

## Facilities Management from A to Z



Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard  
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# U tilisation

Hot-desking and other flexible working practices capitalise 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 UK's average holiday, training and sick absence figures mean that every office 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 (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 where teams of 10 simply share 9 desks can be shown to immediately generate savings of 10% which can be significant given the cost of office space in this economic climate.

Of course, workplace optimisation is not just about utilisation, it is important to recognise the impact of the design and operation of the facility upon the productivity, morale and retention of the occupying workforce. There are many workplace related factors that add cost and time to the input side of workplace productivity. These range from the cumulative effect of time spent walking to and waiting at printers, copiers and fax machines to the more pernicious impact of poor health and safety.

However, given the high cost of real estate, achieving better utilisation of such a valuable asset is an attractive proposition for many organisations.

*The Total Office Cost Survey (TOCS) is published each year by Actium Consult*  
[www.actiumconsult.co.uk](http://www.actiumconsult.co.uk)