

Facilities Management from A to Z

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lexible Working

Flexible working is an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of working practices covering working hours, locations or patterns of work. Shifts in demographics, cultural expectations and economic pressures have combined to generate a demand for less rigid workstyles. Significantly, the British government has now endorsed more flexible working practices in law. In facilities management, the question of location is prevalent. This interest is driven by the high cost of property occupation.

Of all the costs affecting the workplace, real estate is by far the greatest with costs representing around 75% of total occupation expenditure. Although rent, or equivalent capital charging, and local taxes account for most of this, many other FM costs like cleaning and heating are directly related to the amount of space occupied. The facility manager who can achieve just a small percentage reduction in footprint may be able to deliver cost savings or avoidance well in excess of softer targets like catering subsidies or stationery.

The typical occupation pattern of British offices is inherently wasteful with buildings lying unoccupied for more time than they are actually in use. Even during the working day the traditional allocation of one desk per person means that upwards of 40% of workstations are empty at any given moment in time.

With an average workstation in the UK costing around £10,000 per annum and much higher in cities like London this underutilisation represents a huge opportunity for the efficient facility manager. Space saving initiatives like hot-desking, hoteling and so on are all based around that simple opportunity and can produce huge savings.

Many major organisations are increasingly introducing these new types of flexible working, reflecting the changing needs of both their business and their employees. This means a different approach to the workplace which is not about owning a particular desk, but having access to the right kind of workspace for getting the work done. Those organisations who have embraced flexible working claim a wide range of benefits from increased morale and reduced sick absence to major cost reduction and improved productivity.

Useful websites for information on flexible working include:

www.workwiseuk.org

www.officeproductivity.co.uk

www.globalworkplaceinnovation.com