

Future of the Office: A Toolkit for Improving the Occupant Experience

1 Background

Since 2021, the [Future of Real Estate Taskforce on Digital Transformation](#) has been seeking to understand the impact of COVID-19 on commercial office and the role of digital technology solutions in optimizing office spaces.

The resulting briefing paper, [Driving Digitalization: Value Creation for Commercial Real Estate](#), highlighted eight business drivers that underlie most digital transformation decisions, one of which is occupant satisfaction.

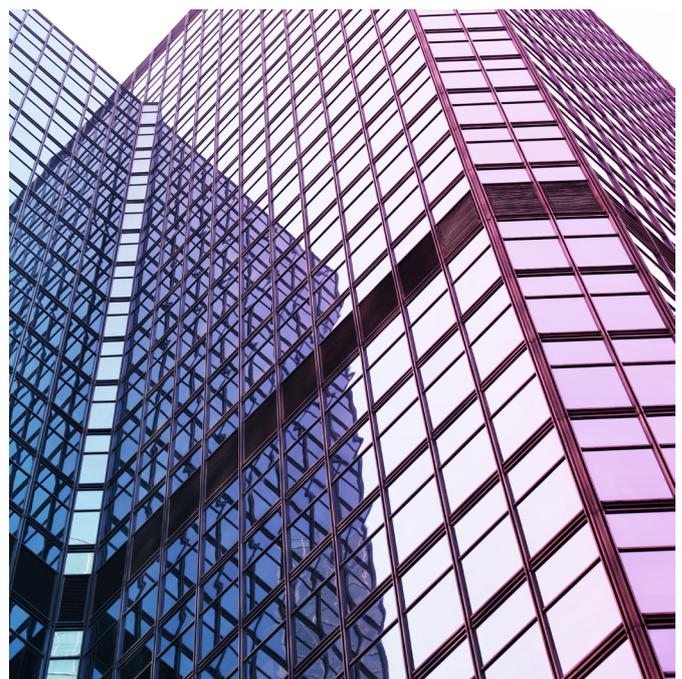
Occupant satisfaction, based on the overall occupant experience, is inherently subjective and ephemeral, making it one of the harder business drivers to address. For the purpose of creating a useful toolkit, the occupant experience is viewed as comprising the following components: environmental comfort and well-being aspects, such as air quality or sunlight; amenities for non-work activities, such as gyms or coffee bars; ease of access to book conference rooms or adequate parking; space for events and networking; and space that engenders inspiration and productivity.

Subsequent Taskforce-led discussions with real estate stakeholders from around the world revealed that landlords face difficulties in understanding their tenants' preferences – especially given the widespread adoption of hybrid work as the new reality – in order to make improvements to the space that will drive occupancy and ultimately improve the value of their buildings.

Furthermore, landlords often lack insight into how digital technologies can be used to further their goals and don't fully understand how to identify the right technologies and determine their return on investment from digital solutions.

The toolkit is designed to address some of these challenges by providing commercial office landlords with the resources to determine effective occupant experience solutions.

Stakeholders lacking financial and other resources in particular may benefit from using this toolkit to understand their tenants' demands better, and find appropriate technological solutions to improve their office offerings and overall occupant experience.



2 Toolkit components

The toolkit provides commercial office landlords with the resources to determine effective occupant experience solutions.

The toolkit is intended primarily for commercial office landlords to help improve the offerings of their physical office space and the overall occupant experience, ultimately to increase the value of their assets.

The toolkit consists of two parts: the Occupant Experience Survey, and Finding the Right Technology Guide.

1. The **Occupant Experience Survey** consists of two documents: the Survey and the Survey Overview document.

The [Survey](#), which is ready to download and share with tenants, can help landlords to understand their tenants' needs better by getting feedback on how satisfied tenants are with the office space, and therefore determine their priorities for improving the space.

The [Survey Overview](#) document provides supporting information to understand why specific questions are asked in the first place, with suggestions for interpreting responses.

The survey can aid in building stronger communication and a better relationship between landlords and their tenants.

The survey findings can be used to determine the priorities for improving a space. It is important for landlords to connect these priorities with the overall potential impact on their net operating income.

The survey is not intended to be the sole source of assessment – landlords are encouraged to consistently connect with their tenants to understand their needs and to conduct additional research and observations concerning the occupant experience and what their tenants may want.

2. [Finding the Right Technology Guide](#) consists of two sections: the Request for Technology Solutions and the Technology Assessment Questionnaire.

Request for Technology Solutions: This section can be used to understand whether a digital technology solution even exists that will help address the priority area for improvement. It can be shared publicly or with select stakeholders within the technology and buildings value chain to solicit ideas for technology solutions and identify what is possible.

Technology Assessment Questionnaire: This section provides a number of specific – and critical – questions to ask vendors in order to understand the full implications of implementing a certain technology solution. These questions can also be used to create a Request for Proposal to obtain details that match your specifications, as well as building targeted talking points with technology providers.



3 Tips

Presented below are relevant insights that emerged from discussions with global leaders from the real estate and technology sectors. While some may be obvious, the key points can support the development of strategies to improve office space and the occupant experience.

- **Do the research and take a strategic approach.** Conducting adequate background work to build your strategy for identifying and integrating occupant experience solutions, rather than just following trends, is encouraged.
- **Determine what features are necessary.** As you build your strategy to improve the occupant experience, take time to consider which features are absolutely necessary and likely to continue to add value over a longer period of time. Many features may be pleasant additions, but do not necessarily correlate to improvements in the bottom line. Speaking to stakeholders across the real estate and technology sectors can help you understand where there has been demonstrative value from the use of certain technology solutions.
- **Technology may help with delivery. Or it may not.** It is important to discern what you need most to deliver on your occupant experience goals and to reflect honestly on whether digital technology solutions will support them.

- **Search for return-on-investment (ROI)-driven use cases (also relevant by geography and building type).** Successful use cases may be few and far between; however, it is important to invest time and effort in identifying them. The willingness to share stories, lessons learned and data with partners, collaborators and others can facilitate the process of determining use cases showing clear ROI.
- **Establish best practices for measuring and monitoring the impact of solutions.** Thinking through the processes of data collection as you develop and deploy your digital solutions can help both you and the wider value chain better understand how to determine value.
- **Be aware of the fragmented technology ecosystem.** The technology market is fragmented. When searching for smart technological solutions for the office, consider whether you are searching for an end-to-end solution and/or specific solutions (both of which can also be tailored by some providers) to meet your specific needs. Having some indication of your long-term plan can allow you to determine the features needed to enable seamless technology selection and integration processes from the start.
- **Value of individual and interconnected solutions.** It can be difficult to isolate the impact and return of individual technological solutions when technological offerings are interconnected, especially when stakeholders in the industry are implementing multiple digital solutions at once to improve the occupant experience. These may also vary between geographical locations, building types and end users. Such factors can complicate the measurement of direct benefits and ROI per technology type. Considering what needs to be measured early on can be a powerful aid in finding the right technology, and the best process of integration with other systems.
- **The future may be more specialized.** Some experts believe that occupants are likely to demand specialized offerings in the future. For instance, IT departments that tend to do a lot of individual work requiring concentration may look for quieter working spaces compared to other departments, which may require different digital solutions or uses of space. Moreover, offerings that are available across a wider network of building services are likely to create new revenue streams.
- **It's still early days and more data is needed.** The full impact of the new hybrid work models remains to be seen. It is also still early days for understanding how office space will evolve and the value that digital solutions can deliver. While digital solutions such as building access control and room booking systems have demonstrated some value, a broad dataset is not yet widely available for advanced systems capable of providing multiple services and insights. Even though this lack of data can inhibit investment in occupant satisfaction solutions, the industry should still pursue doing so with a measured approach. The more data gathered over time, the better the insights in the medium to longer term are likely to be. And sharing this data in a more collaborative, open-source approach is important to help drive innovation.
- **Data and privacy protection.** It is highly recommended to adopt best practices on data and privacy protection and to act in accordance with legal requirements, which can vary between jurisdictions.

Access all toolkit documents on the [website](#).



4 Conclusion

The goal of this toolkit is to support landlords as they embark on improving their office space and occupant experience, and as they select the technologies that can help with delivery. Making investment decisions about a building is a complex

and time-intensive process and this toolkit can help elucidate what tenants really want – determining whether technology can help in meeting tenant demands and assessing vendors and technologies in the marketplace to find the appropriate solution.

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