

A case study – Consulting to optimise the use of workspace

Potential2Achieve were engaged to consult on workplace efficiency in a major global financial services organisation. The EMEA wide project was running alongside a review of IT infrastructure. The main driver was to improve the working environment as a significant factor in staff perception, wellbeing and productivity. There was a secondary driver to generate a reduction in real estate utilisation and therefore to realise cost savings.

The consultation process centred around the following seven core activities to identify the degree to which groups were able and willing to collaborate and their capacity for mobility within the constraints of their roles:

- Senior leader interviews
- Focus groups
- Staff survey
- In situ observations of individual workstyle, for example time spent at meetings (in person and at the telephone), using a desktop PC and working independently of others
- Desk utilisation over 3 month period
- Technology review to assess flexibility
- Review of policies covering legal requirements and company policy.

The consultation identified the following design principles which were used as parameters for the recommendations:

- Introduction of activity based work settings – flex the workspace according to the type of work undertaken
- Convenience of meetings – define the types of space available for formal and informal meetings
- Build team bases – creation of home areas for individual teams within the workspace
- Access to natural light – minimising partitions and barriers
- Centralisation – using space efficiently through placement of facilities and storage
- Making space available for visitors and customers – including provision for individuals who briefly ‘touchdown’ at a desk in between meetings, for example to access emails

The following measures were identified to be aligned to implementation plans:

- Staff satisfaction – assessed through pre and post implementation surveys
- Customer service – no negative impact on customer service during the change and ongoing
- Densification targets – reduction in sqft per person and per workstation to align to industry standards compared to current practice
- Home working culture – increase in % of homeworking, this was primarily seen as viable in Western Europe
- Utilisation capacity – the space saving to be gained by working to actual demand, allowing for holidays, sickness, unfilled vacancies and training
- Lease breaks and sub-leasing – realistic assessment of opportunities available and buoyancy of current market conditions to generate a financial return from the space saved
- Benefit/cost realisation – the number of months post implementation to realise a Return on Investment.

The outcome of the consultation was a recommendation to conduct an in-depth review of 20% of the cities involved in the original consultation where there was an opportunity to maximise potential savings when considering the highest operating expense (in sqft) and known break points. A proposal was drawn up and submitted to position how the gathered understanding of work-styles within the organisation informed the development specifications for the physical workplace, technology, and associated HR policies. The consultation achieved its aim to give a complete understanding of the anticipated new solution(s) to be provided which formed the basis for the subsequent architectural design/development process.