

Morgan Lovell

ACTIVITY BASED WORKING CHECKLIST

YOUR STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO EVALUATING AND
IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITY BASED WORKING

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What is Activity Base Working?

Activity Based Working gives employees a choice about how, when and where they work. In the office, that means a choice of work settings, each designed for different types of tasks. Outside the office it enables staff to work anywhere, from home to an airport lounge.

The benefits of Activity Based Working are wide reaching. In capital cities such as central London, the cost of a desk per person per annum is somewhere between £12,000 and £14,000.

So reducing the number of fixed workstations can have a real impact on a company's bottom line. And for employees, more flexibility means a better work / life balance, job satisfaction and reduced sick time.

But how do you go about creating a work environment that accommodates activity based working? What factors do you need to include in the design? Who should be involved in its implementation? What will it cost? Are there any special considerations?

To deliver activity based working, we recommend following a Discover, Define, Design and Deliver approach. By taking it step by step, and breaking everything down into easily manageable stages, not only will your journey to Activity Based Working run smoothly, you'll also create a working environment that's flexible and efficient and where staff can flourish.

CLARIFY THE BENEFITS TO YOUR BUSINESS

Cost savings

Less time spent at desks means fewer desks, which in turn means less office space required. Every office is different, but reduced space has a knock-on effect on other property related costs. Put a tick next to the areas where your business could save:

• Smaller property footprint	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Lower energy bills	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Reduced churn costs	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Reduced business rates	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Reduced service charges	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Reduced maintenance costs	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Lower travel costs for staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Less internal cabling, wired IT provisioning	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Fewer printers and a reduction in paper	<input type="checkbox"/>

ACTIVITY BASED WORKING STAT:

Dutch insurance company Interpolis reported a 45% reduction in space and a 24% reduction in occupancy costs per year.

Improved communication and collaboration

With employees no longer tied to their desks, there's likely to be more communication and collaboration as team members move around the workspace.

Increased concentration

By providing a range of spaces designed for specific tasks, like quiet work, employees will be able to concentrate better, with a higher quality output.

Increased engagement

A more dynamic workplace, with varied settings will be more engaging for staff, visitors and stakeholders.

Improved recruitment and retention

New talent is always attracted to flexible and creative ways of working, while existing staff will be more likely to stay if they feel their workplace meets their needs, both professionally and personally.

Increased productivity

Many offices are designed for only two activities: sitting at a desk or having meetings. An activity based workplace is designed to facilitate the different types of work your business needs, increasing productivity across a broader spectrum of work.

More innovation

Give staff the time and a quiet space to think and they'll generate a host of ideas. Activity Based Working is all about flexibility and choice of work environment, making it suitable for both extraverts and introverts in the office.

Reduced sick time

In 2012, workers took, on average, six days off sick. If you can offer staff flexible working and the option to work where they want when they want, there's a good chance sick days will reduce significantly.

More sustainable

A smaller property footprint significantly reduces a company's carbon footprint through a reduction in energy, services and materials in an office.

ACTIVITY BASED WORKING STAT

Software company Autodesk is saving \$1 million every two years due to the environmental design of their Activity Based Working UK headquarters.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO YOUR EMPLOYEES?**Flexibility**

With activity based working, your staff get to choose where they work and when they work. Which means they have a better work / life balance and are more productive as a result.

Empowerment

Employees feel empowered when they're able to take charge of their work and make decisions about where and when they work. 59% of organisations see picking your own office hours as the key benefit to Activity Based Working (powwownow.co.uk).

Trust

Offering employees Activity Based Working gives them a greater sense of ownership and builds a relationship of trust in the organisation. Employees who are more valued are much more likely to engage with their work and the people around them, and stay loyal to the company too.

Reduced commuting time

In the UK, approximately 10 million people commute to offices and spend an average of 1 hour and 20 minutes each day travelling to and from work. Reducing your employees' commute gives staff more time to think, create and produce.

ACTIVITY BASED WORKING STAT:

Microsoft reported that employees saved up to an average of 6 hours per employee per week on time spent travelling to / from work after implementing Activity Based Working at their Netherlands office.

Improved performance

Employees who are able to choose the space that best suits the project at hand are more likely to complete it quicker.

Wellbeing and health

As business writer Nilofer Merchant said: sitting is the new smoking. People spend 9.3 hours per day sitting, more than the 7.7 hours they spend sleeping. Their sedentary lifestyles lead to a 10 per cent increase in the risk of breast and colon cancer, 6 per cent increase in the risk of heart disease, and 7 per cent increase in the risk of type 2 diabetes. An activity based workplace is designed to encourage movement, health and wellbeing.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO IMPLEMENT ACTIVITY BASED WORKING?

There's never a bad time to implement activity based working, but sometimes an upcoming event or change can present a great opportunity. Which catalyst applies to your business?

- A lease event, such as a break or end of term

- Big strategy change

- Merger or acquisition

- Divestiture

Change in leadership

- New product launches / teams

- Culture change

- Portfolio rationalisation

BUILDING A CHANGE TEAM

Introducing Activity Based Working into your business can mean a huge cultural shift. It can be a daunting task for one individual to handle everything, so it's a good idea to gather a team together to offer support. However, it's worth having a single champion to head up the project to ensure things stay on track and you don't suffer from 'too many cooks' syndrome.

Choosing a champion

What sort of person should manage the project? The more senior the better as they'll be reporting directly to the board, at least for the duration of the project.

• Influencer from finance, HR or FM	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Passionate about Activity Based Working	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Good at sticking to budgets	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Senior enough to make decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Experienced at multitasking	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Skilled motivator	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Knows your business inside-out	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Great communicator	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Highly organised	<input type="checkbox"/>

YOUR INTERNAL TEAM

There are certain people in the company who need to be involved in the decision making process. Make sure you know who you need to talk to when decisions need to be made.

Managing director / President / CEO Your MD has the ultimate say-so over the approval of designs and costs. But whilst you need to ensure you get approval on the major decisions, your MD doesn't need to be informed about every little detail.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial director As the person who sets the budget, your financial director should be involved from the start.	<input type="checkbox"/>
IT director Successful Activity Based Working is reliant on IT, so you'll need to have your IT director on side. They'll be able to help identify what needs upgrading, replacing or keeping, and where to source the latest technology.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human resources The aim of your HR department is to ensure the wellbeing of everybody affected by the move to activity based working, as well as leading any changes in policies.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Property teams You'll need your property team to assess buildings and manage any capital projects resulting from the change.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Executive board It's important your board understand and buys in to the changes that are going to occur in your organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Office manager

The office manager hears the gripes and grumbles of staff on a day-to-day basis. They'll have valuable input as to where changes need to be made.

Operations director

Your operations director is going to want reassurance that business won't be disrupted during any works. Keep them in the loop so any issues can be managed before they impact your business.

Marketing

It's the job of your marketing department to ensure your company projects the right image, and they'll no doubt have input into how branding can be incorporated into the new workplace.

PAs

The PAs and administration staff probably know more about what's going on in your business than anybody else. Don't leave this valuable resource untapped.

Unions

Often it's a legal requirement to include a union representative on any big organisational change.

YOUR EXTERNAL TEAM

Your external team will bring know-how and experience to the table, and give you an outside view of your working practices.

Workplace Strategy Consultant

A workplace strategy consultant can manage the pre-work and bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to ensure you get the most out of activity based working. Make sure they have competencies in:

- Data collection
- Visioning
- Change management
- Worker typologies
- Interior design
- Activity Based Working business cases

Designer

Make sure the designer is involved as early as possible, as great design is critical to the success of activity based working.

Design and build fit out company

A team that will take your ideas and make them a reality. It's helpful if you choose a design and build fit out company that can take on all stages of the project to ensure consistency, from workplace consultancy right through to completion of the build.

Discover

Before you embark on the journey to change your workplace, you should go through a process of discovery. This will make sure you have the data to back up your design, inform your brief and build your business case for activity based working.

COLLECT THE DATA

How does your business currently work? Does the office set up support the business? How is the workspace being used? Which spaces in the office are under or over utilised? Are the sales teams always out and their desks gathering dust? Do you have different types of workers? Are some of your employees mobile working already? Break it down by department to see whether implementing Activity Based Working requires some minor adjustments or a cultural change.

Clarify your organisation goals

Does your organisation want to break down silos and improve communication and collaboration? Or is innovation on top of the list of priorities? Clarify your company goals and get them down on paper for everyone to agree.

Commission a utilisation study

How is the space being used? Which areas are more popular than others? What areas are underused? Undertake a utilisation study and collect the hard data. You may be surprised how much your desks and meeting space are really being used.

ACTIVITY BASED WORKING STAT:

66% of all workspaces are unoccupied during working hours.

Undertake stakeholder interviews

This will help you understand, from a philosophical, tactical and design point of view, how the space could be used. Interview the main board and department heads to get everyone's views clarified.

Run staff surveys

Typical office surveys ask employees what they like and don't like. We recommend you ask your staff what types of spaces help them do their jobs, and which ones hold them back. This data will give you the evidence you need for your design brief and will ensure your designer creates the right types of spaces for staff. We call it evidence based design.

Do a culture audit

Is your culture more innovative than your work environment? Do you want to change culture? Do you want your workspace to become a catalyst for culture change?

IT audit

Do you have enabling technology? Is it facilitating the work your business does or is it hindering your employees? Would your current technology allow you to be flexible and efficient?

ASSESS THE BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Barriers are normal in any big organisational change. But some are more specific to changes in the workspace. Get an understanding of these early on and start preparing for how you can overcome, work round and even use them to your advantage. Typical barriers to change are:

Fear of change

One of the most common resistances to change is the fear of it. People will fear change even when it may be positive. Overcoming these fears will require communication and support.

Loss of identity

With a desk comes a sense of ownership. Removing assigned desks can cause feelings of lost identity or loss of status (for those with cellular offices).

Paper culture

Anything that roots your team physically to a desk is a barrier to activity based working. So there will need to be a reduction in paper and a change in working practices.

Presenteeism

Staff often think they have to be at a desk so they can be 'seen' to be working. Or managers think if they can't see their staff, they're not working. Determine if your leaders manage by presenteeism and if so, culture change will have to start from the top. Activity Based Working is very much part of a results based culture and you'll need to get the business to change if it currently runs on presenteeism.

Old and faulty IT

Activity Based Working relies on an up to date IT infrastructure. Employees have to be able to connect quickly wherever they are, otherwise you will undo all the positive effects of activity based working.

Perception to access of information

You may have already moved to digital copies of your paper files. However, accessing them can often be difficult due to poor management. So staff may continue using paper for no other reason than ease of location and access.

ACTIVITY BASED WORKING STAT

45% of all privately stored documents can be found in several places.
85% of these documents will never be used again.

Costs

A change to Activity Based Working will require investment. But it can feel like a risk, especially in the current economy. Activity Based Working is an example of spending to save. The benefits are long term but they're worth it. If cost is a barrier, prepare a strong business case.

MAKE A BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTIVITY BASED WORKING

Before you embark on activity based working, it can be helpful to build a business case for senior managers as well as employees. Here are some factors to include that can demonstrate the tangible benefits of activity based working.

Cost per square foot

How much is your office costing you per square foot, and how much could you save with a move to activity based working? Compare the costs of fixed desks for everyone versus shared spaces based on actual utilisation.

Cost per employee

When it comes to your property, measuring the cost of housing an employee in a building can highlight the true cost and help you focus your efforts on maximising the space you have.

Reduced churn

Accommodating fixed desks for everyone means constant churn as teams change. An activity based workplace eliminates the need to constantly move workstations and teams around.

ACTIVITY BASED WORKING STAT

The Macquarie Group estimated a total savings of \$10 million for one office building.

Lower energy consumption

When Macquarie Bank implemented Activity Based Working in their office, they reduced their energy consumption by 50%, saving a significant amount of money and lowering their carbon footprint at the same time.

Accommodating future growth

An activity based workplace is better equipped to accommodate future growth, eliminating the need to take on additional space.

Recruiting and retention numbers

Factor in reduced recruiting costs as companies who have implemented Activity Based Working have reported a boost in recruitment. Also, factor in better staff retention, as staff are more likely to stay at a company which offers more flexibility.

Reduction in sick time

Activity Based Working eliminates the need for staff to use sick days for childcare or home deliveries. In addition, it reduces stress, which has been proven to boost employees' immune systems.

Define

WHAT WILL IT COST?

It's important to set a realistic budget and remember you have to spend to save. Get quotes for everything, and then draw up your budget. Remember to include:

Workplace strategy (interviews, change management, vision)

Without an experienced workplace consultant it's likely the project won't turn out how you want it to. Budget for a workplace strategy consultant so that you get the whole project planned, agreed and signed off.

Utilisation study

Completing a utilisation study is essential to understanding how you use your spaces in detail. This should be included in the budget.

Staff surveys

A survey of what your employees think about their workplace and wellbeing will also give you an understanding of how you can make them happier and as a result more productive.

Design costs

If you are taking desks away from staff, you'll need to provide a great design to compensate. You'll need an experienced designer to bring your ideas to life and help you get the most out of your space.

Delivery / implementation

Activity Based Working often means physical changes to your workplace, so you'll need fit out specialists on board who can project manage the design and construction. See Morgan Lovell's Office Refurbishment Checklist for how to manage a fit out or refurbishment project.

ACTIVITY BASED WORKING STAT

Use 'design and build' as a method for office interior transformation. Your project will complete 40% faster and 15% cheaper.

Occupancy costs

Changes in the use of your offices could mean changes in your occupancy costs, especially energy bills and maintenance costs. In particular, air-conditioning costs will likely change with increased utilisation of different spaces.

IT investment

You may have to upgrade certain IT systems to enable activity based working, like external network access, cloud computing and telephony.

Furniture

Activity Based Working requires quality furniture so that staff will want to use the spaces you create. Along with the purchase, delivery and installation of new furniture, budget for the removal of any old furniture. (Some charities and companies will take it off your hands for free.)

HR costs (if relocation)

If your move to Activity Based Working is alongside a relocation project you need to consider compensation costs for your employees. This could be related to a longer commute and increased travel prices as a result. Elsewhere we're talking about less commuting.

**TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS**

Implementing Activity Based Working relies on great IT. Assess whether your existing IT and telephony systems will effectively facilitate flexible and efficient working, or whether it's time to upgrade them.

Wifi connectivity

Connectivity is the key with activity based working, so reliable Wifi coverage in your workspace should be excellent.

**Laptops and tablets**

Laptops and tablets are essential for Activity Based Working and they have the added benefit of using less energy than desktop computers.

**Everything in the cloud**

Make sure all your information and files are available to whoever needs them, wherever they need them.

**Remote access**

Activity Based Working also includes home and remote working. In order to do these employees will need remote access to the system.

**Video conferencing capabilities**

This doesn't always mean you have to have state-of-the-art video conferencing rooms. A camera built in to a laptop can enable your staff to speak to a client via online services such as Skype, saving them valuable travel time.

**Telephony**

With Activity Based Working comes the need to review telephony provisions. Consider whether you want rolling phones where people can log in to them or whether you're ready to make the move towards a mobile phone only company.

**Follow me printing**

Some organisations run systems where you can swipe a card at any printer and print your work. The benefits are that users can print anywhere, as well as reducing erroneous print jobs.

**ACTIVITY BASED WORKING STAT:**

According to Gartner, an average enterprise spends between 1% and 3% of its revenue on print costs.

HEATING AND VENTILATION NEEDS

The heating and ventilation considerations should be the same as any fit out. See our Office Refurbishment Checklist. But if you're moving to Activity Based Working there are a few specific areas you need to think about.

Hot and cold zones

Changing to Activity Based Working means giving employees a choice as to where they work. So it's worth creating hot and cold zones in the workspace to suit different team members.



Good lighting

Remember this is your opportunity to create a place where people want to work. Lighting is very important in the office setting, so make sure you create a well-lit environment or your hard work might go to waste. Install a lighting control system that allows zoning, presence / absence detection and daylight linking.

**Heating and ventilation loads**

You should be increasing utilisation in different areas with a move to Activity Based Working so take a moment to consider whether the load on your HVAC systems could cause problems in the near future.

**Sustainability**

Look into how improving your lighting and HVAC systems can contribute to an environmental rating such as BREEAM®. Compliance with the latest CIBB Regulations can also contribute to attaining a BREEAM 'excellent' rating.



POLICY CHANGES TO CONSIDER

Activity Based Working requires different working practices. And this means your staff will need some guidance. So policies and guidelines should be reviewed to accommodate your new way of working.

HR policies

Outline your HR policies from the beginning. Look at where employees are based now, where they will be based, and look at your expense policies too. So on day one there is no confusion for your employees.

**Homeworking policy**

With Activity Based Working it needs to be clear what the rules are surrounding homeworking, otherwise employees may feel uncomfortable when they work from home for fear they're not adhering to some unwritten rule.

**IT policies / protocols**

In order for Activity Based Working to succeed, access rights in and out of the office need to be established straight away so that your systems are always convenient and easy to use. Simple guidelines for 'bring your own device' (BYOD) are also important to eliminate confusion.

**Office etiquette**

To avoid a backlash of angry employees, map out some simple etiquette guidelines. Some topics to consider: eating at desks, assigned vs. free desks, clean desk guidelines, noise guidelines, no camping (at a particular desk) and wayfinding (who sits where, location of facilities).

**Management by results**

Managing by results may seem like a given but do your staff know? Make it clear that work is not based on hours in the office but based on performance. So make sure this is clearly understood.

**Critical meetings**

How often do you sit in a meeting and think do I really need to be here? Tell your employees to only book meetings if it's really necessary. You will find meeting rooms will instantly become available and staff will get what they need simply by asking the relevant people.

**Disability requirements**

Consider what the disability requirements are for people in your organisation such as equipment, furniture, access etc.

**Working hours**

Whether employees are expected to be in the office during certain hours on certain days or can be completely flexible with their time, make sure it's clearly understood.



Design

DESIGNING FOR ACTIVITY BASED WORKING

Activity Based Working requires some careful thinking if you want to get the most out of your space. These are just a few design issues to consider.

ACTIVITY BASED WORKING STAT:

85% of people surveyed say the design of their workspace is important to them (Leesman Index).

Space audit

It's vital you evaluate your spatial needs when moving to Activity Based Working because people will no longer have their own desk space. Get as detailed a breakdown of staff requirements as possible – by department, team and individual. A good office design consultancy should do this for you.

How many people / workstations do you need to accommodate? Who needs to be at their desk some of the time and who can be more flexible?

Calculate current and future size, capacity and usage needs for:

- Workstations, bookable and non-bookable
- Meet and greet spaces (reception)
- Meeting rooms, both bookable and non-bookable
- Presentation suites
- Social spaces for eating and team interaction
- Collaboration zones
- Video and tele conferencing facilities
- Informal drop down space
- Contemplation spaces
- Brainstorming spaces
- Quiet spaces for concentrating
- Tables for spreading out papers
- Phone booths / monk cells and any other places for people to have private conversations
- Cafés and canteens
- Gyms
- Relaxation space

- Training rooms
- Showers for staff who cycle to work
- Comms rooms
- Copy and mail room facilities
- Recycling points
- Toilets

What storage is needed for activity based working?

Storage is an important part of Activity Based Working as staff can no longer keep their things on their desk. You need to come up with a flexible or mobile storage solution that is innovative and helps you deal with the inevitable question, 'where am I going to keep my stuff?' Here are a few types of storage to consider:

- Tool kit / mobile storage box
- Shared team storage
- Individual lockers
- Bigger storage for personal items such as helmets, bicycles, high heeled shoes, gym kits, suits
- IT storage
- Roller racking storage

Bringing the design to life

Once you have an idea of the design elements you need, it's time to:

- Produce concept drawings to visualise what it can look like
- Commission 3D walkthroughs to show stakeholders exactly what it will look like
- Produce a full layout (including desks, meeting rooms, kitchens, comms room, IT and mechanical and engineering)
- Put together some mood boards, to find the look and feel that's right for your business
- Involve your marketing team in agreeing on a colour scheme that reflects your brand and identity
- Look for ways of maximising sustainability and energy efficiency

CHOOSING FURNITURE FOR ACTIVITY BASED WORKING

Furniture plays a huge role in activity based working. So it's important you give staff spaces that help them work flexibly.

Good desks and chairs

Make sure the desks and chairs are robust as they will be well used.



Collaborative furniture

Think about the type of soft seating needed for these spaces that will encourage people to sit down and work together. Meeting tables with an integrated screen are great when small groups need to collaborate but don't want the formality of a large meeting room.



Soft seating that creates privacy

Think about different solutions such as high backed sofas that create a private meeting space without the need for a separate room.



Flexible furniture

Think about movable furniture that meets different needs such as small meetings, phone calls or casual conversations.



Furniture with integrated power

As people will be wandering around with laptops, provide plenty of sockets so they can power up.



Tables to spread out papers

Often overlooked, but very popular with staff.



Deliver

The delivery stage could include physical changes to your workplace, a fit out of a new space, a refurbishment in occupation or a relocation. Make sure you plan well in advance for any big changes. For a full checklist on how to deliver a fit out project, download Morgan Lovell's Office Fit Out Checklist at morganlovell.com.

PLAN AHEAD

Work out an indicative programme early on

It'll help you to have some deadlines in mind. They don't have to be set in stone, but they'll keep you on track.

Factor in the holidays and commitments of your key stakeholders

Your managing director won't appreciate his holiday being interrupted because he needs to sign something by last Friday.

Think about how you might go about the move process

You don't have to make any decisions now, but it's worth thinking about how moving into your new office will tie in to moving out of your old one. Will you have to occupy the new space while the fit out works are in progress?

ACTIVITY BASED WORKING STAT

A credible office design and fit out company will provide a highly detailed Gantt chart that illustrates every step of the fit out project schedule. This will also highlight lead-in times, especially for big ticket items such as IT and furniture.

ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Training staff to embrace change

In some instances, involving your staff is the law. The Information & Consultation of Employees Regulations 2004 states that any changes directly affecting staff should be discussed with them. In addition, it's important to provide training for different members of staff so it really works for you, and them.

Make sure you include:

- Successful homeworking tips and tricks
- Training around IT security and confidentiality in the office
- Training for virtual collaborative tools such as SharePoint
- Etiquettes and protocols, such as 'no eating at your desk' or 'no camping'
- Training for management on how to 'manage by results'

Communicating Activity Based Working

Design a change management programme to communicate the key messages to staff and give your employees a channel to give feedback. Things to include are

- Key message index
- Change champions (trained by you)
- Use existing channels – intranets, emails, posters etc.
- Programme with milestones
- Risk register: perceived barriers and how you are going to deal with them

Engaging stakeholders

A move to activity based working requires a total change in culture so it's important to involve all your stakeholders.

Some key groups that will need to be involved include:

- Unions
- Regulators
- Parent company
- Board members
- Department heads

Innovative ways to create buy-in

- Use technology to your advantage and set up an online forum or extranet. It's a great way of letting your employees voice their opinions, and provides an ideal place to show off designs as the project progresses
- Hold workshops to present ideas to staff and get their feedback
- Create a regular newsletter for staff, and keep them up to date

Follow-up research

It's important to constantly review your business's needs in order to maintain the positive effects of activity based working.

- Staff opinion survey to see how your staff are getting on with the new space
- Observation study to see how different areas are being used
- Post occupancy utilisation study

Measure the success

It's important to measure the success of the project against the goals set out in your business case. Some areas to measure and shout about are:

- Property cost savings
- Energy savings and carbon reduction
- Reduced travel time
- Savings from printing costs
- Recruitment and retention figures
- Staff satisfaction

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