

Workplace Mobility

BY **CHRISTINE BARBER, ANDREW GARNAR-WORTZEL AND
TREV G. MORRIS**

Comparing business models of early adopters in traditional businesses with consulting firms.

Reposted with permission from *Corporate Real Estate Journal*, November 2010.

Technology has long been the catalyst for challenging traditional workplace practices, as its capabilities have the power to transform the way people live, work and communicate. Some companies recognised early on that technology would have a profound impact on their business models, productivity and cost structures, and they became the pioneers of mobile work practices. Heavily represented by the technology and consulting industries, whose business processes and work products made it easier to transition to mobile work, these early adopters still encountered the same cultural barriers faced by any company trying to implement a mobile work programme, regardless of industry. Today, mobility programmes are becoming more widespread, predominantly among finance, insurance and pharmaceutical companies, which are responding to a new business landscape that is driving the pursuit of mobile work. This is also fuelled by the availability of more sophisticated tools, technologies and processes that make it easier to identify real estate opportunities in relation to mobility, along with tools that can prepare an organisation for a mobile work programme. In this paper, the mobile work initiatives of hoteling pioneer Ernst & Young are compared with those of more traditional companies which represent a second wave of early adopters. It not only outlines an approach for successfully implementing a mobility programme, but also illustrates best current practices, and makes a business case for mobility that quantifies the benefits for both companies and employees alike.

BACKGROUND

In June 1992, Ernst & Young was the first accounting and consulting firm to shatter conventional notions about the office by implementing a revolutionary hoteling concept for its Chicago location. A workplace innovation galvanised by the

recognition that investments in technology were key to the firm's continued growth and success, hoteling made perfect sense. It was a logical reallocation of office space to support mobile professionals, many of whom worked at their clients' offices for 80–90 percent of the time, while eliminating the costs associated with underutilised real estate. Many firms closely followed Ernst & Young's lead with their own versions of mobile work, including the opening of IBM's 1993 non-territorial offices in New Jersey for sales, marketing and service staff, and AT&T's 'Telecommute Day' on 20th September, 1994, when 32,000 of its 126,000 employees worked from home, including then-Chairman, Robert Allen. By the late 1990s, all of the largest public accounting firms had embraced the hoteling concept and, as the year 2000 approached, many of the world's largest technology firms had distributed work programmes in place as well. Clearly, the early and most successful adopters of mobile work primarily came from the auditing, consulting and technology sectors. The past several years have yielded a second wave of more traditional companies, however, mostly from the finance, insurance and pharmaceutical industries, which are now looking at the benefits of mobile work from both a human capital and space savings perspective.

THE BUSINESS CASE

Today mobility is rapidly moving into the mainstream. An examination of prevailing factors, many of which led to the first wave, begins to suggest a point of no return. Reinforcing this view, a forecast released by research firm IDC indicates that the global mobile worker population is expected to increase from 919.4 million in 2008 to more than 1.19 billion in 2013, representing nearly 35 percent of the worldwide workforce.¹ Further, according to a recent study conducted by Nemertes Research, 35 percent of US companies currently have a mobility programme, 26 percent are developing one, and 15 percent have a mobility budget.² There appears to be a convergence of several major factors fueling the corporate appetite for mobility.

Technology

It is evident that much has changed over the past two decades. Technology, long recognised as a catalyst and enabler of mobile work, has come a long way since the painfully slow days of dial-up internet access. Characterised by speed, capacity, low-cost, portability and unparalleled connectivity, today's technology — ubiquitous broadband, personal digital assistants (PDAs), virtual private networks (VPNs) and voice over internet protocol (VoIP) — gives a whole new level of meaning to the catchphrase 'anytime, anywhere, anyplace'. As the largest percentage of the workforce is classified as 'knowledge workers', technology is unbinding time and task from place.

Human Capital

Among the biggest barriers to mobile work are fears that people working away from the office will be less productive, more difficult to manage and less likely to engage in the relationship building required to maintain corporate culture. The flip side of this argument is that mobile workers are more productive, mobility programmes help companies to attract and retain employees, and a mobile workforce can help to reduce healthcare costs. There is an abundance of research on mobile work that serves to support both views, creating a conundrum for decision makers looking to develop mobility programmes for their companies. In order to answer the question about whether mobile work has a positive or negative impact on companies and the workforce, two researchers from Pennsylvania State University conducted a cumulative test of quantitative findings from 46 studies that examined this issue. The findings definitively show that mobile work has a clear upside in terms of its ability to mediate work–family conflict, reduce stress, reduce turnover, and improve job satisfaction and performance.³ In fact, a recent study conducted by the Georgia Institute of Technology showed that 97 percent of workers and 87 percent of employers reported increases in productivity,⁴ while research from the Batton Institute found that telework can boost worker productivity by 10–50 percent for individual businesses because of a reduction in employee absences and time lost to traffic delays.⁵

Economics

From a real estate point of view, the most compelling argument for mobile work is that it allows companies to better utilise office space and reduce real estate and operating expenses. Not surprisingly, the economic downturn has placed tremendous pressure on corporate real estate to reduce costs, and renewed interest in mobile work may be one of the symptoms. Gensler's experience indicates that, on average, 55 percent of office space is underutilised, meaning that the spaces are empty and unused for more than half the time. Project work also shows that companies implementing mobility programmes can realise real estate cost savings of anywhere between 20–45 percent year over year, depending upon the level of mobility achieved and the subsequent space reduction associated with the programme. This finding is significant, considering that real estate is often the second largest operating expense, exceeded only by a company's investment in people.

Sustainability

Over the past decade, growing awareness and concern about the environment have placed increasing emphasis on reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Numerous

studies have been conducted to explore the impact of a mobility programme on energy use and carbon offsets in relation to a company's overall real estate footprint. One study conducted in the USA suggests that, if the current mobile trend continues over the next ten years, mobile work will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 247.7 million tons due to less driving, 28.1 million tons due to reduced office construction and 312.4 million tons because of energy saved by businesses.⁶ In light of these potential benefits, it is expected that organisations will continue to focus intensely on the use of corporate assets to shed those they do not require, forcing many to adopt more distributed models for how and where people work in order to reduce their overall environmental footprint.

Business Continuity and Agility

Physical disasters — from bad weather to fires, natural disasters and terrorism — are less likely to disable businesses that have a mobile capability in place, as remote access allows workers to do their jobs from any location, including a home office. In addition, businesses report that they are able to deploy remote staff easily and immediately when business conditions create bottlenecks in service or project delivery.

Global Competition

Considering the savings, the organisational benefits and the potential contributions to the elimination of greenhouse gasses, it becomes clear that if competitors have developed a mobility programme when one's company has not, then it will become increasingly difficult to compete from a cost, flexibility, human capital and sustainability perspective. In fact, many companies have stated that one way to save jobs is to reduce real estate costs, and a mobile work programme that is aligned with the overall business strategy of the company can have a substantial impact on achieving this goal.

DEFINING MOBILE WORK

There are widely varying definitions of mobile work. Remote work, virtual work, telework and telecommuting are just a sample of the terms used to express mobility. To simplify matters, all these terms have at least one thing in common: employees are performing tasks normally done at an assigned 'desk' at a location other than that desk. Mobility, in the broadest sense, implies a substitution of place. That 'other' place can be at home, at a remote work centre, in a client's office, at the airport, or in any number of other 'third place' locations, even in alternative settings at the employee's primary place of work. To go beyond confusing definitions and to try to demystify matters, there are really only a handful of critical factors that need to be understood in order to determine the

level and nature of the mobile work that is occurring within an organisation, a department, or among a group of employees. An analysis of these patterns will help to determine whether there is a potential impact on occupancy:

- *Time and frequency:* How are people spending their time at the office? How frequently and for how long do they spend time away from their 'desk'? How often and when are they in the office?
- *Activity and place:* When in the office, what types of work are people doing and where are they doing it? What types of tools are they using?

While distilling mobility patterns to these primary factors does simplify matters, it is also important to understand that these patterns are complex and need to be carefully assessed if the mobile programme is to be successful and sustainable. Mobility should not be about squeezing as many people into the space as possible. Rather, it should conform to and support an individual's requirements for physical accommodation in ways that will help them to be effective and productive.

WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATION

Once a determination is made concerning how and how often people are using office space, patterns can be translated into a couple of major workplace strategies designed to support the type and level of mobile work occurring. Essentially, these involve either eliminating the user's dedicated space entirely (making that space available to several workers on an as-needed basis) or reducing the amount of space dedicated to a single user. Some of the more common workplace responses to eliminating dedicated space include the following.

Hoteling

As the name implies, hoteling involves the use of non-dedicated offices or workstations that are reserved on an as-needed basis by employees who primarily work off-site. Hoteling offices are often associated with a high level of amenity, such as the availability of a concierge charged with assisting mobile staff to set up their offices upon arrival and/or provide logistical support.

Free address

Workers do not have a dedicated desk. When they are in a company location, they are free to choose from a variety of work settings on a first-come/first-served basis. Based upon scale, or the number of seats involved, seat selection may be totally open or zoned to create a sense of belonging and provide access to shared materials.

Satellite Offices or Remote Work Centres

These offices often serve as adjuncts to large, centralised facilities that can be used by field staff or workers who live nearby. It is a place where staff can hold meetings, collect mail and messages, or do a few hours of desk work.

Shared Desks

More than one employee is assigned to the same desk and use is negotiated among the employees.

THE PIONEERS — THE EVOLUTION OF HOTELING AT ERNST & YOUNG

Background

Back in 1995, hoteling at Ernst & Young was still rough around the edges and needed to be fine-tuned. One of the biggest challenges was that the technology and tools to support mobile work were still being developed. In today's world, people take laptops for granted, as well as mobile phones, smart phones, text messaging, instant messaging and all the applications available through the internet, not to mention high-speed connections. The strategy at Ernst & Young was to provide a more efficient and productive workplace, which, in turn, would allow a more aggressive investment in emerging technologies, as it was known that these investments would help professional staff better serve their clients. Most of the space within the workplace is not client facing, so while real estate is viewed as a tool to support people, it does not help the firm solve client problems. By continuing to develop the hoteling model, Ernst & Young was able to improve efficiency, which allowed it to reduce the number of square feet occupied, thus benefiting the firm's cost structure.

THE OFFICE MODEL TODAY

In the beginning, the adoption of hoteling was inconsistent. The 1992 Chicago project, and a project that followed shortly thereafter in Dallas, were precursors to the hoteling model in place today. In Chicago, Ernst & Young had more private offices than were needed and, in Dallas, the office design focused on supporting heads-down work, so the majority of the workspaces were private offices. The firm learned a great deal from these two projects, and leveraged them to develop the more open, collaborative model in use today. The current office model really came out of a project conducted in Los Angeles during the 1997–99 timeframe. It was a significant office for the firm, comprising over 14,000m² (150,000 square feet) of space, and the open model was a much needed innovation. Unlike Chicago and Dallas, staff in Los Angeles work in a low-panel desking system that allows lots of access to natural light and supports more communication and collaboration, making the work environment much more vibrant.

The hoteling concept for Ernst & Young is really centred on the best utilisation of space. Typically, 16.7m² (180 square feet) per seat are planned throughout the entire space but that does not count seats provided in meeting spaces. Hoteling ratios drive that figure down to around 11m² (120 square feet) per person. The firm has four primary service lines, each with the same workplace standard. For example, some assurance and advisory groups spend a great deal of time at a client site, and can hotel at a ratio of ten to one. In contrast, there are individuals who require a dedicated space, but when they are out of the office, travelling or on holiday, their space becomes part of the pool of hoteling spaces.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Communicate and Educate

Hoteling initially met with tremendous resistance, but over the years it has gained popularity. A key factor in the success of the programme was that it was supported at the most senior levels of the firm. The employee communication strategy was also critical in the early stages. It was important to educate people about the transition that was taking place and what they could expect as part of the move. Even though the initial change was difficult, it has allowed the firm to do what it is doing today. It is not easy being a pioneer — there is no way to benchmark what is being done, or compare practices with those of other firms. Today, hoteling practices are much more acceptable and widespread, so comparative data are readily available.

Looking back, the technologies that were available in the early years were cumbersome at best. Cellphone dependency was in its infancy, while laptop use was limited to internet connections outside the office made through dial-up. This meant that the communications plan had to be really specific about the changes staff would encounter in this new environment. One technique that was very successful was a 'day in the life' illustration of what a typical workday would be like from start to finish. This helped employees understand what to expect and how things would work when they moved into their new environment.

Despite all the success, resistance is sometimes encountered at the individual level, which is often based upon reduced interaction between managers and their staff members. The key here is that performance management has continued to evolve, and the reliance on having to see someone consistently in order to judge their performance effectively has gone by the wayside. Education has provided a path to successfully manage a mobile workforce, so professionals are measured on results, not by how often they are seen in the office.

Real estate Organisation

Back in 1995, Ernst & Young's real estate decisions were decentralised and each office was managed separately with every location using a different design firm. Today, it is a more mature real estate organisation in the Americas with standards, a workplace play book, metrics, budgets and consistent design support. The firm has an operating committee that helps to review the feedback gathered from the local offices following project implementation. This feedback is gathered using a host of methods including pre- and post-occupancy surveys and focus groups.

Another important factor is that over time the firm has developed a strong and experienced real estate team, which has been proactive about providing strategic advice and a high level of service, within individual geographics. They have developed strong relationships with the managing partners and are positioned as trusted advisory real estate resources. Management is provided with information and recommendations throughout the year — not just at the time of relocation or space renovation — so when the time comes for them to make decisions about space, they already understand the concept. With a reliance on key metrics and utilisation statistics, the team typically lets the numbers do the talking.

Infrastructure

Today, space standards are very similar. Staff can travel from location to location, and make reservations online at anytime and from anywhere for any location throughout the USA or in other Ernst & Young hoteling offices around the world. Telephone numbers are easily transferred, meeting facilities are available and the components and fit-out of the offices are more uniform and standardised. These consistencies did not exist in the 1990s, and they make it easier for employees to navigate the workplace. It is all about investing in people and giving them the tools and technology they need to perform at their highest level.

Cultural Cohesion

The firm supports a host of educational and training activities that include cultural orientation as well as professional training programmes. These take place in the firm's offices, giving staff an opportunity to come in and spend time with their colleagues face-to-face. While some firms have a 'pull strategy', meaning they want their employees to stay at the office as much as possible, Ernst & Young has a push/pull workplace strategy that supports the work style of the firm, its clients and its people. The firm pushes staff out to spend time with clients, and pulls them back in to collaborate, to learn and to get mentored before pushing them back out again to support clients. When

people are pulled in, the firm wants to offer them the best possible workplace for collaboration, mentoring, learning and meeting, in a convenient location close to transportation and the firm's clients.

Sustainability

Sustainability is clearly a part of Ernst & Young's business strategy today and its hoteling programme fits squarely within its sustainability goals. The firm continues to reduce its carbon footprint by reducing the amount of real estate occupied. Although Ernst & Young has a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) strategy, space reduction has proved even more effective than LEED certification. At its office locations, the firm works on reducing energy consumption by retrofitting lighting and installing dimmers, and is also experimenting with solar panels at its data centre locations. The goal is to be a good corporate citizen and hoteling aligns with this goal. Clients are always eager to learn more about the sustainability programme and, when competing for young talent, they want to understand this sustainability platform too.

BENEFITS OF HOTELING

Hoteling makes sense for the firm on many different levels, from productivity to work-life balance to sustainability. The firm views the office as a tool, not an entitlement. Experience shows that hoteling provides a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining the best and the brightest talent. Young employees joining the firm today place greater emphasis on other aspects of their work than on the type of office they get — client opportunities, the quality of work product, the ability to rise in the ranks and having the best technologies available to better serve clients are among the most important. The nature of the work is people-focused, and professionals entering the workforce today are very comfortable with the tools and technologies that help them to communicate. Young workers report that they really enjoy and appreciate the freedom and latitude that hoteling affords them. The firm is not building boats or cars, it is all about people. Work-life balance not only enhances employees' lives, but the firm benefits as well. In fact, for many consecutive years, Ernst & Young has been named one of Fortune magazine's '100 Best Companies to Work For'.

EVOLUTION CONTINUES

Ernst & Young continues to evolve its hoteling model, and just recently team members spent time visiting technology firms on the US West Coast to understand the latest and greatest tools and how they will influence space utilisation. If Ernst & Young is going to be a forward-looking firm, it needs to know what tools are coming online to determine how they might impact space

and how they might make employees more productive. The firm has reached a point where it has a good understanding of space utilisation. Mobility is now recognised as more of an art than a science. A combination of tools is used to provide a good picture of occupancy. This includes analysing and comparing telephone data — the data connections that show when people log in or begin to use a telephone — with data from badge readers. Together, these tools have shown that there is still capacity within the system, with an 80 percent utilisation rate as the goal. The good news is that the numbers have improved. Back in 1995, Ernst & Young occupied space within the 23m² (250 square feet) per person range, but today it is at the low end of 9m² (100 square feet).

It also has been recognised that not every Ernst & Young office throughout the world has a culture that can adjust to a hoteling strategy. The goal of hoteling is not to squeeze as many people as possible into the space, and it is certainly not a one size fits all approach. While common metrics are used by other offices for comparison purposes, it is not uncommon for offices outside the USA to conform to the firm's efficiency standards without having to hotel. The key is to create an office environment that reflects local culture and practice. The firm remains sensitive to this and considers these factors when making workplace decisions. At the end of the day, it is about giving people the tools they need to be productive, happy and effective at work wherever they sit in the world.

THE SECOND WAVE — AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PROJECTS AT TRADITIONAL COMPANIES

The Nature of Mobility Today

To compare and contrast the mobility practices of the early adopters with those of more traditional businesses, Gensler conducted an assessment of its work with consulting and auditing firms and compared outcomes and processes with mobility practices in more traditional businesses, predominantly finance, insurance and pharmaceutical industries. The analysis showed that several significant changes have taken place in work patterns that facilitate the transition to mobile work by businesses that historically have relied on a one-to-one desk to worker ratio.

First, many of the initiatives today are responding to work patterns that are characterised by increased collaboration and a high level of workplace mobility enabled by technology. Second, as a result of these new work patterns, the types of workers who qualify for mobility programmes are much broader. Mobility is no longer the exclusive domain of consultants, auditors, sales and service personnel who spend most of their time away from the office at a client site. Today's mobile workers

represent a range of roles including professionals, researchers, management, administrative and operational functions, as well as human resources, marketing and finance.

Lastly, while many of the pioneers were aligning occupancy patterns with those who mostly worked away from the office, companies today (including the pioneers) are able to capitalise on the mobility patterns of workers who traditionally would come into the office every day. Real estate is now able to translate the more subtle patterns of mobility, such as 'campus' or 'on-site' mobility, where workers may be travelling within a cluster of buildings as well as those who simply spend a significant amount of time away from the desk, into cost savings for their organisations. These subtle patterns can be leveraged, in large part, because of the technologies and measurement tools available today that help to better align work with occupancy patterns.

New Objectives

While the economic downturn has placed increased pressure on real estate to reduce costs, making mobility programmes attractive, it is also the case that more companies are coming to terms with the fact that technology has blurred the distinction between work life and personal life. Today, many workers are available 24/7; employees take work on holiday, they respond to e-mails at all hours of the day and night and use connectivity to blend in personal activities that otherwise would have been missed. This extends the workday well beyond the ordinary hours of operation. This behaviour is not unique to younger employees and transcends generations. The second wave of mobility is partially an acknowledgment of this new business dynamic that companies can translate into business benefits. Companies not only recognise that mobility can deliver greater work-life balance to their employees, but they also acknowledge that mobile programmes help them to recruit and retain the best and the brightest, and help employees to be more effective and productive at their jobs.

Workplace Accommodation

In contrast to the mobility programmes of the early adopters, many companies today want to liberate themselves from the one-to-one ratio of desk to worker while still encouraging employees to come to the office frequently to maintain their connection to the culture and to collaborate with coworkers. While one of the main goals of mobility is to reduce real estate costs (ie reduce wasted space due to improved utilisation), there is another underlying motivation for shifting workers' expectations about using space. Specifically, companies are changing the physical work environment to signal and encourage a different kind of work behaviour, one that focuses

on higher levels of collaboration and interaction with colleagues and relies on management by objective rather than posture.

As a result, the ratios of desk to worker tend to be modest, with ratios ranging from 1.2:1 to 3:1 (see Table 1). While five people sharing four desks seems to be the low end, the yield from the range of ratios is typically significant enough to result in a meaningful reduction of real estate while still effectively supporting staff requirements.

In addition, firms are discovering that there is a tremendous range of mobility that is appropriate for different individuals, functions, groups and departments within the company. For example, there may be auditors or sales personnel who function more like consultants and spend significant time outside the office, or various groups within the organisation that can work at home full time. There also may be different solutions and higher ratios for individuals who are more mobile within the company or who work from multiple company locations.

It is also important to acknowledge that for some corporate staff mobility just may not be practical, depending upon their role, function and tasks. In order to combat the tension between mobile and non-mobile workers, many companies celebrate mobility in a way that engenders ownership of the entire office space by those who do not have a dedicated desk at the office. Accommodation typically incorporates more collaborative, social and quiet zones that are available to both mobile and non-mobile workers, signalling a distinct separation between ownership and use.

SUCCESS FACTORS

While some of the biggest differences between the mobility programmes of the pioneers and the traditional businesses embracing mobility today revolve around staff roles and desk to worker ratios, there is a great deal of similarity across factors that make a mobility programme successful and sustainable. Chief among these are the following.

Management education

The biggest factor in the success of mobile work is manager education. If managers interact well with mobile workers, rather than thinking of them as individuals who have ‘opted out’, mobility can be a very satisfying experience for the manager, the mobile worker and in-office staff.

Identifying the Right Candidates

It is important to keep in mind that not all workers can or should be mobile. The key to a successful programme is to identify the best candidates and then determine whether their work patterns can be appropriately translated into real estate accommodation.

Behavioural protocols

Mobile workplaces typically incorporate a variety of spaces that are available to all staff. How these spaces should be used is often not understood by staff. Therefore it is important to educate employees about the behavioural protocols for using each type of space — usually a mix of collaborative, social and quiet zones — that have been developed to reinforce various types of work behaviour.

Table 1: Mobility Metrics by Industry

Industry	Useable square feet (usf)	Seat per person target
Insurance firm	135-165 usf/per seat	1.4:1
Pharmaceutical firm	175-185 usf/per seat	1.2:1
Financial firm (IT & support)	100-150 usf/per seat	1.2:1
Public accounting	120 usf/per seat	6:1-10:1

Note: Leverage ratios vary widely across industries. This table shows specific examples of mobility targets for individual companies across several industries, illustrating the range of useable square feet per seat and seat per person target ratios. Note the high ratio of seat per person in accounting, which significantly contrasts with mobility ratios for more traditional businesses.

Collaborating Across Disciplines

The development of a successful programme requires a collaborative partnership among real estate and other support functions including human resources, technology and finance. For example, most large companies have some form of human resources policy that allows employees to request work-at-home privileges based on need. From a human resources perspective, this makes sense as it helps to attract and retain the best and the brightest, and contributes to work-life balance, productivity and health benefits. Human resources, however, does not automatically translate flexible work programmes into real estate cost savings; therefore, real estate has an enormous opportunity to bridge this gap through close collaboration with the human resources and information technology departments, which are important players in the success of a mobility programme.

Summary

Clients from traditional businesses are increasingly requesting an exploration and analysis of the types of functions that might be appropriate for mobile work within their organisations. As a result, mobility within traditional businesses is expected to grow. While a major goal is to reduce space, real estate professionals are quickly discovering that mobility programmes contribute to other organisational objectives and they now have the tools and processes to make a better business case as well as successfully execute mobile programmes for their companies.

IMPLEMENTATION — GETTING STARTED

In general, there are some extremely sophisticated tools and processes available today that can assist real estate and workplace decision makers to launch mobility projects and programmes successfully. While this list can be extensive, a handful of steps, processes and tools are essential. These will build support for the programme at the most senior levels of the organisation, help in selecting the right programme candidates and guide the development of a programme that either aligns with an existing level of mobility or transitions a group to the desired level. The most successful strategies consider diverse viewpoints and build buy-in from all levels in the organisation.

Educate Leadership

As with any change initiative, the first step is to educate senior leadership in order to gain their support for the programme. Unlike the challenges faced by the pioneers, there is ample research, benchmarking and best practice information available on companies from a host of industries that have successfully

transitioned to mobile work practices. Building a successful mobility programme requires taking the long-term view. While cost reductions are likely to make a compelling argument, it may be necessary to plan for increased investments in technology or additional support services during the start-up phases. It is also important not to lose sight of the 'softer' benefits to the organisation that revolve around human capital, sustainability and productivity. Combining these perspectives can make a powerful business case.

Risk Assessment

Collaborate with other corporate disciplines in the organisation, such as human resources, health and safety, tax and legal, and information technology. It is important to develop an understanding of any policy, security or procedural complexities that may be involved in launching a mobile work programme. If these departments are not familiar with mobile work practices, then connect with the innovators in the real estate network who have successfully marshalled a mobility programme within their organisation.

Assess Organisational Readiness

A readiness assessment is particularly important when the mobility programme involves the elimination of dedicated workspaces, but it will also facilitate any workplace strategy intended to reduce occupancy to better align with space utilisation. Despite all the benefits that have been quantified and the technologies available to facilitate connectivity and communication, businesses report that the biggest challenges to implementing mobile work revolve around people factors. Obstacles include resistance to and fear of change, management concerns about the effects of limited oversight and concerns about a breakdown in corporate culture. The more comprehensive readiness tools assess management and staff attitudes towards mobile work and determine how space is currently being used and occupied. The output can help the real estate organisation identify those groups that are the best candidates for a mobility programme.

Implement a Pilot Programme

Once the readiness of a group is established, it is generally prudent to test the waters by implementing a pilot programme before planning a full-scale mobility initiative. Good first candidates are groups, individuals and/or departments whose participation in a mobility programme would be likely to increase their individual performance. The types of employees who might perform well can be drawn from a wide range of disciplines, including field sales, consulting and service staff, as well as individuals whose productivity is heavily dependent

on focused work, such as analysts, researchers, writers, administrators and computer programmers. Tools that will help to guide the development of the pilot programme include:

- **Occupancy analysis:** An analysis of space utilisation and occupancy examines how often and how effectively existing space is being used. This information can determine best use of current space, inform decisions about proposed space or determine the amount of space required overall to meet the organisation's utilisation goals. There are a host of techniques available to analyse occupancy and space usage. Computer modelling techniques informed by observational analysis comprise one way to determine how and how often space is used. Other technology-based tools collect data using occupancy detection hardware such as radio frequency tracking systems, motion sensors or tracking badge usage and the frequency and duration of data and telephone connections.
- **Employee surveys:** Employee surveys are excellent tools to gain an understanding about how people work, where they are working and how effectively the space is supporting their needs. Surveys are also a means of engaging employees in efforts to change the work environment. A good technique for maximising the results of surveys is to cross-reference survey results with the findings from other tools and techniques being used, such as space utilisation tools or employee focus groups. By doing this, the information that develops will provide deeper insights and result in better-informed decision making. In addition to informing decisions upfront, employee surveys based upon pre and post occupancy analysis can be used to monitor and track the success of the mobility programme, as well as to alert the real estate or workplace team about problem areas that need to be addressed.
- **Learning and communication:** It is critically important to develop a learning and communications programme for managers and staff who will take part in the mobility programme. Employees need to be educated about what to expect and guided on how to navigate the changed environment. Training programmes are available to give management the guidance and tools they need to manage a remote worker, while staff can benefit from learning techniques that will make them better employees, communicators and team members, despite physical or geographical separation.

CONCLUSION

Business has been redefined in the past two decades, bringing some of the old models, methods and practices into question. The most notable changes revolve around technological innovation, shifting demographics, globalisation and sustainability, and all of these issues directly influence effective real estate and workplace decisions. Companies embracing mobile work today are keenly aware of this new business landscape and are building on the successes of the early adopters; however, while the landscape has changed, the same methodologies and principles for implementing a mobile work programme apply today, just as they did nearly two decades ago. The good news is that some of the difficulties encountered by the pioneers have given way to enhanced technological capabilities that easily support mobile work, while the availability of more sophisticated tools to capture work and occupancy patterns can result in a powerful business case. It also must be recognised that technology has enabled new ways of working and communicating, resulting in higher levels of worker mobility both inside and outside the office. This changing work behaviour, coupled with the expectations of new entrants to the workforce, provide good indications that mobility will continue to move into the mainstream and become commonplace practice among all types of businesses.

Notes:

- ¹ Ryan, S. (2009) 'Worldwide mobile worker population 2009–2013 forecast', available at: <http://www.idc.com/research/viewdocsynopsis.jsp?containerId=221309§ionId=null&elementId=null&pageType=SYNOPSIS> (accessed 1st May, 2010).
- ² Jude, M. (2008) 'Nemertes benchmark: Unified communications and collaboration — Mobility and business transformation', available at: http://www.nemertes.com/benchmarks/nemertes_benchmark_unified_communications_and_collaboration_mobility_and_business_transformation_0 (accessed 1st June, 2009).
- ³ Gajendran, R. S. and Harrison, D. A. (2007) 'The good, the bad, and the unknown about telecommuting: Metaanalysis of psychological mediators and individual consequences', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 92, No. 6, pp. 1524–1541.
- ⁴ Moon, N. (2007) 'Private sector telework and its implications for economic development: Results of case survey 26 and policy assessment', available at: www.cherry.gatech.edu/stip/intern-2007/Telecommuting-STIP-Internship-2007-Report.pdf (accessed 1st November, 2008).

⁵ Allenby, B. and Roitz, J. (2003) 'Implementing the knowledge economy: The theory and practice of telework', working paper, Batten Institute Center of Excellence at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

⁶ Lister, K. (2010) 'Workshifting benefits: The bottom line', available at: <http://www.workshifting.com/downloads/downloads/Workshifting%20Benefits-The%20Bottom%20Line.pdf> (accessed 1st May, 2010).

Christine Barber is Director of Research at Gensler, responsible for firm-wide research initiatives which are designed to deliver strategic insight to clients and provide a larger context for design direction. Her expertise spans a broad range of topics including business, organisational and workplace trends. Recent research projects focus on design and business performance, trends and issues in global real estate portfolio management, and mobile workplace practices. Christine is a published writer and has lectured at corporations, universities and business associations in North America, Europe and Asia. She holds a degree in business from Baruch College, City University of New York, and studied organisational development and the social sciences at Columbia University. Contact her at christine_barber@gensler.com or +1 212.484.2483.

Andrew Garnar-Wortzel is Principal, Consulting Practice Area Leader with Gensler in New York City and a leader of Gensler's firmwide consulting practice. He specialises in real estate and facilities strategy, workplace strategy, information solutions for real estate management, change management and strategic communications. Recent projects have involved developing design guidelines for high-performance work environments on a portfolio scale, mergers and acquisitions related portfolio optimisation and strategies for mobile work. Andrew works with companies across many industries including financial, pharmaceutical, publishing, advertising, technology and insurance. He graduated from Fashion Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in interior design. Contact him at andrew_garnar-wortzel@gensler.com or +1.212.492.1438.

Trex Morris is the Global Real Estate Services Leader for Ernst & Young. A seasoned executive with more than a decade of experience in the planning and implementation of hoteling strategies, Trex joined the firm as the Americas Real Estate Director in 1995 from IBM, a company that was working on its own remote work strategies at that time. Compelled by the innovation taking place at Ernst & Young, Trex left IBM to continue developing the hoteling strategy that had begun with Ernst & Young's Chicago office in 1992. Today, all the firm's offices in the Americas utilise alternative workplace strategies where hoteling is the cornerstone. Trex is now focused on leveraging these similar strategies in other Ernst & Young offices around the world. Contact him at trex.morris@ey.com or +1 404.817.5482.