

How to Make Workplace Mobility Work for You

How does mobility factor into an organization's real estate or workplace strategy within the context of increasingly collaborative work processes, an emphasis on positive workplace experiences, and new definitions of engagement and productivity? It all starts with creating your own definition of what mobility means that is aligned with the organization's critical business goals, work processes, and culture.

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IN THIS WHITEPAPER:

While mobility can take many forms, we have established a reliable approach to defining and designing a mobility strategy that will effectively support your organization's work processes, people, and culture.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

How to define and quantify mobility for your organization

The three layers of impact for any mobility program

The people, technology, and place considerations associated with mobility

Actions to avoid when implementing a mobility program



So, what do we mean by 'mobility'?

PROOF POINT

According to a 2016 SHRM survey, 60% of US companies let employees work remotely or telecommute, up threefold from 1990.

Mobility is often used (at least in the US) as a catch phrase for different programs developed to manage or accommodate telework, telecommuting, hoteling, free address, flexible seating, etc. It includes external mobility – working at different locations outside the office – and internal mobility – moving between the range of individual and collaborative work settings in the office.

When technology advances first enabled mobility, many organizations seized the opportunity to send workers home, viewing this primarily as a way to reduce real estate costs. Today, we know that in order to be effective, a mobility strategy must provide balanced support for effective work, an organization's culture and business goals, as well as making the workplace inherently more adaptable to change.

Technology is the key enabler for mobility in the workplace. Cell phones, laptops, tablets, wireless networks, and web meeting tools all make working anywhere, anytime the reality of work today. These same technologies influence our expectations about work: if we have the right tools, we all expect to have the flexibility to choose where and when we can do our best work.

So, where is everyone?

Occupancy and utilization studies completed over the years by multiple organizations and their workplace consultants have consistently found that knowledge workers are at their desk an average of 35-45% of the time¹. These findings suggest that work is no longer happening primarily at one's desk.

So, where is everyone? Technologies give users the ability to choose where they work – and often it's not at their desk. It's the huddle room, the scrum space, or the café. Or they choose to work outside the office with a client, or closer to home. Regardless of where they are getting their work done, their organization will need to 'formalize' what is currently taking place and ensure their employees have the right tools, resources, knowledge, and skills to be fully engaged and effective regardless of the place they work.

PROOF POINT

A reliable rule of thumb is with an average utilization of 45%, a DSR of 1.5:1 can readily be implemented

THE MANY FLAVORS OF MOBILITY

- **Flexible Scheduling:** *Employees come and go as needed*
- **Telework:** *Employees work from home, connected to the work by mobile technologies*
- **Remote Work:** *Employees work anywhere, coming to the office as needed*
- **Desk Sharing:** *Desks are shared by multiple employees, and not assigned to an individual*
- **Free Address:** *A form of desk sharing, where desks are available on a first come, first served basis*
- **Hoteling:** *A form of desk sharing where individual workspaces may be reserved in advance for a specific date and time*

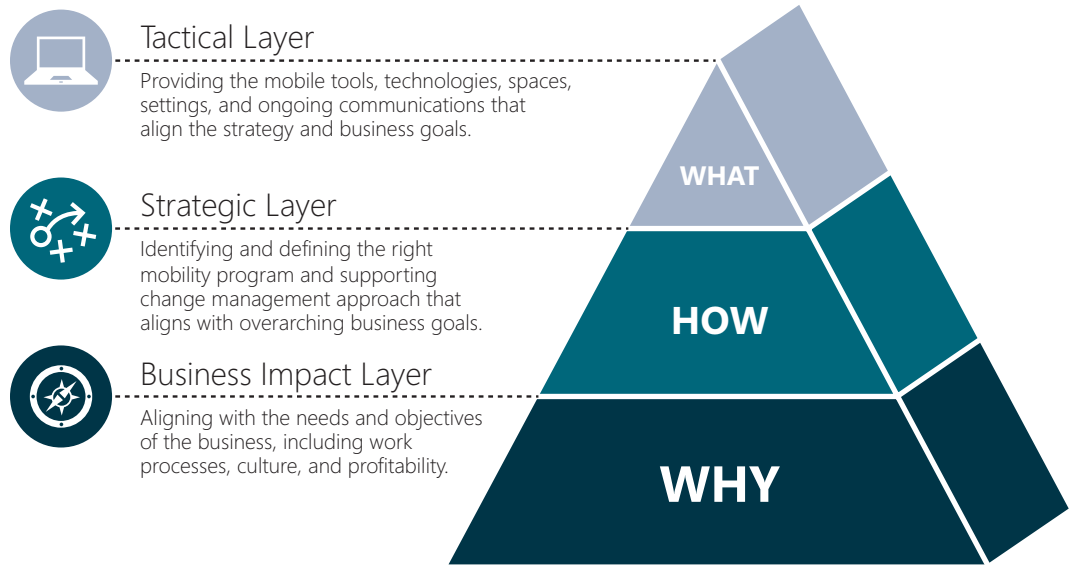
The three layers of impact

As mobility can take many forms, we see there are three key layers of impact to consider when defining a mobility program. Simply stated, it's the why, the how, and the what.

The first step is to define the why. Why change now? What is the larger context of this change? By clearly articulating the why, we begin to define the organizational imperative for mobility, and ensure that any change supports business effectiveness, is aligned with your culture, drives efficiency, and supports agility.

**FIGURE 1:
MOBILITY PYRAMID**

An effective, flexible mobility program creates alignment across three layers of impact: the business, the strategy, and the tactics.



The second step is to define the how, or the strategy. Workplace strategy always involves assessing and defining the context of the change – what are the constraints and opportunities for your people, technology, and place? Has a strategy like this been tried before, maybe without too much success? Is your organization's culture one in which "if you are not at your desk you are not working?" What training is available? Does your organization have the right tools, technology, and security to support mobile workers? Does your current workspace provide the right balance of solo, team, and community spaces?

When understanding the context for the mobility program, it is advisable to identify and measure your workforce's current levels of mobility and mobility patterns. For example, if individual workspaces are only utilized 45% of the time and 55% of the time your employees are somewhere else, you need to better understand where these employees are working, their functions, and activities they complete away from the desk. Understanding who is mobile, and how they function is important to defining your mobility strategy's requirements. There are numerous ways to compile this data, including observations, badge-in data, occupancy sensors, Bluetooth Low Energy beacon monitoring, and triangulated wireless access.

To define the data that is required, first identify the data that is readily available. Then define the additional data required to help your team better understand your organization's work processes and activities. Once you have identified the data that is still needed, then you can determine the collection tools and processes you'll deploy. You can use Allsteel's Mobility Assessment Tool at the end of this whitepaper to help determine what data is required and the most effective tools for collecting it.

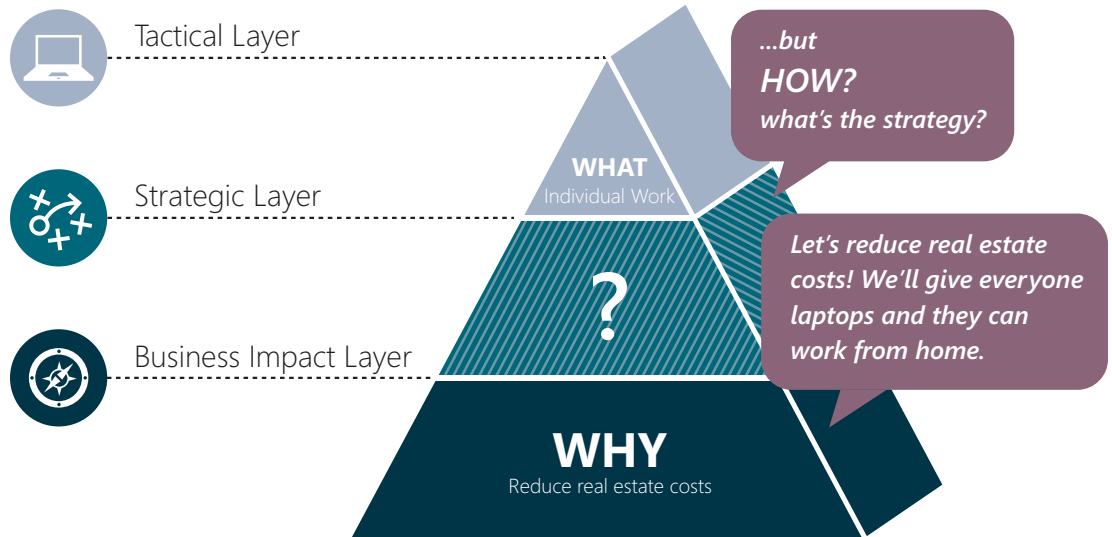
The final step is that what – the tactical impact layer. Only once the why and the how have been defined, do we move on to the specific technologies, tools, space types, settings, policies and communications that build on the business and strategy of the mobility program.

FAILURE MODE: BYPASSING THE MOBILITY PYRAMID

Too often, organizations fail to build a solid foundation through the three layers of the mobility pyramid. Many organizations see a mobility program primarily as a way to reduce real estate costs (the why) and jump to the conclusion of giving everyone a laptop and phone to work from home (the what). Without an informed strategy and knowledge of how work is happening, pushing workers out of the office may result in less-than-ideal work behaviors and diminished performance.

**FIGURE 2:
MOBILITY WITHOUT
A STRATEGY**

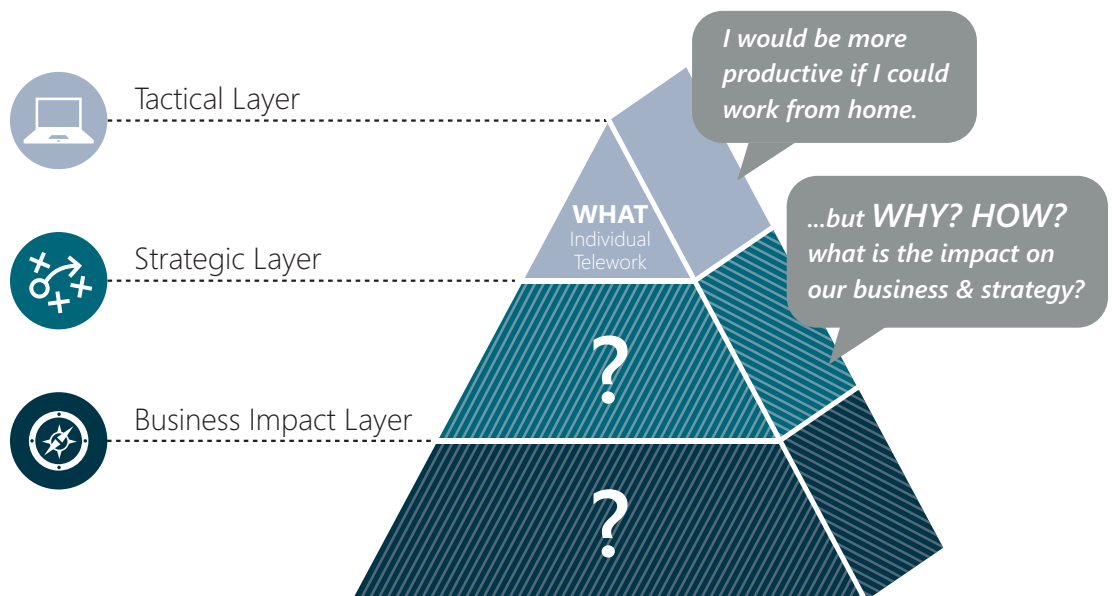
An effective, flexible mobility strategy creates alignment across three layers of impact: the business, the strategy, and the tactics.



Alternatively, we also see many organizations driven to explore mobility programs as a way to provide an employee benefit. As employees' expectations of flexibility and mobility increase, companies are pressured to respond to this demand at an organizational level – or be left behind. While listening to employees is always recommended, the organization needs to understand the impact this strategy will have on the business, as well as the strategy. Without it, the mobility program has no support to stand on.

**FIGURE 3:
EMPLOYEE MOBILITY
WITHOUT BUSINESS
SUPPORT**

Common failure modes also occur when employees are given mobile tools, but no underlying business or strategic support.



PROOF POINT

The number of people in the US working from home at least 1 day a week has increased 115% between 2005 and 2015. (GWA, 2017)

FAILURE MODE: EVERYONE CAN WORK REMOTELY

While technology gives everyone the ability to be mobile, not every individual or job will be effective in a remote out-of-office setting. Some individuals' work styles require the structure of going to the office to be truly effective in their job. It's not that they are bad employees, it's just that activities outside work – children, TV, chores – can be too distracting. Likewise, jobs that require continuous collaboration, or access to unique tools and technology that are only available in the office won't be as effective in a mobile or remote setting.

A strategy that mandates mobility, such as a mandatory three days per week working from home, can be both disruptive to the individual and have a negative impact on employee engagement and productivity. A strategy built with a clear understanding of different work processes and workstyles will be more effective, continue to support engagement, and contribute to a positive workplace experience.

FAILURE MODE: OLD MANAGEMENT STYLES IN A NEW WORKPLACE SETTING

Often, managers are not provided training on how to effectively manage people – they are simply promoted because they were a good individual contributor. As a result, they manage their teams as best they can, often based on how they were managed. Traditional management styles equate presence in the workplace or at one's desk with productivity, and absence with slacking off. Implementing a mobility strategy completely changes the parameters for managing a team. Managers resistance to these new ways of working and managing are often framed with statements like, "If employees are not in the office or at their desk, how can they be managed?" or, "If I can't see them, how will I know they are working?"



*Research shows that **communication and trust** are key elements to effectively managing a virtual team. Specific communication skills training for both managers and their teams will improve the management, social cohesion, and effectiveness of the team.*

Training in virtual management typically has two components:

- 1. Remote collaboration tools:** Training to use mobile technologies and tools, like Go-To-Meeting or Skype for collaboration, SharePoint or RealTimeBoard for document sharing.
- 2. Remote communication skills:** Training is required to establish best practices and protocols for communication (including how often to check-in with the office) and managing virtual meetings. Applying these skills will ensure a virtual team and their manager will continue to be effective in their jobs.²

Building an effective, flexible mobility strategy

A mobility strategy is one component of a broader adaptive workplace strategy. And like the broader strategy, there is not a one-size-fits-all mobility strategy. As such, it is essential that your program be designed to support your organization's work processes, business goals, and culture, and not compromise the performance of individuals or teams by making it harder to establish rapport, build trust, and freely exchange information³. Saving real estate costs will NOT compensate for adversely affecting productivity. An organization can also use their mobility strategy to increase their portfolio's adaptability to changing work requirements and technology advancements.

² Jan Johnson and Karen Plum. 'The Challenge of Virtual Teams', 2018.

³ Jan Johnson, Karen Plum, and Andrew Mawson. "What Really Matters for Knowledge Worker Performance."

As a colleague so brilliantly stated, “mobility breeds mobility.” As technology continues to evolve, opportunities for mobility in the workplace will also expand. Virtual reality and artificial intelligence could make virtual meetings nearly as impactful as face-to-face meetings. Smart rooms will use voice recognition to seamlessly connect users in multiple locations, and then record and document the meeting. Presence sharing tools will be able to tell you where your colleagues are in the office, illustrate the path to their location, and identify open workspaces near them. And as the workforce continues to change, expectations about the availability of these technologies will also evolve.

So, a program that may start as a closely managed, limited, case-by-case work from home program could evolve into one where mobility in all its forms becomes the organization’s cultural norm.

The key to starting this journey is to understand where your organization is today – how and where people are working, managers’ openness to managing remote teams, the workspace – and how mobility might support critical work processes and business goals. Then the fun begins: discovering the strategies through workplace research that defines work processes, and informs the policies, protocols, and metrics that will support both the initial and the evolving program. Allsteel’s Mobility Program Checklist, included at the end of this paper, is designed to help you identify specific items that would be relevant to and supportive of your strategy.

The Takeaways

Understand mobility in your organization

Assess what mobility is occurring at present and determine how mobility can support achieving your organization’s business goals.

It is not just a real estate play

While there may be significant real estate saving associated with a mobility, the program will not be effective if that is the only focus. The program must support the workers’ effectiveness, align with the

organization’s culture, and enable future organizational, work process and technology changes.

Mobility is not all-or-nothing

It does not mean everyone will be working remotely. Define mobility so that it aligns with your organization’s culture and supports your work processes.

Technology will drive more mobility

Improving seamless and intuitive knowledge sharing, presence, and collaboration tools

will create worker experiences that are as effective as face-to-face interactions, which in turn will expand the work activities that may be completed anywhere, anytime.

Mobility does not always diminish community

Mobility includes flexibility and choice, both of which support improved engagement. Creating a positive workplace experience will also drive engagement and make the office the choice place to be – which in turn will support community.

Insights to Action

Mobility Assessment Tool

This table identifies the different processes for collecting data about workplace utilization, occupancy and work flows. This data can be used to determine existing patterns and levels of mobility.

TOOL	DATA COLLECTED	APPLICATION
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which spaces are occupied • How long spaces are occupied • How many users are occupying a space • What activities users are engaged in • What tools/technology are being used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility utilization • Determining number and types of spaces used and required based on occupancy • Quantifying technology use • Identifying work activities
Security Badge Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total # of arrivals during a set period of time • % of users assigned to a facility who enter during a set period of time • Categories of users, i.e., employees, visitors, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility utilization • Total number of seats required • Occupant profiles
Wi-Fi Infrared Sensors (typically located in furniture or doorways)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which seats are being used – individual or group • Duration of use • Utilization by seat, room, etc. during a set period of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility utilization • Number, size and type of workspaces required • Available workspace locations based on user preferences • Wayfinding to open workspaces
Wi-Fi Enabled Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility occupancy • User locations and mobility patterns • Work space occupancy and use data • HVAC lighting demands/levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility utilization • Number, size, and location of different space types required • Work group locations based on internal mobility and collaboration patterns • Available workspace locations based on user preferences • Wayfinding to open workspaces • Building system demand and adjustments based on trends and real-time data

Mobility Program Checklist

The purpose of the following checklist is to help organizations evaluate their comprehensive workplace mobility research and program. We suggest that you don't use this checklist in a linear way, but instead jump across categories to ensure that you have a balanced approach to data collection and measurement, analysis, and creation of your mobility program.

PILOT THE STRATEGY

Validate mobility data, technology, training, etc.

People

- Work Process assessment (mobility, collaboration, focus, unique requirements)
- Remote Work Policy
- Training
 - Remote Communication Skills: staying connected
 - Remote teaming
 - Managing remote meetings
 - Managing remote teams
- Technology
- Ergonomics: home office set up
- Group norms and protocols
- Communication and Change Management Plans
- Metrics
 - Engagement
 - Retention
 - Productivity/effectiveness
 - Team Goals

HOME OFFICE SET UP

Very few organizations compensate their mobile employee for high speed Internet.

Technology

- Mobile platform (i.e., laptop, tablet) for impacted personnel
- Seamless and secure remote network access
- Seamless and secure remote email access
- Seamless access to all typical in-office tools and technology while remote (i.e., printing)
- Remote communication and collaboration tools
 - Instant messaging
 - Individual video
 - Web meetings
 - Document sharing/coordination
 - Conferencing
 - Presence
- Mobile voice
 - "Follow me" technology, unified communication
- Work process technology assessment: identify unique technology requirements that may limit flexibility
- Metrics, including technology adoption

Mobility Program Checklist continued

STOWAGE VS. STORAGE

Mobile employees need a place to 'stow' their backpack, shoes, laptop for the day as opposed to storing files and work materials over time.

Place

- Individual workspace standards that support mobility
 - Storage: limited within individual workspaces; shared in open areas
 - Personal storage for short term use
 - Acoustically enclosed spaces for privacy and focus
 - Easily accessible data, power, and voice
- Solo, team and community spaces to support different work activities and provide user choice and flexibility
 - Individual workspaces
 - Formal Meeting spaces
 - Informal meeting spaces
 - Open work areas
 - Quiet zones
 - Enclosed work areas
 - Clear and consistent wayfinding
- Reservation technology (as required)
 - Individual workspaces
 - Collaborative workspaces
 - Mobile platforms to facilitate use
 - Business rules
- Home office set up and provisioning
 - Ergonomics assessment and review
 - Set up options and support
- Protocols
 - Communication response
 - Working together
 - Workspace access and use
- Services and support
 - Services Standards and/or SLA (Service Level Agreement)
 - Staffing
- Metrics
 - Workspace utilization
 - Work process and effectiveness support

Workplace Advisory at Allsteel

The Workplace Advisory team listens. We apply research and our extensive workplace experience to assist organizations in the development and implementation of situationally appropriate workplace strategies. Strategies that align with organizational culture and business goals, support the ability to work effectively, utilize real estate assets as efficiently as possible, and adapt to changing business and work practice requirements.

Eric D. Johnson is a key member of the Workplace Advisory team at Allsteel. He effectively integrates the breadth of workplace considerations – design, talent, operations and technology – to creatively and optimally support changing work practices and an increasingly diverse workforce. Eric’s career has included corporate facilities, interior design, strategic workplace consulting, and workplace and mobility program design, implementation and management. He has also taught graduate level workplace change and strategy; and is a certified interior designer, and a member of CoreNet Global and IFMA.

Looking for
more?

Here's our
recommended
reading list.

- Stringer, L. et al., Distributed Work Revisited; Research Report #37, IFMA, 2015.
- Bower, T. et al, The Future of Work: Make the Future Work for You., The FOW Community, 2016.
- Friedman, Ron PhD, The Best Place to Work: The Art and Science of Creating an Extraordinary Workplace, Perigree, 2014.
- Meister, J. and Mulcahy, K., The Future Workplace Experience. McGraw Hill, 2017
- AWA and CeBMA, 6 Factors that impact Knowledge Worker productivity, 2017.

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- Lund, S. et al., Preparing for a New Era of Work. The McKinsey Quarterly, November 2012.
- Hagel, J., Brown, J., and Samoylova, T., Work Environment Redesign: Accelerating Talent Development and Performance Improvement. Deloitte University Press, Deloitte Center for the Edge, 2013.
- Galinsky, E and Tahmincioglu, E., Why Citi got rid of their assigned desks, Harvard Business Review, November 2014.
- McInerney, J., Idehen, O., and Goodman, L., Making virtual work "Business as usual", Deloitte, 2012.