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### **Hybrid Office Space Usage is Increasing Post-Pandemic. Is It a Good Choice for Your Company?**

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The concept of having employees share space within an office has been around for decades. In many circles, it was referred to as “hoteling” and it has been popular with consulting firms that often had employees traveling offsite for their work several days each week. Sections of the office space contained either private offices or workstations that would be available for employee use when they were in their home city and needed to come into the office. This concept was quite simple, worked well for the consultant employees, and reduced lease expenses.

Fast forward to the pandemic and concepts ranging from “work from anywhere” to the simple hoteling concept. Many companies are looking at hybrid situations that would contain areas as outlined above, but also would have more casual seating, more small private spaces employees could use when needed, and more common amenities such as breakrooms and small conference rooms. This type of office space design will provide employees with the most flexibility and provides the employer with optimal square footage to conduct their business.

One challenge with the hybrid style of workspace is for the employer to determine who will be eligible to have the flexible schedule and utilize flexible workspace within the office. With traveling consultants, the decision was easy since those employees did not need a dedicated workspace five days per week. Now an employer will need to consider how much flexibility they might offer to other employees involved in other departments like customer service, accounting, and HR. The decisions won't be easy because each employee is different, and some may not be as adept to working on a hybrid schedule. Employee tenure will also need to be considered as newer employees often require more supervision and training as compared to long-term employees.

Another challenge of the hybrid work model is equipping employees with the tools they need to work remotely. In some cases, this might just be a laptop computer, but in others, there might be furniture needs at the employee's home. However, there are some gray areas about what employers need to provide to employees when they are working from home. So, while a hybrid space model will optimize the real estate footprint and reduce lease costs, the space occupier needs to consider what other costs will enter into the hybrid model of space occupancy.



One final consideration is corporate culture. A strong corporate culture is an important company asset that contains critical cogs of success, so implementing changes that could impact this should not be made without adequate due diligence. One misconception is that corporate culture remains fixed, when in reality corporate culture is continually changing depending on who the employees are and how they interact with each other day-to-day. Ideally companies want corporate culture and efficiency to improve as time goes by. For companies that choose to have a high percentage of remote workers and high levels of hybrid office space, their corporate culture could be negatively impacted because of reduced interaction of employees. In some cases, a hybrid model could also improve the corporate culture as employees adapt.

It is too early to know what the actual impacts of hybrid space models will be given high levels of remote working are generally new concepts. For many companies a hybrid office environment will impact the businesses' corporate culture in some way as time goes by.

If you are contemplating moving to a hybrid work model, it would be in your best interest to consult with a qualified real estate advisor. ITRA Global advisors are located worldwide and can help you determine how your changing needs may affect your space requirements. Please visit our website to find a member in your market.

