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Optimaze Workplace Review

Insights from 2016 workplace studies

Executive Summary

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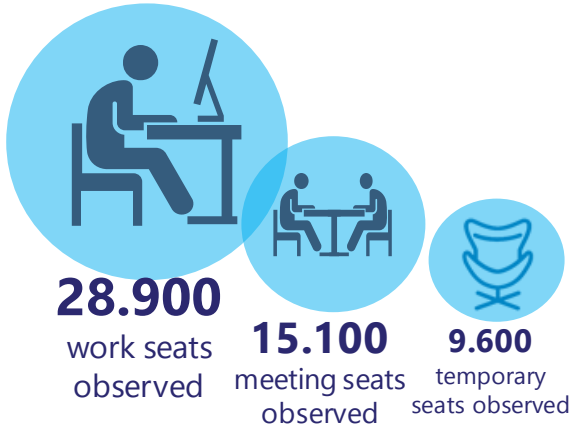
Background

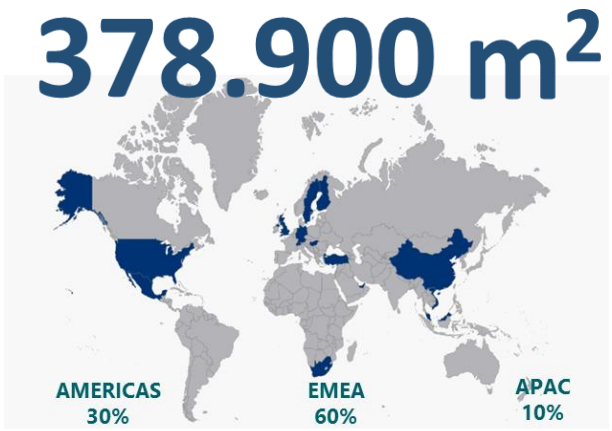
Optimaze Workplace Review is a space utilization benchmark report published by Rapal Oy since 2014. This is the 3rd report in order, and it aims to provide comparative data to help organizations assess the efficiency of their own space use, discover cost savings potential and analyze their employees' needs and workplace satisfaction. The review keeps evolving every year.

The 2016 analysis and review covers measurement data collected globally from 15 countries in three major market regions, and is to our knowledge by far the largest observational workplace study conducted in 2016 globally, if not ever.

Using Rapal's Optimaze Measure software and a standardized, systematic methodology for all data collection throughout the years and across all geographical locations, the Optimaze Workplace Review benchmark data now provides a unique glimpse of how office users allocate and use their space.

The 2016 data gathered for this review covers 330 observational studies in 111 buildings and 378.900 m^2 around the world. The space utilization studies explore the use of more than 28.900 workstations, 15.100 meeting seats and 9.600 temporary seats, and the workplaces of more than 23.000 people.





Methodology

Space utilization measurement using the Optimaze Measure software is a method for observing utilization rates of spaces and places in the workplace. During a 2-week measurement period, observers perform walkthrough measurements at least twice a day, recording seat use and performed work activites with the help of a tablet computer.

For this report, at least 6600 walkthroughs were made using the Optimaze Measure tool to collect the data from 53.600 seats, creating a set of at least 353,8 million observations of seat use in total.

Training was given to all those conducting the observational studies in order to ensure that interpretation and gathering of the data is systematic and coherent.

Some utilization studies only include the time people are physically at their desk and report this as the utilization rate. This is often the case, especially when using automated systems and sensors to make observations. However, a lot of the time seats are not free but only temporarily unoccupied. The methodology in this study thus also includes the recording of reserved seats, i.e. situations where seats are unoccupied but 'taken'.

Purpose

Space utilization studies provide evidence to support desk sharing policies and optimization of office space and seating capacity for a more flexible working environment. *Desk sharing will release desks, which will reduce the leased space actually required*, or the freed up desks can be used to accommodate more people.

Using the observational method with Optimaze Measure, utilization studies also provide *understanding of different workstyles of the workforce, in order to reshape effective environments*, tools and work cultures for productive and agile working.

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Finding #1 : Density

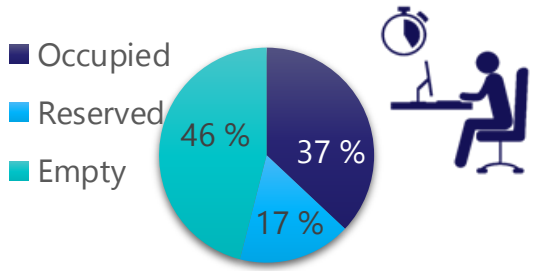
The **headcount per work seat ratio** is generally very relaxed: traditional enclosed offices have a ratio of 0,88 people/seat, whereas the newer Activity-Based offices that often promote desk sharing, have a slightly higher ratio of 1,18 people/work seat. Average was 0,97.

0,97
people/work seat

The average office density, or **area per work seat ratio** was 16,38 m^2 / seat. The most space-efficient office type was the activity-based office, with 13,27 m2 of office space available for every work seat, while the least efficient space use can be found in enclosed offices, where 22,14 m2 of floor area is available per workstation. By comparison, activity-based offices are almost 40% more efficient in their use of space than enclosed offices.

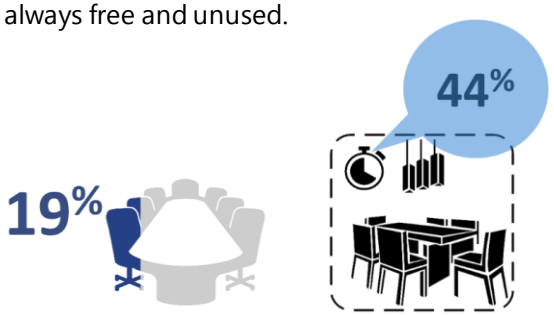
Dynamic workplace density, **or area per person ratio** showed that activity-based offices provide on average 14,75 m2/person, while the enclosed and open plan offices included in the 2016 data allocated about 61% more space per person, with 26,9 m2/person and 20,7 m2/person respectively (average being 19,5 m2/person).

Finding #2: Utilization

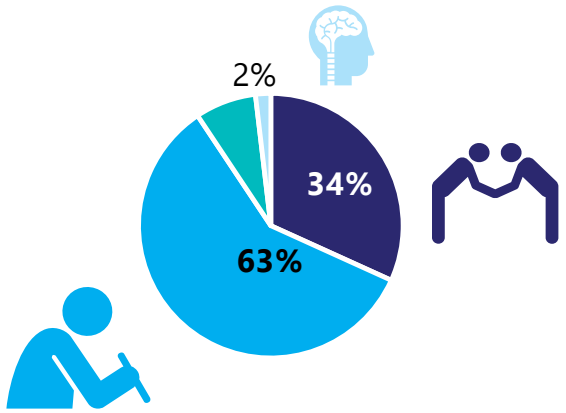


The space utilization measurements revealed that work seats are in use, on average, only 37% of the time. When taking into account also the times the work station is reserved without an occupant present, the utilization rate on average sums up to 54%. Notably, even at peak use, there were on average always at least 30% free seats available.

Meeting rooms are used, on average, only 44% of the time. Meeting seats are used on average only 19% of the time, and at any given time, at least 49% of all meeting seats are always free and unused.

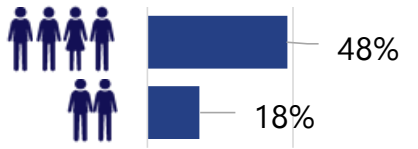


Finding #3: Ways of working



Collaboration
Individual work
Other
Recharge

A third of the time spent at the office is used working with others, typically in meetings of four people or less (66% of all meetings). In this light, meeting room sizes were observed to be misaligned. Such small groups were observed occupying large meeting rooms (designed for 5-9 people) 57% of the time, and even extra large meeting rooms (16 people or more) 37% of the time.



Conclusions

Based on the observations, it is evident that a great deal of desks and meeting rooms are under-utilized, while at the same time seating capacity is on average over dimensioned, creating a lot of wasted space. Especially when it comes to observed work activities and typical meeting sizes, it is clear that offices and the conference rooms they provide have not adapted to a new type of knowledge work, and have begun to fall short from providing optimal support to enable agile, activity-based working.

As more and more companies have begun to investigate their workplaces and consequently make adjustments to their workplace strategies, it appears that commercial real estate and future office spaces are about to undergo revolutionary changes world wide towards a sharing economy with resource efficient flexible workplace models. Workplaces are increasingly impacted by trends such as increased mobility, remote work and working from home, changes in meeting cultures, co-working, activity-based working, flexible work schedules and cultures, reduced commuting and other new company workplace strategies that seek to enhance productivity, well-being, innovation in business and employee experience while lowering fixed costs from unused space.

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Quality measurement made easy, no hardware installations

There are many methods for measuring utilization. The various tools and methodologies can be evaluated based on one's own needs, the costs and benefits. The electronic observation method using Optimaze Measure has the following benefits:

- ✓ **Moderate costs:** no installations are needed to set up the study, no investment in hardware
- ✓ **Agility and ease-of-use:** all you need is connectivity, a tablet and the software with a graphical interphase
- ✓ **Great scalability and flexibility:** the method quickly scales to as many observational points as you wish on a floor plan, and can be used in any kinds of spaces (offices, education, laboratories, parking buildings etc.)
- ✓ **Accuracy:** the method has proven to be accurate enough for most uses. More frequent observations are technically possible if resources are available
- ✓ **High granularity:** the level of detail in terms of specific spaces, work activities, seat types, space types and occupying organizations are all available
- ✓ **Engagement vs. invasiveness:** on the one hand the method may somewhat interrupt or distract workers, but more often than not, the method proves to be a great way for engaging the workforce in developing their own workplace as a first step towards change
- ✓ **Work culture profiling:** Optimaze Measure has the ability to collect information regarding work activities and group sizes, filtered by specific locations and much more
- ✓ **Reporting speed:** it takes no time to generate a report after data is collected, real-time online reporting and safe databases are what sets electronic methods apart from paper-and-pen methods
- ✓ **Acceptability:** the acceptance of an observational study with a human interface is much higher by clients, when compared to any type of electronic surveillance that may be perceived as 'big brother watching'.

Based on 'The WCO Guide to: Utilisation and Occupancy Studies' April 2013
(edited by CBRE April 2015 and RapalOy 2017).

If you are interested in obtaining the Full Report, or doing your own space utilization studies, please **follow the links for further information**.
EMEA and APAC regions: http://rapal.com/
U.S.: http://www.optimazeinc.com/

Rapal's tools and services are aimed at supporting clients and its partners in analyzing and optimizing better working environments that can boost wellbeing, productivity and cost efficiency. This review of observational data was prepared by Rapal Oy's Workplace team based on 2016 data collected through the use of its space utilization measurement tool Optimaze Measure, by permission of its end clients.

We hope you the reader will find the results and findings within this report useful, whether it is to find points of comparison or to make a case for conducting space utilization studies of your own.

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Rapal Oy
Panorama Tower
Hevosenkenkä 3
02600 Espoo
Finland

Tel. +358 9 6122 522
Fax. +358 9 6122 5289
info@rapal.fi
rapal.com | rapal.fi

Optimaze Measure
Maija Patjas
Director
maija.patjas@rapal.fi
+358 44 031 2256

Pontus Kihlman
Executive Consultant
pontus.kihlman@rapal.fi
+358 40 571 5356

Rainer Lund
Head of International Sales
rainer.lund@rapal.fi
+358 40 737 3925

Vilma Lukkarinen
Consultant
vilma.lukkarinen@rapal.fi
+358 45 847 1332