CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD

FLEXING YOUR
OFFICE SPACE

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Flexible office space is becoming increasingly prized by tenants. Flexibility improves a space's productivity, the ease at which it can be adapted to changing needs or innovations can help boost its utilisation and output over the course of a tenancy.

Consumers value flexibility, the Blackberry mobile phone initially gained popularity by providing a technology that allowed text-based messages to be more easily sent than the existing technology. However, additional uses were limited to a few applications. The iPhone, by contrast, offered a platform that allowed anyone to create new apps, the number limited by imagination only. By creating a much more flexible platform, the iPhone won the battle for market share.

❝ At a time where changing workplace practices and increased remote working are impacting office space demand, flexibility in a space can help attract and retain tenants. ❞

In office space, flexibility can fall into three areas: place, technology and people:

In terms of place, building architecture and internal layout has traditionally limited flexibility. Floor plate size, columns, internal walls as well as plumbing and cabling have been less flexible once a fit out has been completed.

❝ Systems that allow a tenancy to be more easily adapted to changing business needs are increasingly being valued. ❞

This might include space that can be used for yoga in the morning, a board meeting at lunch time or a workplace "town hall" in the evening. Workstations with limited or no cabling, can improve flexibility. For example, power cabling can restrict how quickly a space can be changed. More powerful battery technology and dedicated workplace battery packs allow cabling to be further reduced, providing a more dynamic built environment.

The pace of technological change seems to continually accelerate. This can both increase and decrease a space's flexibility. New technologies to monitor and allocate space can allow for more efficient uses, encourage more people to use an existing space or suggest the space be adapted to higher use purposes. However, rapid changes in technology can also lead to obsolescence which, combined with high investment cost, may mean a tenancy retains a legacy system that is less efficient

❝ Ideally systems should be agnostic, allowing new technologies to be easily incorporated. ❞

Much like the iPhone creates a platform for new apps designed by anyone to be added.

An office space is all about people. A 2021 study by Cushman & Wakefield found employees coming to the office valued the additional connection and learning it brings. Systems which allow for increased collaboration in the office will be valued, but increasingly tenants are seeking "third space" options in a building either for meetings, collaboration or amenity. In addition, a dedicated team to curate space has found to be a valuable initiative to ensure flexible options are being utilised. For example, is there someone available to rearrange the space as needs change or manage bookings?

❝ A built environment that is easily adaptable, technologically agnostic and allows for increased collaboration is likely to be more productive and in demand as tenants continue to seek the best space to attract and retail talent. ❞

To find out what's next in flexible office design please contact Maria Russo-Fama, from Cushman & Wakefield's Project & Development Services.

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