

Creating a Productive Workplace

Through Space Management

Several factors drive organizational success. One of these factors is employee performance. Employee performance is an organizational concern that is not addressed by traditional space management techniques. The expense of traditional space management goes beyond the simple monetary costs of employee retention because legacy space management techniques affect performance and profitability.

BOOST EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION & ENGAGEMENT

The open office concept can offer the right balance of features to boost employee satisfaction and engagement, thereby driving performance to new heights within an

organization. However, in order to really make the most of the modern workplace design, it is important to use proper space management. This strategy lets an organization focus on human capital, and leverage the impact of the physical office environment on employee engagement.

In this paper, we highlight the importance of satisfaction and engagement, drawing a connection between these factors and space management. When organizations use the right space management approaches supported by advanced CAFM platforms, they create an office environment that's more conducive to loyalty and connection. This investment in technique and technology pays off with a satisfied and engaged workforce that stays put and bears down on challenges with gusto.

What is Employee Performance?

Employee performance is the result of two elements: satisfaction and engagement. Supportive organizations inspire loyalty. Easy connections encourage employee engagement. Without both elements, the risk of employee dissatisfaction, disengagement, turnover, and poor performance put your business at a competitive disadvantage.

> Employee Satisfaction

Why does employee satisfaction matter? While some argue that it doesn't, better informed people recognize that a satisfied employee is more likely to be a loyal employee. Happiness counts for a lot in the workplace. Surveys have shown that satisfied employees are less likely to leave for greener pastures and that unhappy employees tend to be planning their departure.

Organizations that focus on more than just compensation as a draw for workers are more likely to successfully attract and keep satisfied employees. Day-to-day issues may give rise to frustrations or exhaustion when workers feel hindered by organizational issues. Schedule flexibility and personal space are two issues workers identify as essential to their satisfaction.

As organizations move away from outmoded management tactics and towards a more effective and data-driven approach, satisfaction becomes an increasingly critical data point. If you want to foster loyalty in your workforce, providing a dynamic workplace is an important factor.

A possible outcome of employee satisfaction is employee engagement. According to a study

conducted by Steelcase, "The data show that workers who are highly satisfied with various aspects of their workplace also demonstrate higher levels of engagement. Yet, only 13 percent of global workers are highly engaged and highly satisfied with their workplace." While satisfaction may be key to loyalty, engagement is key to productivity.

> Employee Engagement

According to Steelcase, "Employee engagement is a serious bottom-line issue. It fuels organizations during times of economic growth and, more critically, when market conditions are uncertain and volatile." This means employee engagement is a key to organizational success. Institutions that study the workplace, such as Gallup and Harvard University, measure employee engagement rather than satisfaction. As engagement is heavily weighted towards productivity, it makes sense to focus on this keystone as the real way to test whether workers perform well for their employers.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IS A SERIOUS BOTTOM-LINE ISSUE

Engagement is an umbrella term for the employee's sense of connectedness and commitment to the job. Where satisfaction affects the organization at a high level, engagement is more of a day-to-day detail-oriented concern. Employee engagement factors in managerial relationships, future goals, and a sense of purpose. Engaged employees are productive employees.

In the same report, Steelcase goes on to say, "The findings of this study indicate that the work environment can either augment or hinder efforts to boost employee engagement."



What is Space Management?

Space management, also known as facilities management, is the delivery of a workplace. These days, that means a workplace that encourages employee satisfaction and enables employee engagement. Traditional tools for facilities management are not suited to the fast pace of today's workforce.

Computer-Assisted Facility Management (CAFM) tools support the creation of a dynamic environment that can be shifted and extended to accommodate communications support, collaborative spaces embedded in the larger office environment, flexible seating arrangements, and a balanced access to management. CAFM software cuts out bureaucratic red tape and allows department managers to handle seat reassignment efforts with a few clicks or drags in the platform's interface. This task can be executed in a matter of minutes rather than taking days to run through various departments.

CAFM SOFTWARE CUTS OUT BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE

Space Management for Performance Improvements

Organizations that use CAFM software as part of a space management effort can easily address several engagement factors discussed. Often, open offices include several different collaboration or private focus spaces. With CAFM platforms, users can easily locate each other within an open office. This helps management feel more accessible to staff and provides an easy way to connect with team members for quick chats or feedback, thereby enhancing the feeling of unity to an organization's mission. Opportunities are not only limited to these examples though. CAFM platforms touch on important procedural techniques that are part of a good space management approach.



Space Management platforms work to enhance your office environment to produce employee satisfaction and engagement.

1. Access to management for mentorship, as well as access to office resources for productivity, are two parts of effective space management. CAFM platforms provides the framework for managing office environments.

2. Flexibility in work hours and work location help employees balance the tension between home and work. Using CAFMs to manage your office environment gives you the ability to accommodate the varied needs of your workforce.

3. Personal Connections keep employees in touch with their coworkers and managers. CAFM systems enable you to plan and deliver a space that encourages connections between employees and their line managers. Gallup News says, "What they [employees] want most is a great boss who cares about their development, and a company that focuses on and develops their strengths." ²

4. Collaboration is vital to employee performance. With space management platforms and mobile apps you can set up an environment in which coworkers, regardless of location, can collaborate easily and effectively.

5. New Talent will evaluate the work environment before coming on board. You want to attract talent that works well with others and your office environment gives them big clues. You also need to accommodate change in your workforce. Utilizing the right space management platform provides the resources needed to manage the workspace on an on-going basis, building and designing spaces for a growing workforce.

1. Access

Access has two distinct categories: access to the tools and processes of the workplace and access to line managers and management. To provide access to the tools and processes of the workplace, you need a dynamic workplace setting with options for seating and meeting. Access grants off-site workers the same tool set as those sitting at a central office location. The Steelcase review of global employee engagement says, “The data show that workers who are highly satisfied with various aspects of their workplace also demonstrate higher levels of engagement. ... This finding suggests that a key design principle for the workplace is to create a range of spaces—for groups and individuals, mobile and resident workers—and corresponding work policies that enable employees to make choices about the best ways to work. The data demonstrates a correlation between how much control employees have in their workplace and their engagement level.”

Access to line managers and management is also critical to employee engagement. Just as managers need to be able to track the employee’s productivity and activity, the employee needs to be assured of a connection to their manager. Open office arrangements can draw management out from behind closed doors but must balance the access against the manager’s need for privacy while conducting business and dealing with employees. A dynamic workspace includes collaborative and casual meeting spaces where a manager can meet with individuals without being intimidating. Space management approaches that find a balance between privacy and access tend to be more successful. These arrangements provide both management and workers with what they need to be engaged at work.



2. Flexibility

Being able to work varied hours and locations is a key feature in attracting and keeping high value employees. Working in a flexible environment allows employees to balance their work and home lives. Employees with this type of office culture experience more satisfaction, leaving them less vulnerable to burnout. Office arrangements that support a flexible work schedule and allow employees to connect from a remote location provide workers with the tools to do their jobs without losing out on life.

“37 PERCENT OF WORKERS SAY MORE WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY WOULD MAKE THEM MORE PRODUCTIVE.”³

Creating virtual meeting and collaboration spaces as a part of your office encourages workers to join meetings without leaving their desks. Traditional space management assumes that a meeting occurs in a fixed-use location on a schedule. Modern techniques recognize that there are different meeting needs in the new office environment. Workers can grab a collaboration space that allows them to meet on-the-fly without disrupting the work around them. Workers no longer need to congregate in fixed-use, heavily trafficked meeting rooms to spend an hour going over issues that could be solved with a quick conversation.

Telecommunications technology allows virtual attendance to nearly every office event.

Open office options include a free-form seating arrangement that allows teams to form and coalesce according to their need. “They discovered that seating the right types of workers together led to increased productivity and profits.”⁴

Flexibility cultivates employee satisfaction. Studies have shown that “...perceived flexibility and supportive work-life policies have significant independent effects in predicting employee engagement and expected retention even after controlling for several personal, family, and job characteristics. Consistent with previous reviews of employee engagement research that show employee characteristics to be weak predictors of engagement compared to work environment and human resource management practices, we find that perceived flexibility and supportive work-life policies were the best predictors of employee engagement.”⁵ Such a flexible environment needs to not increase costs, but reduce them. To do this, organizations require the resources to design, monitor, and maintain the workspace.

3. Personal Connections

The personal feel of a traditional “closed” office space was one of its major strengths. However, this does tend to lead to a greater sense of isolation, particularly when it comes to manager-employee relations. Open office plans are a good solution to this issue, but they aren’t a fix-all since they tend to lose that personal feeling entirely. Smart space management tools give stakeholders at all levels greater control over the environment in which they work, which helps introduce a new kind of personal connection that favors ownership rather than closed-door environments.

Employees who feel isolated not only from their coworkers but also from the main goals of an organization can feel hopeless in their jobs, which is distinctly counterproductive for engagement. A study on employee loneliness found that “because they feel more estranged and less connected to coworkers, lonelier employees will be more likely to experience a lack of belongingness at work, thus decreasing their effective commitment to their organizations.”⁶ Proper space management allows an organization to balance flexibility and the need for collaboration with an employee’s desire for solitude and personal space in the office. With the right technology and tools, stakeholders can easily locate each other in the office, even if they’re in a collaboration room or individual work space. Good space management technology can even integrate communication so employees can check in with each other before going to their physical location to ensure the discussion won’t be disruptive.



4. Collaboration

Collaboration between employees is a critical need in any organization. Seating arrangements need to be easily managed on an on-going basis as the organization cycles through projects. The open office arrangement is excellent for accommodating quick desk-to-desk collaboration. Where this may become disruptive, a well-designed open office environment includes spaces for workers to hold ad hoc meetings and discuss the project or develop a solution to a problem.

EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION CAN BE THE BEST WAY TO HELP EMPLOYEES COMBAT BURNOUT

An article in *Workspace Today* notes that, “Collaboration through video has become the de facto communication standard within many enterprises across the globe when employees cannot meet in-person.”⁷ Modern offices tend towards delivering a flexible workplace that supports working off-site and makes accommodations for connecting and collaborating with every other employee.

Effective collaboration can be the best way to help employees combat burnout. In addition to open office arrangements with collaboration spaces and casual meeting spaces, space management best practices call for the inclusion of some individual private work areas as well. The use of these group and individual breakout rooms can be easily managed with good space management technology.

5. New Talent

The *Harvard Business Review* says, “In this rapid cycle economy, business leaders know that having a high-performing workforce is essential for growth and survival. They recognize that a highly engaged workforce can increase innovation, productivity, and bottom-line performance while reducing costs related to hiring and retention in highly competitive talent markets.”⁸ While most studies focus on employee engagement, prospective employees are also affected by your workplace choices.

Encourage Collaboration with Space Management Software

The key factors to a successful space management implementation are access, flexibility, personal connection, collaboration, and new talent. Good facilities management tools enable the delivery of a quality workspace.

Making it possible for workers to select and book meeting rooms is one thing; actually implementing a usable system is another. The latter is a challenge that modern space management tools and methods have taken up. Providing tools for employees to be able to arrange their day is one way that space management serves the workers and alleviates facilities management from the nitty-gritty on who is using which meeting room. If it's easy to book and release a meeting room, workers wouldn't conveniently tend to overbook. A good system generates reports that reveal the actual usage of various spaces in the workspace.

Flexible workspaces are needed these days so that workers can balance their work life in a way never expected before. Designing and implementing these spaces is one challenge where a robust space management system should shine. A good system will allow department heads to manage their team's allocations.

Employees need to feel connected to their

work space, even while they take advantage of the flexible work options. The system needs to not just accommodate but promote a sense of confident belonging. Choose a CAFM that features shared spaces so that telecommuting or visiting workers can have a desk assignment, or they can be floaters using quiet spaces or small meeting rooms. The system must recognize and assist you with space allocations in a way that encourages workers to feel confident about their "place" in the organization.

Encouraging collaboration is what it's all about these days. Engaged and happy employees work well with others. The nurturing of collaboration can be accomplished by creating spaces in which it is easy for employees to engage their coworkers in problem solving. Open offices are one way to do this. Plus, providing quiet spaces, away from the other busy employees means that collaboration doesn't have to disturb anyone.

Finally, space management affects prospective employees as well as the folks already employed by an organization. Presenting the best face to prospective high-value employees gives an organization a leg up on the market.



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