



Knoll Workplace Research

Unassigned Workspace Etiquette

Introducing Policies,
Protocol and Politeness

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Workstyles have changed and so has the workforce. No longer is the workplace population comprised of just resident employees who are on-site full-time. Today, a network of mobile employees, remote workers, part-time employees, contract workers and consultants work collaboratively across disciplines in teams and tasks that shift as frequently as their projects.

Replacing traditional space ownership with a community of shared spaces meets the needs of today's workers, fluid workstyles and collaborative group-based work.

Whether you are considering a move to hoteling (a reservation-based system), free address (first come, first-served) or a combination, unassigned seating can create an adaptable workplace that yields numerous benefits to your organization and its employees.

Shared workspaces can help optimize space utilization, potentially reducing real estate expenses. Additionally, the varied spaces within an unassigned environment empower individuals to choose the workspace they want at the time and place they prefer.

Adjusting to the new norms of working in a shared space will no doubt take some time. Management can provide direction by giving employees the tools and training needed to thrive in the new setting. Part of the training should include developing and introducing appropriate guidelines to the workforce. Clearly articulating expectations and etiquette will help streamline your organization's adjustment to its new environment, avoid misunderstandings, minimize downtime and reduce stress levels.

This paper provides advice on the process for developing workplace protocols for an unassigned workspace setting and presents an example of guidelines for a hypothetical company that addresses some typical hot-button issues.

Simple Process for Developing Workplace Protocols

Before the move

+ Enlist support from the top. Top-level leadership and support is vital to a successful shift. Engage leaders early and encourage them to be active and visible through the change process. Direct managers also play a vital role in delivering information and reinforcing policy and protocol.

+ Explain the business case and design detail. Share the business reasons for the change with your employees when you give an overview of how the new workspace works. Use varied messaging and maintain a positive, informative tone as you highlight ways it will better meet the needs of the organization and individual.

+ Reassure employees that they have access to ample spaces to work, socialize and store their belongings. Explain that all seating ratios have been well-thought out and based on careful consideration and planning. All levels of attendance will be accommodated, from full-time, resident on-site workers to occasional and infrequent employees and visitors.

+ Facilitate the transition to an unassigned space. Provide support and tools necessary to assist employees in the change. Suggest that large personal items be



taken home, unneeded materials discarded and paper files purged well before the move date. Provide access to scanners and shredders to facilitate the move to digital records. Consider offering incentives or sponsoring a company-wide contest for purging physical files.

- + **Consult with Human Resources and Labor Relations to assure compliance.** Appropriate departmental representatives should be involved to ensure that any guidelines you create align with existing policies.
- + **Verify that the appropriate infrastructure is in place and operational.** This encompasses several areas.
 - + **Technology.** All elements of technology, including hardware, power and connectivity, must be fluid, operational and reliable. Individual and team workspaces should be fully equipped and accessible, including appropriate cables and chargers. Security and reservation systems should function seamlessly. Procedures should be in place to issue employees designated devices (laptop, headset, phone, etc.).

Routines should also be established to inspect technology on a regular basis to clear caches, check for viruses, etc.
 - + **Scheduling Tools.** Simplify the transition from workspaces as much as possible. Select an effective scheduling tool that monitors reservations and space usage. Train employees on reservation policies, protocol and technology.
 - + **Housekeeping.** Shared office environments require added diligence. To reduce risks, minimize exposure and improve quality of work life, your new standards should combine antimicrobial cleaning with a hygiene program.

Educate employees and equip them with the proper information and tools to lower exposure and protect from germs.
 - + **Personal storage and amenities.** Assignments should be made if offering permanent storage (lockers or rolling files for example). Day-to-day storage and supplies should be available and accessible. Now that they are transient, workers may need access to items they might have previously stored in their assigned workspace. Consider maintaining a centralized supply of personal items such as pain relievers, tissues, bandages, stain remover, sewing kit, mints and headphones.
 - + **Schedule Training.** Develop and deliver modules on how to use new spaces and technologies. Be sure employees and managers understand all processes and procedures.

During the move

- + **Deliver guidelines.** Use the release of guidelines as an opportunity to reiterate your message and mission. Depending on the number of employees involved in the change, guidelines can be incorporated with other training



meetings related to the move. If that is not practical, the guidelines can be posted on the corporate intranet and/or presented via "lunch & learn," webinar, town hall or other method appropriate to your organization's size and culture. Additionally, direct managers should reinforce policies in staff meetings and other team interactions.

- + **Celebrate the move with positive experiences.** Reinforce a community message to ease apprehension. Host events and document the company-wide transition using community boards and similar forums. Encouraging individuals to participate by sharing photos and feedback on the move can help build engagement and buy-in.

Consider providing a welcome letter from leadership and a small office-related gift to each employee on move day.
- + **Distribute all essential materials and guides.** In addition to the sample guidelines presented, develop a printed series of handouts such as office plans, technology instructions and codes, and any other needed guides that employees can refer to.

Post signage in restrooms with proper handwashing technique. Consider tasteful visual reminders about the importance of wiping down common surfaces. On move day, have staff on-hand to resolve problems and answer questions.
- + **Lead by example.** Implementing and maintaining a successful change starts in the C-suite. Encourage all levels of the organization to be a good example and enthusiastically adopt the new setting.

After the move

+ **Monitor and adjust.** Allow time throughout the process to assess the successes and shortcomings of the change process. Make regular rounds to observe how new policies and protocols are working. Engage in frequent face-to-face conversations to gain direct and unfiltered feedback.

Build in means for users to submit comments on how they feel the new space and guidelines are working after about 90 days. Based on insights learned, policies and procedures can be tweaked as needed.

A well-executed designed and executed plan will streamline the process, reduce anxiety and misunderstandings, and hasten acceptance, assuring a smooth transition and adaptation to the new environment. **K**

SAMPLE GUIDELINES FOR UNASSIGNED WORKSPACE POLICIES, PROTOCOL AND POLITENESS

M E M O

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to One World's new space, designed for how we work today.

Our shift to a shared, unassigned environment allows us to enjoy greater space efficiencies, share natural daylight and express our brand.

Each day you can choose where and how you want to work.

As with any change, our new workplace brings challenges and opportunities. It will require some conscious adjustments to adapt to the new norms and standards. Please refer to your guidelines and handouts as many questions are answered in the materials provided. Please visit the community boards for updates. If you have questions or need additional information, please consult your manager.

While we have itemized out specifics, we hope mutual respect, tolerance and consideration for your fellow co-worker will guide your behavior, so everyone can enjoy the connection, engagement, productivity and job satisfaction our environment is designed to achieve.

1 Spaces. *It's imperative we follow designated protocol for optimal success in sharing multiple spaces.*

+ *Reserve when required. Not all spaces require advance booking. Workspaces in the East Wing, and drop-in spaces such as the café, lounges and library are available without appointment.*

Once you have selected your space(s) for the day, use the new reservation system to guarantee availability. Reservations can be made up to one month ahead.

+ *Honor your reservation time. Update or cancel your appointment if activities change, run longer or end earlier than expected.*

+ *Clean surfaces between uses. Much like a gym, where members all share common equipment and wipe down machines after use, surfaces and technology need to be cleaned between users to keep germs at bay. We have provided antimicrobial wipes throughout the space and in the centralized restrooms. Additionally, our professional cleaning crew will disinfect all surfaces each evening.*

+ *Return to order. Ensure you leave all spaces as you found them. Allow sufficient time before vacating to clean desks and rooms so they are ready for action by the next party.*

For open-focused spaces:

- Refrain from eating and personal grooming*
- Wipe down keyboards and phones with sanitizer wipes after use*
- Log out of all technology and/or change settings as appropriate*

- When you leave a workspace for a long period of time, push in the chair, turn off task lights and make sure to take your items with you or store them in your locker so that others can take advantage of that workspace

For meeting rooms and activity spaces:

- Dispose of food and drink waste appropriately in the café
- Remove dirty dishes and utensils and place in the dishwasher
- Reset and turn off A/V equipment
- Wipe off white boards
- Clear tables
- Return furniture to its original layout
- Push chairs back in place
- Return any borrowed equipment or supplies sourced elsewhere
- Please do not swap or relocate chairs, non-mobile technology, artwork or plants

2 Technology, Supplies & Storage. We are changing the way we work. Employing our new tools and resources will help us successfully transition into our new work processes.

- + Utilize provided equipment and storage. All employees have been issued a cell phone, headset, and laptop and assigned a locker for daily personal items and bags. Please store equipment in your locker each evening. Shared, reservable lockers are also available. Coats should be hung in coat closets and lunch items stored in the café. Locked portable storage can be stowed in the center core area, near the café, and wheeled to your selected workspace.
- + Use technical support. Consult your Tech Guide for PIN numbers and log in procedures. Troubleshooting is available via chat or phone call to the numbers printed on materials.

3 Noise, Distractions & Interruptions. While the ability to focus in an unassigned environment increases with time, noises can occur as people move about the space. Here are a few tips for a considerate approach to day-to-day interactions.

- + Keep to a low tone. Maintain a voice soft enough so the folks at the next desk don't get distracted by your conversations.
- + Use phone discretion. Relocate to enclosed spaces when on a speakerphone, having lengthy conversations or participating in interactive webinars. If you are using a cellphone, removing one earbud will help you keep your voice at an appropriate level.
- + Be conscious of non-verbal noise. Keep cell phones and other devices on vibrate or on a low ringtone. Refrain from humming and pencil or finger tapping.
- + Chat away from focus workspaces. Avoid talking past your immediate neighbor. Instead, find an isolated location and move noisy conversations away from designated focus spaces. Activity spaces such as lounges and café spaces are designed for spontaneous and planned small-group meetings. Huddle areas are available in the north and south corners.
- + Reserve enclosed spaces when needed. Team activity spaces are available for larger or longer meetings. Enclave and refuge rooms are provided for private or conference calls, one-on-one conversations and focus work time.
- + Signify privacy preference. Wear headphones, go to designated focus spaces or use other methods to manage distractions and to indicate that you are engaged in focus work and do not want to be disturbed.
- + Respect personal boundaries. If your neighbor is visibly occupied, wearing headphones or otherwise signaling they are doing focused work, hold your thought or question for another time. Or, send a message they can reply to at their convenience.

4 Privacy and Confidentiality. Use discretion and judgment when working on confidential projects in common spaces.

- + Delete your paper trail. Whether physical and/or digital, don't leave anything behind when departing a space.
- + Utilize enclosed activity spaces. Small conference rooms are located throughout the space for sensitive or confidential face-to-face or telephone conversations or work.

- + *Modify your surroundings. In focused workspaces, leverage monitor arms to provide forward-looking seated privacy.*
- + *Leave no trace. Clear cache and log out completely of any shared technology device. Shred confidential documents when disposing of them. Be particularly conscientious and vigilant.*

5 Wellness. *Sharing communal settings requires a preventative, proactive approach to keeping well, minimizing risk and spreading of germs. Following our guidelines will help maintain your own health as well as that of your co-workers.*

- + *Bring your healthy self to work. Stay home when you are ill.*
- + *Wash your hands. It's the best way to prevent the spread of germs. Please follow the suggested pictograms posted in all restrooms for the proper and effective way to do so. Hand-sanitizer is located in restrooms and throughout the space.*
- + *Keep it to yourself. Sneeze or cough into the crook of your elbow or a tissue that is immediately disposed of in the trash.*
- + *Make note of high touchpoints. Be extra vigilant and be sure to wash your hands or use hand-sanitizer after touching these most common areas that breed germs:*
 - *Sink faucet*
 - *Microwave door*
 - *Keyboards*
 - *Telephone headset and keypad*
 - *Refrigerator door*
 - *Water fountain*
 - *Vending machines*
 - *Coffee maker*
- + *Keep moving. We've consolidated cafés and designed spaces to encourage movement. Use the internal stairs whenever possible instead of the elevator. Take a walk at lunch. Utilize the height-adjustable desks. Consider a walking or standing meeting.*
- + *Share the view. Keep spaces, walkways and vistas clear so everyone can enjoy the natural sunlight.*

6 Sustainability. *A shared environment based on actual utilization allows us to save on space, heating and lighting, thus reducing our carbon footprint. Additional small efforts by all help us meet our mission of working green.*

- + *Recycle. Use designated receptacles to dispose of bottles, cans and paper.*
- + *Minimize. Bring only what you will use in a day to store in lockers or refrigerators.*
- + *Conserve power. Turn off lights when areas are not in use. Turn off equipment at the end of day.*
- + *Dispose of trash. Keep our grounds and parking lots litter-free. Use designated receptacles.*
- + *E-file and think digital. Avoid printing, copying and accumulating paper when digital filing and sharing will suffice.*

Thank you for your continued cooperation and consideration in helping us achieve our goal of creating a space that makes you feel your best at work.



Through research, Knoll explores the connection between workspace design and human behavior, health and performance, and the quality of the user experience. We share and apply what we learn to inform product development and help our customers shape their work environments. To learn more about this topic or other research resources Knoll can provide, visit www.knoll.com/research