

The changing face of the office

Amy Wright of Storetec describes how the company has been helping businesses transition to a digital way of working as the traditional view of office employment undergoes radical changes

Businesses are now beginning to make significant changes to the way they operate following the shift in employment culture, now geared towards remote working. Although government working from home advice has ended, many companies have allowed employees to continue working from home on a permanent basis while the coronavirus crisis is ongoing. By downsizing, and in some cases getting rid of offices altogether, the idea that remote working will become 'normal' is beginning to feel a more permanent future for workers across the UK.

In research by Accumulate Capital 37% of respondents said their business is planning to relocate to a smaller commercial space in the next year. Over half (58%) believe working from home will become the new normal following changes to the way businesses operate during the UK Coronavirus lockdown. As a result of the pandemic, businesses are looking at office utilisation in a completely different light.

But the implications of remote working have the potential to affect more than just employee morale, consolidated office space and reduced rental costs. The reality is that home-working will have a knock-on effect on office cleaners, security guards and public transport, as well as nearby cafés etc. who rely on workers commuting to the office. Accountancy firm PwC has reported that home-working could cost the UK economy up to £15.3bn a year due to such factors. There may also be an impact

on the property rental market as office space quickly becomes available throughout our cities.

BP is one example of the corporations planning on downsizing office locations throughout the UK. As one of the largest oilfield service providers, BP has financially suffered amid the oil price crash from the Coronavirus pandemic. As part of plans to cut 15% of its workforce, BP will also be implementing a more hybrid work style which includes an element of working from home.

Elsewhere, Mark Zuckerberg said as many as 50% of Facebook employees could be working remotely within the next five to 10 years. Zuckerberg pitched the idea as both a matter of satisfying employee desires and also as an effort to create 'more broad-based economic prosperity.'

Whilst downsizing office space is a popular choice for many employers, the reverse solution of expanding office space to allow employees to come back to work and maintain social distancing is an equally viable solution. Although remote working offers employees a number of unique benefits included reduced travel costs, less commute stress, location independence and improved efficiency, there are drawbacks. Spending 24/7 at home can get lonely and without the social interaction daily working life can become less enjoyable. Switching off from work and finding the right home/work balance would also be difficult to achieve. It's no surprise that 2 out of 3

employers have reported that maintaining employee morale during the pandemic has been a challenge.

Michael Dubicki, Director of Business Development at Flexoffices commented; 'Covid-19 has had a profound effect on businesses. Ultimately, it has asked deeper questions of the office. What does the office actually do? Why do we have them? Do we need them? The pandemic has asked businesses to re-look at office space and include the perspective of how it affects people - their productivity, their wellbeing, how they interact together and engage in positive experiences.'

A DIGITAL FUTURE

Effective records management is a major consideration for organisations downsizing office space. With more employees working from home, digital access to business documents is an absolute must.

Furthermore, with less space available, employers are faced with the reality that there is no longer space available to store archived documentation to be retained for years to come. The solution is simple: a digital archive. By scanning documents into accessible PDFs, employees can login to a central online system, accessing the records they require 24/7, without delay.

Furthermore, employees can set up virtual meetings to collaborate and discuss records, or quickly send over annotated documents via email. The options are endless. Storetec also provide a secure storage solution for physical records if this option is preferred.

With the Coronavirus pandemic unfortunately expected to impact our lives over the coming years, we're not expecting the demand to downsize office space to ease any time soon. The Storetec team remains available to assist businesses with their digital transformation goals.

More info: www.storetec.net

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