

RIGHT-SIZING

your workplace

A practical checklist for hybrid occupiers



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01 WHY RIGHT-SIZING MATTERS NOW

Hybrid working is now firmly part of the UK landscape. ONS data suggests around 28% of workers are hybrid, rising to 34% among full-time staff in early 2025 ([euronews](#)).

CIPD's latest flexible and hybrid working report reaches the same conclusion: flexible/hybrid patterns are now deeply embedded in how UK organisations operate. ([CIPD](#)).

At the same time, employers are tightening what "hybrid" means. Indeed's Hiring Lab finds that **85% of UK job postings mentioning hybrid now require at least two days a week in the office**, and they explicitly describe two to three days as the new norm. ([Indeed Hiring Lab](#))

Meanwhile, how people use offices has shifted:

Midweek crunch: Sensor and utilisation studies show that Tuesdays–Thursdays are now the clear peak days, with average desk use on those days around 40%, compared with closer to 30% across the full week. ([abintra-consulting.co.uk](#))

Lower, but stable, overall utilisation: The British Council for Offices has formally revised its long-standing benchmark from 80% utilisation down to around 66%, calling 66% a more realistic (but still conservative) post-pandemic norm. (BCO – British Council for Offices)

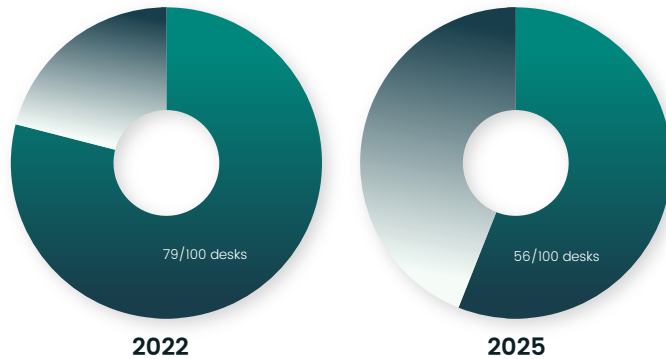
So most organisations are wrestling with two problems at once: overcrowded "crunch days" and under-used space for the rest of the week.



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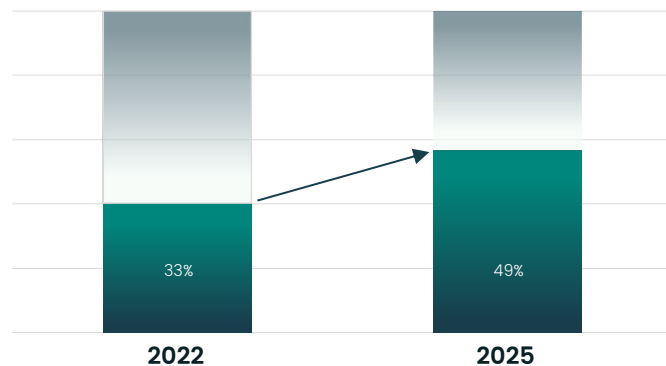
At the same time, the way we provision desks has fundamentally changed:

AWA's Hybrid Working Index



AWA's Hybrid Working Index and associated UK coverage show that UK offices now provide around **56 desks per 100 employees**, down from **about 79 desks per 100 employees in July 2022**. ([FMJ](#))

Rise in desk usage



Over the same period, **desk usage has risen from roughly 33% to about 49%**, with both attendance and desk use highest on Tuesdays. ([workplace360.co.uk](#))

In other words, **more people are sharing fewer desks**. On the busiest days, many organisations now report **peak desk utilisation in the 80–90% band**, especially in EMEA, where CBRE data shows that peak utilisation frequently sits **above the pre-Covid 80% benchmark**. ([CBRE](#)) Workplace bodies such as the BCO and Abintra now treat **66% as the realistic average**, implying that **80%+ on peak days is effectively “full”** in comfort terms. ([BCO – British Council for Offices](#))

Layer on top the realities of modern work:

Virtual and hybrid meetings are still dominant, even when colleagues are back in the office. UK surveys report that professionals are often in **multiple online meetings a day**, and that virtual meetings remain prevalent even when people are in the same building. ([The Times](#))

...and it's no surprise that many occupiers feel their workplace is the wrong size, the wrong shape – or both.

The question isn't just “do we need more or less space?” It's: **“Do we have the right amount of the right kinds of space for how we actually work now?”**



This checklist is designed to help you answer that, and to give you a solid starting point before you speak to a Workplace Strategist.



02 HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST:

Who it's for

- Businesses of **100+ people**
- HR, Real Estate, Finance and Operations leaders responsible for the workplace
- Anyone facing a lease event, consolidation, **re-stack** or post-Covid '**make do and mend**' layout

How it works

For each statement, mark:

- **Yes:** this is true most of the time
- **Sometimes:** this happens now and then
- **No:** this isn't really an issue

Then:

1. Add up your score in each section (People & culture; Utilisation & attendance; Space & settings; Cost & risk; Numbers & scenarios).
2. Add those subtotals together for a grand score (we explain what it means later).

SCORING

(for the main 4 sections):

Yes = 2 points

Sometimes = 1 point

No = 0 points

03 THE RIGHT-SIZING CHECKLIST FOR OCCUPIERS



SECTION 1: PEOPLE & CULTURE

Does your workplace help or hinder the culture you're trying to build?

1. Crunch-day overload

Office attendance spikes across two or three 'crunch days', creating noticeable overcrowding, noise and distraction.

Yes / Sometimes / No

2. In-person days feel exhausting

Leaders want stronger attendance, but employee feedback suggests that in-office days feel tiring, unproductive or poorly supported by the current space.

Yes / Sometimes / No

3. Early-career learning gaps

New starters and early-career colleagues struggle to learn by osmosis because they can't reliably find the right people or settings when they're in.

Yes / Sometimes / No

4. DIY "office days"

Teams have quietly created their own "office days" just to avoid the space being overwhelmed if everyone turns up at once.

Yes / Sometimes / No

5. Avoiding peak days

Certain individuals or teams actively avoid peak days because the office feels too busy, too loud or too chaotic.

Yes / Sometimes / No

6. Hybrid as a retention risk

You suspect (or have heard) that the current office set-up is a factor in retention or attraction, e.g. "I get more done at home" or "the office doesn't feel worth the commute".

Yes / Sometimes / No

People & culture subtotal
(max 12)

SECTION 2: UTILISATION & ATTENDANCE

Do your patterns of use match the size and cost of your space?

1. Hunting for desks on peak days

Desk utilisation regularly feels at (or above) “full” on busy days: people are hunting for seats, “camping” on a favourite desk or working in circulation areas.

Yes / Sometimes / No

2. Empty space on quiet days

On quieter days, large portions of the office sit empty, but the footprint and cost remain fixed.

Yes / Sometimes / No

3. Overflow spend

You rely on coworking space, overflow floors or short-term licences to cope with predictable peaks in headcount or project work.

Yes / Sometimes / No

4. Decisions based on anecdotes

You lack reliable utilisation data (badges, sensors, booking analytics), so space decisions rely heavily on anecdotes or the loudest voices.

Yes / Sometimes / No

5. External meeting spend

Teams regularly book external meeting rooms because internal rooms are either unavailable, unsuitable or poorly equipped for hybrid calls.

Yes / Sometimes / No

6. No shared view of ‘full’

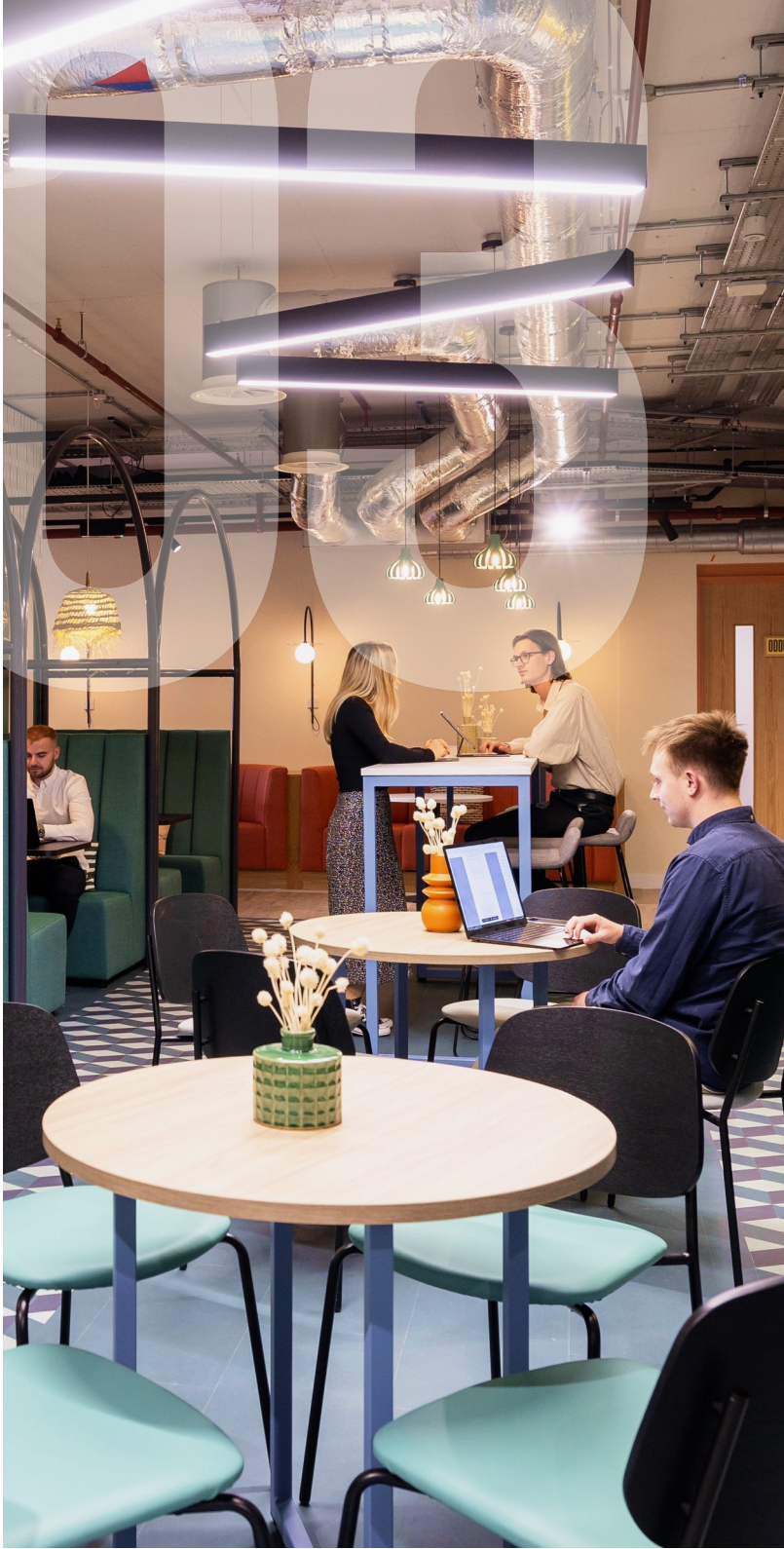
You don't have a clear, agreed definition of “full but comfortable” (for example, a target band for peak desk utilisation or a clear desk-sharing ratio).

Yes / Sometimes / No

Utilisation & attendance subtotal

(max 12)





SECTION 3: SPACE & SETTINGS

Do you have the right *mix* of settings for a hybrid week?

1. Video calls everywhere

Video calls and hybrid meetings spill into open areas because there aren't enough small, enclosed rooms or booths.

Yes / Sometimes / No

2. Pre-Covid layout, post-Covid reality

Your space mix still reflects pre-Covid working styles – lots of identical desks, not enough variety for focus, collaboration, learning or social time.

Yes / Sometimes / No

3. Nowhere private

Confidential conversations (HR, client calls, 1:1s) are hard to host without being overheard.

Yes / Sometimes / No

4. Rooms used “off-label”

Rooms are routinely used for purposes they weren't designed for – for example, large meeting rooms used as single-person Zoom booths, or project rooms used as storage.

Yes / Sometimes / No

5. Exhausted bolt-on fixes & compliance doubts

Over time you've responded to growth by squeezing more desks into circulation and collaboration areas or stripping out shared space altogether – to the point where the layout now feels compromised and you're no longer confident it still aligns with building regulations and your fire strategy (escape routes, travel distances, occupancy, etc.).

Yes / Sometimes / No

6. Hybrid-unfriendly meeting rooms

Your AV and room types don't properly support hybrid meetings, so people default to laptops on the table and improvised setups.

Yes / Sometimes / No

Why this matters: UK research shows that virtual meetings still dominate many professionals' days, and they remain prevalent even when colleagues are back in the office – which is why call booths, focus rooms and small hybrid-ready spaces are at such a premium. ([The Times](#))

Space & settings subtotal
(max 12)

SECTION 4: COST & RISK

Do your workplace costs and commitments still make sense?

1. Unclear true cost

Your true workplace cost (rent, rates, service charge, utilities, fit-out, flex spend) isn't clearly understood at board level.

Yes / Sometimes / No

2. Paying for the wrong space

You're paying for areas that sit under-used most of the week, despite carrying the full cost.

Yes / Sometimes / No

3. Short-term fixes, long-term problem

Short-term fixes (bolting on flex space, ad-hoc furniture, temporary partitions) are masking deeper issues with size, layout or location.

Yes / Sometimes / No

4. Lease event without a plan

You have an upcoming lease event (next 12–36 months) but no data-backed view of how much space you'll actually need.

Yes / Sometimes / No

5. Big cost, gut-feel decisions

You know workplace is one of your largest fixed costs after payroll, but major decisions are still driven more by internal politics than evidence.

Yes / Sometimes / No

Cost & risk subtotal
(max 10)

SECTION 5: NUMBERS & SCENARIOS (OPTIONAL BUT HELPFUL)

This section nudges you towards the numbers you'll eventually need for a proper workplace strategy. Don't worry if you can't answer everything perfectly yet.

1. Clear headcount & growth view

You have a clear view of current headcount, forecast headcount (3–5 years) and how that splits by team/location.

Yes / Sometimes / No

2. Known attendance by team

You understand typical in-office patterns by team (for example, 2 vs 3 days, specific days of the week) and have considered what happens if expectations tighten.

Yes / Sometimes / No

3. Peak attendance data

You know your actual peak daily attendance over at least the last 3–6 months (not just how many people could come in).

Yes / Sometimes / No

4. Desk and seat ratios

You've worked out rough desk-to-people ratios and total "seats" (desks + collaboration + focus + social) for peak days.

Yes / Sometimes / No

5. Scenario testing done

You've already modelled a few basic scenarios such as "everyone in two days", "three core days", or staggered patterns by team against your current footprint.

Yes / Sometimes / No

Numbers & scenarios subtotal
(max 10)

04 SCORING AND WHAT IT TELLS YOU

Use the scoring:

Yes = 2

Sometimes = 1

No = 0

Section-by-section red flags

You're likely in "wrong-size" territory if:

- **People & culture:** 7 or more
- **Utilisation & attendance:** 7 or more
- **Space & settings:** 7 or more
- **Cost & risk:** 6 or more

Overall score (Sections 1-4, max 46)

0-14 – Broadly aligned

A few isolated issues; the space is mostly fit for purpose. Focus on fine-tuning (settings, tech, policies) rather than major change.

15-28 – Warning signs

Multiple friction points. Your current size/configuration may not support future ways of working – especially if headcount or attendance expectations change.

29+ – Wrong-size likely

Your workplace is probably the wrong size and/or the wrong shape for how you now work. A structured right-sizing review is warranted before your next major lease or fit-out decision.

You can also use Section 5 as a readiness check: the more "Yes" answers you have there, the easier it will be to build a board-ready business case for change.



05 WHAT “RIGHT-SIZING” ACTUALLY MEANS

For many occupiers, right-sizing doesn't simply mean going smaller.

In fact, some organisations that shrank footprint quickly after Covid have later found that:

- Midweek utilisation is regularly at or above **“full” on the busiest days**, even though weekly averages look modest. ([CBRE](#))
- Teams routinely book external meeting rooms because internal ones are full or not hybrid-ready. ([workplaceinsight.net](#))
- New hires default to home because “there’s nowhere to go on the busy days”.

In many cases, the right answer turns out to be a **different mix of settings**, not just a bigger or smaller box:

- Fewer traditional desks, more enclosed focus and call spaces
- Better-equipped hybrid meeting rooms
- Clear zoning by energy level
- Spaces that genuinely support collaboration, learning and client time – especially on those crunch days

BCO and CBRE data together point in the same direction: **designing around a realistic average utilisation (c.66%) and peak utilisation bands that don't routinely push past 80%** tends to deliver better comfort, wellbeing and performance. ([BCO - British Council for Offices](#))



06 YOUR NEXT STEP: TURN YOUR CHECKLIST INTO A SPACE BRIEF

If your scores are nagging at you, you're in good company. Many recent projects start from exactly this point: overcrowded peaks, empty troughs and a sense that "hybrid" isn't quite working.

The good news: with the right data and a clear brief, you can move from guesswork to a **right-sized, hybrid-ready plan** in weeks, not months.

WHAT WE SUGGEST YOU DO NOW

1. Capture your results

Keep your section scores and overall score
Highlight the "Yes" statements that sparked the most debate – these are usually your biggest levers

2. Have a 30 minute call with a Workplace Strategist

Bring:

- Your checklist scores
- Basic headcount and growth assumptions
- A rough sense of your hybrid pattern (days in, known pinch points, flex usage)

On that call, a Workplace Strategist can:

- Stress-test whether you're truly over- or under-spaced, or simply mis-configured
- Sketch simple scenarios (stay and re-plan, consolidate, expand or relocate)
- Outline what utilisation data you actually need – and what's nice-to-have
- Give you a high-level view of the type and amount of space you're likely to need: desks, collaboration, focus and social

If you then want to go further, we can turn that into a structured right-sizing and workplace strategy exercise, including:

- Utilisation diagnostics and scenario modelling
- Space and settings planning for hybrid
- Cost and ROI analysis that Finance can get behind
- A clear set of recommendations you can take to the board



07 SHARE YOUR CHECKLIST SCORE

Why not share your checklist score with our Workplace Strategy team?

In one short session, we'll help you translate it into clear space options for your next 5–10 years, focused on culture, hybrid working and cost (not just pretty offices).

[give us a call?](#)