

Navigating the post-COVID shift in office space

3 steps to making your facility services and
real estate work for you and your employees

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Introduction

With physical distancing fundamentally changing the way in which employees work and interact with physical space, many companies are trying to determine what the workplace will look like once things get 'back to normal'. How much of your workforce will be coming back to the office, on which days of the week and what will their workspace requirements look like?

Undoubtedly, office space will be downsized. Some companies are already thinking of selling off their real estate altogether. Whatever the case, the question is the same for all: How can we best utilize office space? Providing an answer to this question will be key to not only managing costs, but importantly, to keeping your employees onboard.

Today's challenge – what kind of space will we be needing?

Recent research by Gartner shows that 48% of employees will likely work remotely at least part of the time after the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to 30% pre-pandemic. In fact, 74% of CFOs indicate that they intend to increase remote work after the outbreak. Whatever is set to happen, one thing is clear: the workplace will undergo a fundamental change.

Up till the outbreak of the pandemic, for most companies, office space and real estate spend were, by and large, steady.

Cost savings have, for many years already, been attained by way of densification and open-plan layout. But now, with health standards and minimum space per person likely to become legally binding, this trend will reverse sooner rather than later. In fact, COVID-19 has catapulted us into a reality where office space, from one day to the next, has been revealed to be superfluous for at least some 37% of all jobs.

Not only will there be fewer people coming to the office, but the way in which we use space will also change radically. After all, digital has strongly impacted the hierarchical structure and silos within organizations. Decision-making is being delegated to those in the know and able to deliver, irrespective of their hierarchical place in the organization. Such an Agile way of working will only grow.



Some 33% of companies expect to make more use of flexible space, such as serviced office, suites and coworking. And then there's the emergence of the hybrid model that combines home working with working at the office. It's clear that companies need to adapt their real estate strategy.'

— Arvid Waasdorp, SeviceNow Facilities Expert



Plan now for retooling

Prediction, adaptability and resilience are the three capabilities, according to Bain Consultancy, that companies should be basing any future business strategy on. What we see is that companies are fast deploying tools and systems to improve prediction, the ability to adapt is turning out to be more challenging. And resilience should shift from a focus on efficiency to resilience in decision-making and operations.

We have identified three essential steps that facility management should be taking to ensure they have in place the three capabilities that will make facility and real estate a competitive differentiator.

The 3 essential steps all facility managers should be making

1 Act now – to get it right post-COVID

Reverting back to the old way of doing things, is a tried way of picking up business after a crisis. Except now in the case of this crisis. Because COVID-19 has accelerated things in such a way that it is impossible to pick up where we left off when it first started spreading.

In order to respond to this new, digital-first, post-COVID reality and the way employees will use company real estate, it is essential that facility managers take action. Already, they are having to make decisions to protect the safety and health of employees and visitors. But, it's essential to also look at how our perception of workspace will be permanently changed.

In this shifting landscape, many hundreds of decisions will have to be made regarding policy, investments and adapting the workplace to fit the new reality. To support such decisions, it is essential to have tools in place that can provide actionable insights and enhance the employee experience.

However, the truth is that many facility managers are finding themselves groping in the dark, without any relevant historical data on which to base such decisions. In fact, the million-dollar question to be answered is: how to capture current and future employee and workplace interaction, in order to leverage the value of your real estate?

2 Predict and adapt – Meeting employee expectations

Before the crisis, many companies had already been moving toward digitizing facility management and creating digitally enabled services. But the lockdown catapulted us into a world that has magnified the importance of digitization, particularly regarding the employee experience.

Facility management is typically based on centralized decision-making. Yet, now with the 'democratization' within organizations, facility needs to look to the work floor to know what is required from them and be able to predict how assets can best be used.

Prediction has everything to do with fully understanding employees' workplace needs and matching that to a safe ecosystem. But with employee needs varying within a single office space, available behavioral data should be able to generate fact-based insights for possible scenarios. Such scenarios can be the basis of highly targeted decisions, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. This will require having in place tools that can support running the business as a fully Agile enterprise, with optimal use of office space based on digital and advanced analytics.

3 Building your resilience - Braving the storm in the long term

Uncertainty seems to be here to stay for the coming years. It makes it hard to take on the challenges of today and, at the same time, think ahead regarding future strategies. Yet, COVID-19 has accelerated the need for strategic choices and highlighted that those who haven't yet invested in such digital solutions need to catch up fast!

According to a [recent automation survey](#) by Bain & Company, automation has suddenly climbed much higher on the agenda of many companies. And not just to lower costs, but to become more resilient, cut back risk and generate useful business insights more easily.

In fact, leaders are discovering that digital can not only deliver a competitive edge for their business, but also in retaining scarce talents in a tight labor market. Because, as digital accelerates even further, things that employees value about their job will also shift. Digital strategies will help focus on employee experience and provide fitting answers to key questions such as: How do you reengage with employees and how do you meet their needs in a changed world?

By making workplace services easily available and consumable by way of a fully digitized, smooth employee experience, you can boost workforce productivity now, while having in place flexible facility services that can help predict future needs and successfully adapt your services accordingly.

Conclusion

How are you going to measure what you need in the new world? And make sure you have a space where employees can be productive and have the space that fits their new interaction with each other? The ability to acquire the knowledge and connect the dots for fitting action, will create the differentiated experience that is called for in a post-COVID office environment.

This will involve having in place a suite of digital first products and experiences. And as more employees embrace such digital-first facility services, their expectations will be raised. Organizations that can provide a post-pandemic, value-adding digital experience will come up trumps, in the way of the ability to adapt service offerings and real estate to new working methods, while better meeting the needs of all concerned.



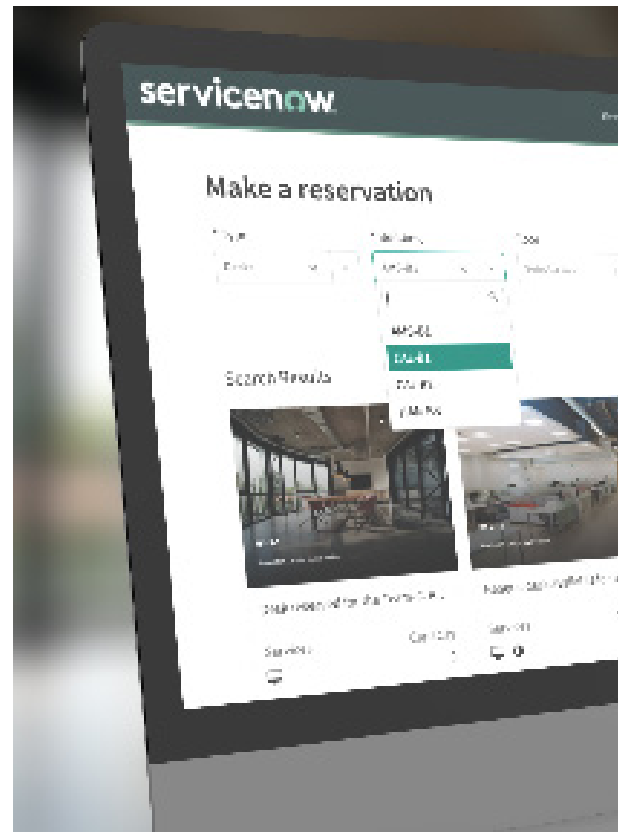
Pre-COVID, Space as a Service was already booming in real estate. It's likely to grow even further now that, post-COVID, employees look for not just a workplace, but one that fits their specific needs at any point in time.

How ServiceNow enables facility managers to predict and adapt

While employees are increasingly looking for a consumer-like experience for services they consume while at work, facility services are often based on legacy and siloed tools. Not only do such tools fail to provide a positive employee experience, they are inherently inefficient.

The pressure is on for facility managers to deliver their services cost-effectively with the best employee experience: a fitting digital experience for a hybrid way of working. This where [ServiceNow Workplace Service Delivery \(WSD\)](#) fits in.

WSD replaces diversified communication and manual workflows with a single, one-stop-shop that supports implemented policies, reporting on them, validating



them and improving them. In this way, WSD enables facility managers to assess what kind of office space is required by employees returning to work and stay in sync with the workplace and its users. What's more, the solution simplifies how employees get the services and workplace related info they need.

- ✓ **Know what use there is for your real estate**
Cut costs by optimizing use of facility services resources and floor area
- ✓ **Boost workforce productivity**
Knowledge items help employees to maximize the potential of their workplace
- ✓ **Reach out to employees on their go-to device**
Optimize the employee experience and make workplace services readily available and consumable
- ✓ **Actively manage office space**
Steer demand based on predictive insights

In a world where working remotely is the new normal, the powerful WSD infrastructure enables you to adapt quickly to meet challenges as they arise. Based on informed decisions, you can understand how office space can and will be used going forward.

What our customer achieved using WSD

4600+

happy users

700

desk reservations per month

1000

room reservations per month

>700

visitors per month



Customer Story

For a major client, we recently rolled out a new Workspace Service Delivery employee experience. We were asked to replace various systems and Excel sheets used for day-to-day facility operations in nearly 20 countries with one user-friendly system, that could bring employees safely back into the office.

Based on a mobile reservation app, WSD has provided the client a global, one-stop-shop portal where employees can easily request services, book

socially-distanced spaces and manage visitors. For facility, reservations, vendor management and service requests are now centralized and easy to manage, freeing up valuable time otherwise spent on daily operations.

By having the app divide the workforce and workspace into groups, the client is able to offer employees a seamless digital journey and flexible, safe seating.