

# H

## ot Desking

Hot Desking is the term used to describe the practice of a group of employees utilising a smaller number of workstations on an as-required basis as opposed to having a dedicated desk. The name is said to originate from the naval practice where sailors on different shifts would share bunks. This practice means that fewer bunks can be installed on a vessel like a submarine where space is limited. However the regular shift system meant that a sailor often lay down in a bunk still warm from its previous occupant, hence this was known as hot bunking.

Hot desking, along with a number of other flexible working practices, capitalises on the poor utilisation of space within the average workplace. Where every worker has a single dedicated workstation studies show that it is empty for a significant portion of the average working week. The UKs average holiday, training and sick absence figures mean that every worker is absent from their desk for 16% of the time. With another hour for lunch each workstation is empty for nearly three hours a day. If the role involves meetings or customer visits then the utilisation may fall to between 40% and 60%.

The annual Total Office Cost Survey 2008 (TOCS) shows that the annual cost of workstations in the UK vary from £6,071 in Plymouth to £18,980 in London's West End. If these are only occupied for between 40% and 84% of the time the potential exists for substantial levels of savings. The business case for hot desking lies in this opportunity. The cost of redesigning and equipping the workplace with hot desks and of training participants can be recovered in less than a year.

It is unusual to implement hot desking for everyone in a workplace. Most organisations target those who spend a higher than average amount of time out of the office. Moving from a dedicated workstation to a shared space can be difficult for some who prefer an individual and personalised desk. However if participation can be shown to offer other benefits such as breakout space, new technology or homeworking ability then sufficient volunteers can usually be identified. Some organisations such as BT or IBM have employed such initiatives on a grand scale across the organisation. However more modest schemes of 10 where teams of 10 simply share 9 desks can be shown to immediately generate up to 10% savings can be significant given the cost of office space in this economic climate.

*For more information on hot desking, hotelling and other office design trends try reading Space to Work: New Office Design by Jeremy Myerson and Philip Ross published by Laurence King Publishing ISBN-10: 1856694569*