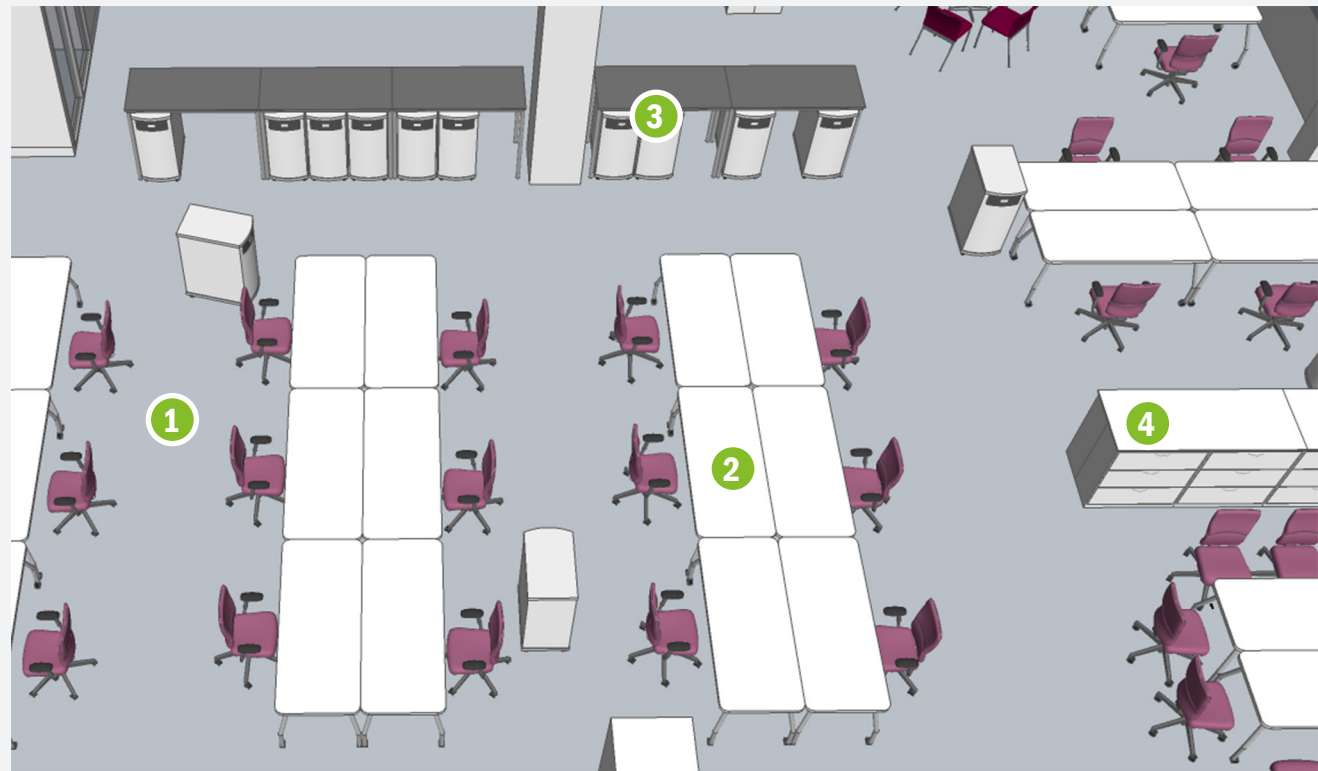**Greater than 25% outside the office**

Greater than 50% of desk time working with others at their desk

This work pattern spends a substantial amount of time working outside the office, such as teleworking. When in the office, individual workspaces and support spaces are used in varying degrees. The majority of at-desk time is spent interacting with others. With this variety of functions, it is important that a diverse mix of collaboration areas be offered, ranging from mobile screens for small impromptu meetings to enclosed team and meeting rooms.

When zoning, this neighborhood should be placed both near main workplace entrances and away from concentrative employees, especially those that are desk-bound. This will help minimize acoustic disruptions to more concentrative groups. This workplace is also well suited for desk-sharing groups. Appropriate technology, organizational alignment, and supportive processes should all be in-place beforehand to maximize effectiveness (see page 14).

Potential Strategies

1. A large interactive area for individual work should be provided, such as through benching.

2. Work surfaces should accommodate face-to-face and side-by-side collaboration depending on the type of interaction occurring.

3. Mobile storage units, low height workstation panels, mobile technologies, views of team members, and shared access to team file storage, and virtual conferencing are all options that should be provided

4. Shared team storage can be located between individual workspace groups and open meeting areas as a way to visually break-up space and designate activity zones.

The image above illustrates a potential space configuration and is not the only method for accommodating this work pattern.

Workplace Configuration for
Externally-Mobile / Concentrative Employees

Greater than 25% outside the office

Greater than 50% of desk time working individually

Externally-mobile concentrative individuals spend more than a quarter of their work time outside the office, and when inside the office, in a variety of locations. Flexibility is critical for the workplace to be effective. A variety of collaboration should be provided, conveniently located to encourage use. This type of workplace is also well suited for desk-sharing, especially for those employees who need a quiet place to work when not attending meetings.

This work pattern's concentrative nature requires workspaces that permit solo work without visual or acoustic interruption. Some elements that should be provided are freestanding surfaces that be easily reconfigured, mobile screen components to indicate the need for quiet or confidentiality, and supportive mobile technology. These employees should also be located away from interactive work patterns to help minimize acoustic disruptions.

Potential Strategies

1. Workstations should be located together in the same zone to limit acoustic and visual distractions.

2. Mobile storage units located at the workstation allow for flexibility in work locations.

3. Team storage is located in the circulation area, providing convenient access to all employees as well as serving as a visual divider between workstation areas and open meeting areas.

4. Open collaboration seating should be kept to a minimum in those areas where concentrative workstations are located. They should also be mobile in case relocation to another part of the workplace is needed.
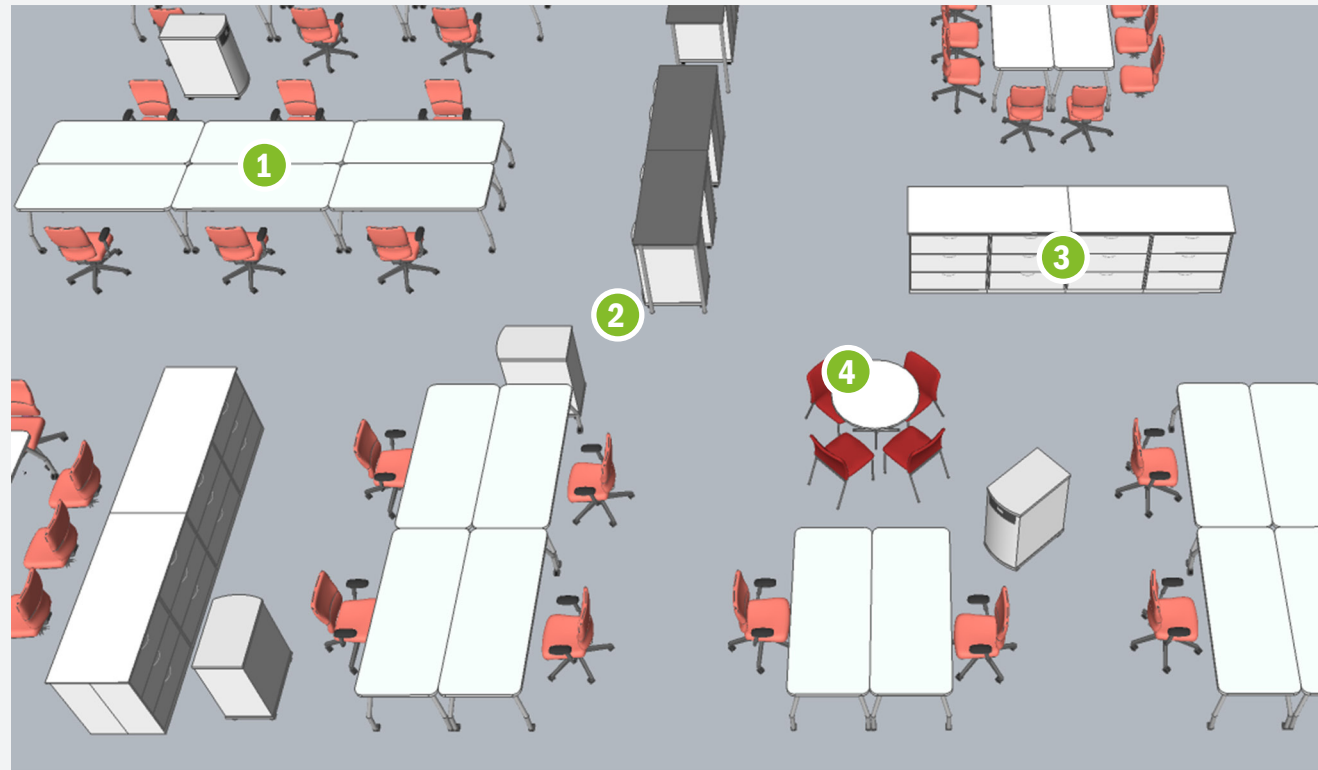
The image above illustrates a potential space configuration and is not the only method for accommodating this work pattern.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

As demonstrated in the preceding illustrations, the GSA Work Pattern approach provides a robust framework for workplace planning. Individual workspace and support spaces are tailored to most effectively support the needs of the organization and its employees. This customization is attainable both within a group of employees that share a work pattern, as well as across various work patterns. An organization's workplace can accommodate multiple styles of working, regardless of their size or distribution.

The illustration below shows how a workplace based on Activity Based Planning can accommodate all six work patterns effectively. Interactive and concentrative employees are acoustically separated by enclosed spaces and the building core. Externally-mobile groups are located closest to the primary entrances into the organization's workplace. This is also an ideal location for desk-sharers who come into the office less frequently. Conversely, desk-bound groups are located farthest away from the entrances to minimize disruptions by their mobile peers.

While the space is customized for each work pattern group, there are also additional benefits that all employees will enjoy. With the majority of enclosed spaces being located near the building core, as well as lower height workstations being used throughout the space, natural light is able to permeate the entire workplace. Meeting and team rooms are distributed throughout the workplace allowing for convenient access by everyone. Finally and most important, the workplace suits the nature of work being accomplished by each member of the organization.

Work Patterns

1. Internally-Mobile Interactive
2. Externally-Mobile Interactive
3. Desk-Bound Interactive
4. Desk-Bound Concentrative
5. Externally-Mobile Concentrative
6. Internally-Mobile Concentrative

Selected Features

1. Meeting rooms become acoustic buffers between interactive and concentrative groups.

2. Shared focus rooms for 1- 2 persons allow for conversations away from concentrative workspaces.

3. Reception is located near a variety of meeting rooms, minimizing visitors in other areas.

The image above illustrates a potential space configuration and is not the only method for accommodating multiple work patterns.

Workplace Matters: Activity Based Planning

05
PART FIVE:
CONCLUSION

Activity Based Planning is a versatile, adaptive, and customizable approach to optimizing workplace investments. Through a deep understanding of existing workplace conditions and employee work patterns, comprehensive strategies can be developed that address the multifaceted nature of the workplace. Beyond its impacts to the physical workplace, Activity Based Planning can also enhance organizational performance by increasing organizational agility, user choice, and engagement. However, even the most successful workplace strategies can become ineffective over time.

Workplace needs are in a constant state of flux. The influence of technology on work processes, as well as continuous shifts in headcount and organizational culture, all have an impact on workplace productivity. In order to be successful, workplace strategies must adapt to such future changes. Desk sharing, teleworking, and modularity of space allow workplaces to accommodate organizational shifts without needing to physically alter the space. Identifying such preparations are possible with Activity Based Planning.

A workplace strategy's effectiveness is also dependent on the success of the accompanying change management effort. This is especially true when more substantial degrees of change are sought. Any workplace change can encounter resistance, which can include claims that technology cannot be upgraded or that employees cannot be trusted to work away from the office. Change management provides a plan to help employees make a swifter, more effective transition to a new environment, culture, or even technology. This plan should be based on the insights gained from the Activity Based Planning diagnostic research activities. The collected data can yield crucial insights to help address and mitigate employee concerns and potential barriers.

A balanced and comprehensive approach is integral to the success of the project. When appropriately implemented, Activity Based Planning not only improves financial performance through long-term cost savings, but can also invigorate and strengthen the organization by making it more adaptive to organizational and technological changes.

GSA's Total Workplace Program Management Office, along with its national network of workplace strategists, offer Activity Based Planning, change management, and other workplace services to interested federal agencies. Additional details can be found at www.gsa.gov/totalworkplace or by emailing workplace@gsa.gov.

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