AUGUST 2022

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THE LEGAL TENANT

The AmLaw 100 Survey

Focus on Flexibility

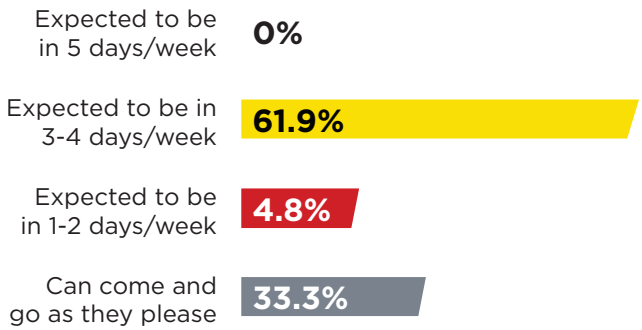
Although law firms are not widely known for their radical workplace transformations, the trajectory of change in their office culture has accelerated over the past five years. The pandemic merely fueled a conversion that was already on the rise in law firms across the country. The surge in remote work has delivered the most visible shift in practice and perspective, especially as it relates to partner and non-partner attorneys.

To take the pulse on the current state of flexibility in work practices among the AmLaw 100, the Savills Legal Tenant Practice Group recently conducted a survey of AmLaw 100 firms. The results reveal evolving policies and traditional hierarchies, but one theme reigns supreme across the board: flexibility is (mostly) the rule and not the exception.

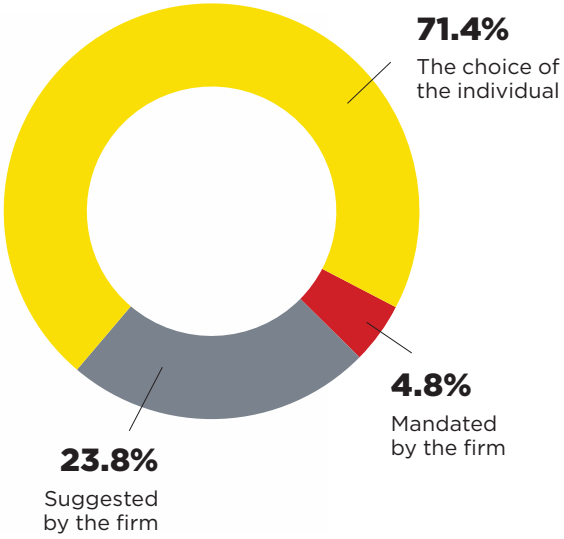
FOLLOW THE AUTONOMY

High-earners and the most tenured individuals have the most flexibility working remotely with, 33.3% of partners being able to "come and go as they please" and 61.9% being expected to be in the office three to four days a week. Further, 71.4% of partners decide what days they work in the office, and only 23.8% receive suggested workdays from the firm. Although this is not a dramatic shift in pre-Covid work policies for firm shareholders, it does indicate a striking change in employee preference since the start of the pandemic.

What flexibility do **partners** have for remote work?



For firms with expectations of how often **partners** will be in the office, those days are:

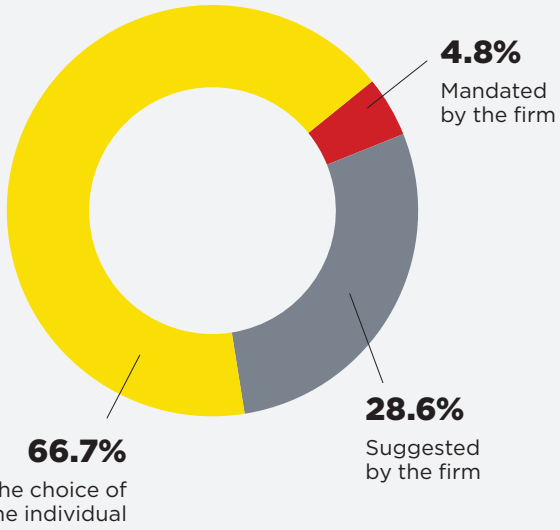


Non-partner attorneys and the expectation for remote work align similarly to the survey results regarding partners. Unencumbered employee choice of the amount days working remotely declines by 9.5% and increases to 66.7% regarding firm expectations to be in the office three to four days per week. The same percentage of non-partner attorneys can also choose what days they work remotely.

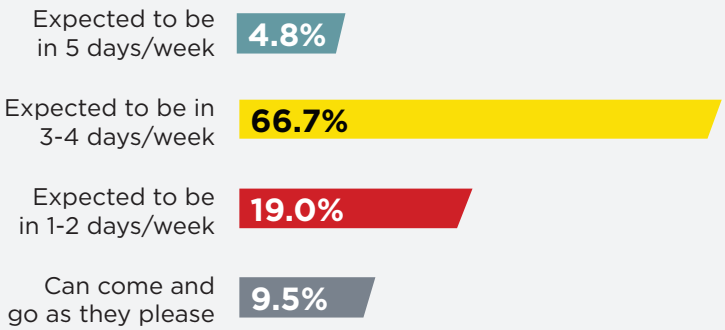
Neither partners nor non-partner attorneys were mandated to be in the office five days a week, and only 4.8% of each group were mandated specific in-office days. Yet, administrative employees show a significant drop-off in flexibility as 4.8% were required to be in the office five days a week, mandates regarding what days are worked jumped to 14%, and only 19% could choose their days working remotely.

What flexibility do **non-partner attorneys** have for remote work?

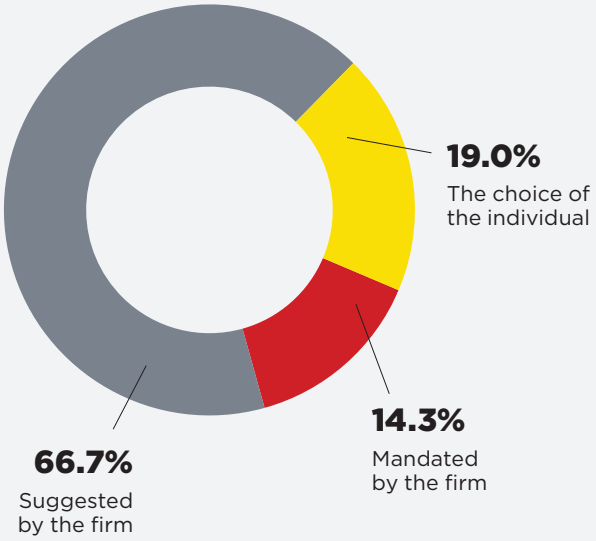
For firms with expectations of how often **non-partner attorneys** will be in the office, those days are:



What flexibility does **administrative staff** have for remote work?



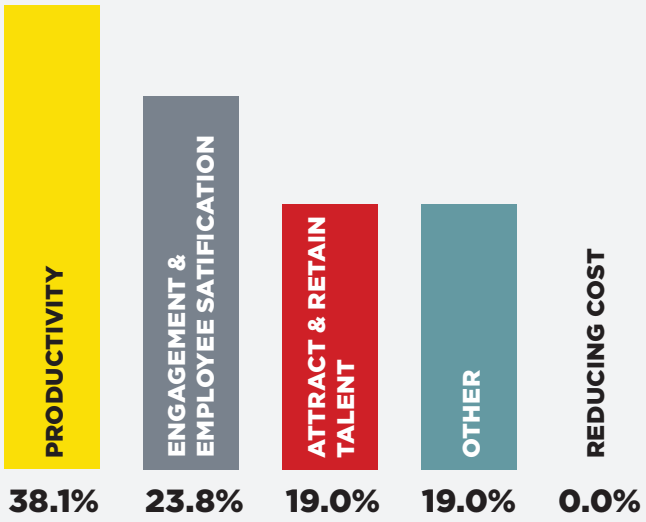
For firms with expectations of how often **administrative staff** will be in the office, those days are:



ARE PROFITS DRIVING POLICY?

The AmLaw 100 enjoyed record profits and on average positive employee headcounts for the past two years, notwithstanding the pandemic and the "Great Resignation." With this accomplishment in mind, our survey found the highest scoring measure for the success of remote work policy was productivity 38.1%, followed by employee satisfaction 23.8% and the ability to attract and retain talent 19.0%. Reducing cost as a measure received a 0.0% score and was not a consideration for any firm at this time but considering the cyclical nature of law firms, costs may become a prioritized measure considering the looming economic downturn.

How will you measure the success of this rollout?



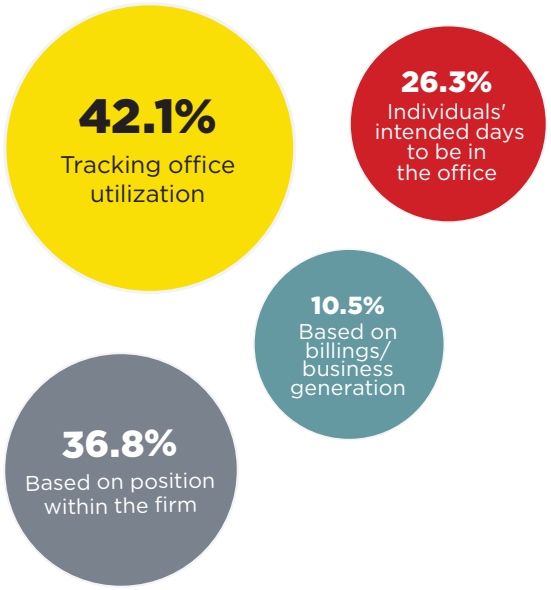
THE FUTURE OF HOTELING

Unlike many organizations, law firms sign leases for 10, 15, or 20 years at a time. Over time, firms have moved to more efficient real estate strategies due to changing technologies eliminating the need for law libraries, physical files, and less overall administrative support. Yet, despite decreasing the size of the offices, there remains a need and desire to maintain a physical office. Today, firms are turning their attention to space utilization and hoteling design options. Our survey revealed that 42.9% of respondents are implementing hoteling or shared approach to office occupancy. Although the remaining firms surveyed are not currently implementing the model, 42.1% of those respondents indicated they are "tracking office utilization" as they consider dedicated space guidelines.

42.9%

of respondents are implementing hoteling or shared approach to office occupancy.

For firms implementing hoteling, what are the guidelines for who gets a dedicated workspace (check all that apply)?



The hoteling environment can take a variety of forms, including unassigned workstations, focus rooms, and offices. This option gives firms the ability to reimagine their spaces and re-engage their employees. Staff should not experience their work environment as a mostly empty space with features that were relevant during a different era. For younger associates who live in smaller spaces or need the in-office support of tenured lawyers, a hoteling environment may cultivate stronger working relationships as dedicated offices are converted into collaborative areas and meeting spaces.

Law firms are not only creating remote work policies that promote flexibility in when and where work takes place but also how the experience feels when attorneys and staff are in the office. Sweeping change in remote work may have come years behind other industries, but the legal sector realizes change that is showing no signs of slowing down.

Thomas M. Fulcher Jr.
Chairman,
Legal Tenant Practice Group
+1 202 624 8527
tfulcher@savills.us

Marty Festenstein
Senior Managing Director,
Workplace Practice Group
+1 847 917 0119
mfestenstein@savills.us

Devon Munos
Senior Director, Head of
Research Platform Initiatives
+1 310 444 1050
dmunos@savills.us

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