



Hybrid Work

A **How-To Guide** for Workplace
Innovators in 2025



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Introduction

The average person will spend **80,000** hours at work over the course of their lifetime.

Today's workplace leader has transformational superpowers. But with these powers comes great responsibility.

New ways of working promise to unlock new levels of performance and better ways to live. Indeed, 90% of companies are using some flavor of hybrid work, and it's been proven that companies with flexible work policies experience significantly more revenue growth than those without.

And yet, there are challenges holding us back.

In this guide, we'll delve into those challenges and offer a framework for figuring out the 'how' - the ingredients and the sequencing, so you can develop a strategy that brings about a brighter future of work.



Workplace Strategy: A Definition

According to Wikipedia, a workplace strategy is 'the dynamic alignment of an organization's work patterns with the work environment to enable peak performance and reduce costs'.

Today's work patterns include:

- **Fully remote**
- **Fully face-to-face**
- **Trust-based hybrid**
- **Expectation-based hybrid** - e.g. at least 2 days per week
- **Schedule-based hybrid** - e.g. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

As for work environments, it's clear that most offices are no longer fit for purpose.

Improving the working environment, alongside aligning it with complex new work patterns is exactly why a solid and adaptable workplace strategy is imperative in 2025.

What's more, a better workplace is now a cross-functional discipline. HR, CRE, IT, Operations, and FM teams are all involved, with new roles and teams around workplace experience and flexible working increasing exponentially.

Each stakeholder needs frameworks and processes to adapt and course-correct over time.

Like the autopilot function of an aircraft, a successful workplace strategy levels and stabilizes the organization during turbulent periods of uncertainty and change.

And let's face it, as far as 2025 goes, working life *is* change.

Getting Your Workplace Strategy Right

The top 3 burning questions facing workplace leaders right now are:

- What's our vision for the future of work?
- What work patterns support this vision?
- What spaces do we need to support those patterns?

As a workplace innovator on a mission to improve lives and competitive advantage by aligning work patterns and places, how the heck do you make the necessary decisions if the needs of individuals are a soupy mess of perpetual change?

This is where things get interesting. Let's take a leaf out of futurists' book and think short and long-term, **simultaneously**.

Rather than working to a long-term, unreliable, linear plan that you'll file in a drawer when it's (instantly) out of date, let's hatch a plan that **adapts** as you gain greater certainty over time, based on data and evidence.



Shaping Your Vision

“Economic losers will be organizations that are slow to change or adapt—ones who hedge their bets or pretend to embrace hybrid or remote-first work but who don’t actually put the systems, policies and resources in place that are needed to make it successful. Organizations who embrace a human-centered approach to designing their workplaces, schedules and in-person collaboration requirements are going to be best positioned to thrive over the next 20 years.” – Wendy Ryan, CEO, Kadab

Change is easier when you know where you’re going and why it’s worth it.

That’s why it’s vital to set a **vision**.

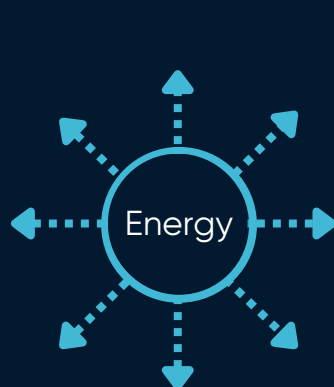
Without a vision, your workplace strategy is rudderless and the leaders in your organization won’t be able to make decisions in alignment, resulting in:

David Solomon’s vision for the future of work at Goldman Sachs is **fully in-office**.

Jeremy Stoppelman’s vision for the future of work at Yelp is **fully remote**.

Annie Dean’s vision for the future of work at Atlassian is **based on trust**: trusting people to choose to work however and wherever works best for them.

This:



Instead of this:

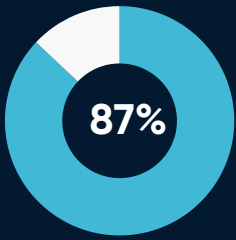


Which work pattern you choose is an output of your answer this core question:

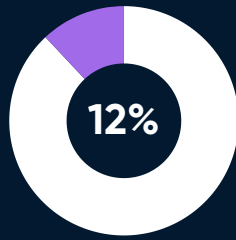
How much autonomy are you willing to give your people?

The answer to this depends on:

The worldview of your leadership



87% of remote employees think they're productive



Only 12% of leaders think their remote teams are productive

Source: Microsoft

Shaping Your Strategy

A strategy describes goals, priorities and how you'll mobilize resources to get from your current reality to your desired outcome.

So the first questions are, what is your highest priority goal? What is your desired outcome?

- Right-sizing your office portfolio and reducing costs?
- Enticing employees to spend more time in the office?
- Optimizing space to improve employee experience?

In order to make decisions around work patterns and workspaces, first you need **workplace data**.



Without reliable workplace data, you're making decisions in the dark - decisions that can be worth millions, even billions.

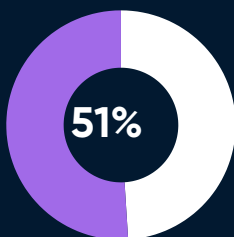
The strength of your culture



Only **2 out of 10 employees** feel connected to their organization's culture

Source: Gallup

The expectations of your target talent



Over half of employees globally are actively or passively seeking a new job

Source: Gallup

The Top 3 Workplace Strategy Pitfalls

There are three common pitfalls to be aware of when developing your strategy:

#1 - The Occupancy / Experience Loop

You want people to return to the office to reap all the benefits of collaboration, learning and social connection. But when they arrive, their experience disappoints. The space is too crowded or a ghost town, their work friends are nowhere to be seen and the desk or room they wanted isn't available. As a result they vow never to return.

Meanwhile you're trying to learn which spaces will provide an outstanding experience versus what's waste or a detractor. But how can you do that if nobody wants to come in?



#2 - Occupancy peaks, troughs & epic waste

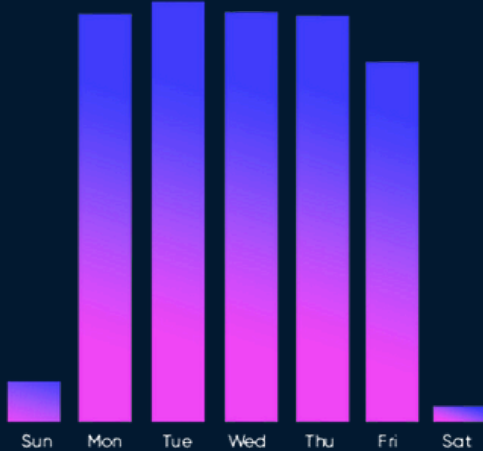
Your goal is to right-size your portfolio and optimize your spaces, but occupancy is typically uneven.

As Sarah Hayes from KPMG puts it,

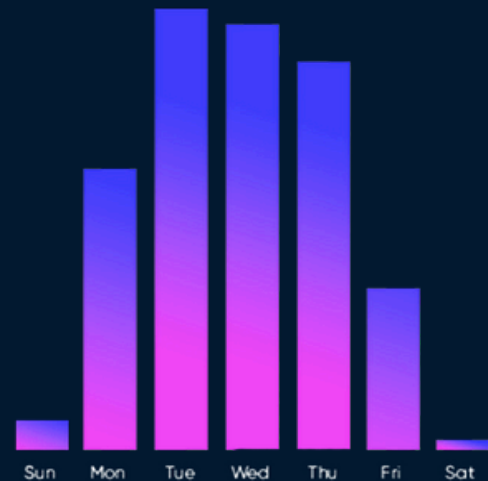
"There's often a degree of magnetism around being in the office on certain days of the week. So you won't be able to free up as much space as you might think. People might only come in two to three days, but they could well be the same days. That means nothing changes in terms of office space needed unless you put strict rules in place. Not every organization will want to force that on their people."

Most workplace leaders believe Sarah is right and they're stuck with a choice between sucking up obscene levels of underutilization, shrinking their space and risking overcrowding, or causing revolt by putting strict rules in place to even out occupancy.

Pre-pandemic
Relatively flat utilization
HubStar



Post-pandemic
Variable utilization by day of week
HubStar



#3 - Crude Measurement and messy data

Given the name of the workplace strategy game is the alignment of your work patterns with your work environment, success is wholly dependent on your ability to accurately track, analyze and predict who wants to use what, and when.

The most common source of workplace data is badge swipes, but this doesn't provide anywhere near the level of accuracy required.

Visual observation is another old classic, where people walk around with clipboards or tablets manually monitoring occupancy.

These techniques have, in some cases, led to overcrowding and health and safety risks due to shedding real estate based on 'snapshots' of occupancy, without understanding trends and patterns over time.

These mistakes are difficult to recover from, as there's literally no room for back-peddaling.

So you now have a vision, you've defined your goals and you know which pitfalls to avoid - next comes action.

What specific tactics do you need to implement, and in what order, to get to your desired outcome?

Let's get into it.

Workplace Strategy Tactics

1 Quantify Work Patterns & Analyze Employee Preferences

The success of your workplace strategy hinges on your ability to quantify how people are using the workplace.

The more flexibility and autonomy you offer your people, the greater the variability in workplace demand, so let's begin with quantifying that.

Indeed, **61% of companies** surveyed are sticking with an **expectation-based hybrid schedule**, creating unpredictable occupancy levels in the process.

Quantifying work patterns reveals:

- **How many** employees are coming in
- **Where** they're going
- **When** they're coming in
- **What** they're doing
- **Why** they're coming in

Ultimately, this helps you determine whether or not the spaces you have are fit for purpose and what changes you should be making.

Where does workplace pattern data come from?

Ideally, a variety of sources – workplace occupancy sensors, WiFi signals, and desk and room booking tools. The broader the coverage, the more accurate the data.

And as for **employee preferences**, workplace patterns can reveal a lot about when people want to come in and where they want to work.

But employee surveys, interviews and focus groups are a good place to turn for qualitative data about what people want in the future.

61%



of companies use an expectation-based hybrid work schedule

Source: Flex Index

45%



of employees say brainstorming is better in-person

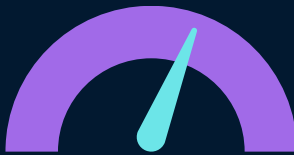
Source: Slack

The ability to walk into the boardroom with this information expands your sphere of influence as a workplace innovator, as your capabilities click into a higher gear, armed with trustworthy data.

2 Shift to Agile Space Optimization

According to Cisco, **over 50% of office space** is still dedicated to individual work spaces, despite collaboration being the number one reason employees come into the office.

Over 50%



of office space is still made up of individual workspaces

Source: Cisco

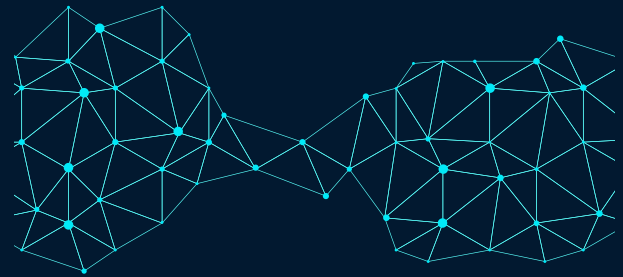
Most office spaces aren't laid out and designed as well as they could be.

(Hint: you're *definitely* going to need more collaboration spaces)

The writing is on the wall – for most workplace leaders, it's time for an overhaul.

That's what agile space optimization is all about.

Agile began in software, when engineers realized that long, linear projects were risky, because you could lock yourself in a room for years only to find that the thing you've been building doesn't delight customers the way you assumed it would.



Instead, the trick is to release something early and often; to test, learn and iterate.

And when we apply agile to the workplace?

Instead of making office design decisions based on a hunch, agile space optimization is about working from reliable data and course-correcting quickly.

Some organizations, for example, rushed to install kitchens with free food to entice employees back into the office, only to discover nobody used them and subsequently had to rip them out.

A limited test to explore whether kitchens serve as an attractor is clearly preferable to spending a giant wad of budget on kitchens that turned out to be a flop.

Agile space optimization not only avoids wasting time and budget, but also avoids false assumptions about what's working and what isn't.

3

Entice people in by creating a commute-worthy office

According to Microsoft’s Work Trends Index research, **82% of business decision makers** are concerned about getting people back into the office. Their concerns are well-founded. Many organizations flung open their doors, then nobody showed up. Why?

Because employees (**73% of those surveyed**) say they need a more compelling reason to schlep back to the office than just company expectations.

If your workplace strategy doesn’t demonstrate that showing up fulfils more than an arbitrary desire to see butts in seats, it’s likely to be met with ‘hell no we won’t go.’

Roll on the heavy-handed mandates to force them back. Cue the great resignation, increased presenteeism and absenteeism, coffee badging, quiet quitting and more.

And considering that the average employee spends **an extra \$561 per month** on the additional transportation, child and pet care that returning to the office requires, it’s pretty clear that employees aren’t getting back what they’re putting in.

So what compelling reason(s) should you offer?

Company events, killer amenities, fun socials, yoga classes, access to mentorship and development opportunities – the most compelling reasons to go into the office are going to vary from employee to employee.

Here are three steps to creating a commute-worthy office:

- Figure out **what resonates most** with different employee groups
- **Showcase compelling reasons** to all employees
- **Use workplace data** to measure what drives purposeful attendance and what falls flat



4 Take the friction out of planning an ideal day in the office

When asked what would motivate them to come into the office, here's what employees said:

- **84%** would be motivated to go into the office if they could socialize with co workers
- **74%** would go to the office more frequently if they knew their work friends were there
- **73%** would go to the office more frequently if they knew their direct team members would be there

Contrast this with the current reality most employees face:

- Coordinating office schedules across teams is a logistical nightmare. **63% of employees** find it hard to collaborate, according to Slack
- There's no way to tell how busy or quiet the office will be
- Finding days and spaces to work with team members is a massive hassle - in fact, **76% of employees** surveyed by Cisco feel that their office's meeting rooms don't enhance productivity

There's so much friction in the way of planning an ideal day in the office, it ends up being easier to stay home.

This starts happening day after day, and then long term - cue the remote work inertia.

Instead, we need to entice people into the office by making it easier for them to connect with their work friends and collaborators. Then, when they show up, we need to provide frictionless access to their favorite spaces and amenities.

How do we do all that at once?

By using technology - workplace scheduling and workplace experience apps - to personalize and remove the friction from every employee's workplace experience.

63%



of employees find it hard to collaborate in the office

Source: Slack

Key Takeaways

A successful workplace strategy requires a mindset shift.

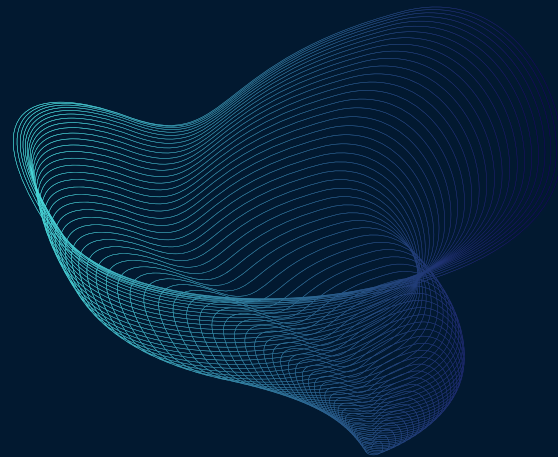
We don't have all the answers. We don't know how work patterns will change or what external events might change the game completely.

Here's how to align work patterns with work environments while improving employee experience, achieving business goals and keeping costs low:

- Set your vision – take an objective look at your organization's culture, vision for the future of work
- Shape your strategy – work out priorities and the desired outcomes for all stakeholders

Bear in mind these three common pitfalls:

- The interdependence of workplace experience and occupancy levels
- Uneven occupancy levels creating waste
- Workplace data sources that don't give a true picture of occupancy



Implement your workplace strategy with these four tactics:

1) Measure workplace patterns and preferences

2) Align work environments through agile space optimization

3) Create a commute-worthy workplace experience

4) Take the friction out of planning a day in the office

So, workplace innovator, who can provide us with new levels of connection that nourish and evolve our mental models, ushering in a new era of work?

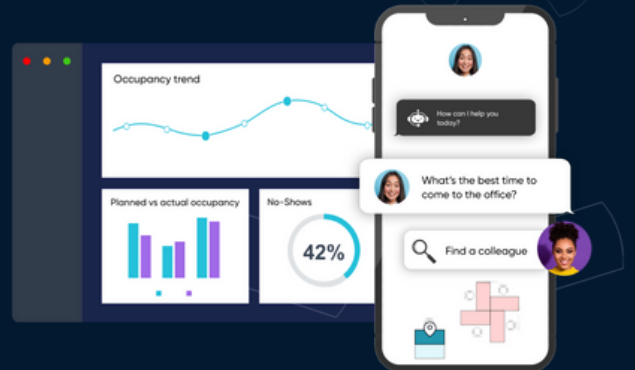
Well, if not you, who? If not now, when?



HubStar

HubStar is a dynamic workplace management platform that helps workplace innovators like you **measure workplace patterns, optimize spaces** and **drive purposeful office attendance**.

Find out how HubStar can help your organization achieve everything you've read in this guide, and more.



[Book a demo](#)

