



# THE FUTURE STATE OF THE LEGAL WORKPLACE

ASSESSING AND ADOPTING THE  
RIGHT TECHNOLOGY FOR SUCCESS

Savills introduced “The Way Forward for Law Firm Offices” series to serve as a guide to redefine the purpose and value of law firm office space. **In our first article**, the Law Firm Tenant Practice Group offered advice for how to lay the groundwork for data-driven real estate decision-making. The series continued with **a discussion of short and long-term workplace strategies for success**, offering advice for how to assess and prepare your current offices for the new priorities of face-to-face work. In our current article, we introduce the key enabler for the post-Covid workplace—an integrated technology strategy.

## The Future State of the Legal Workplace — Assessing and Adopting the Right Technology for Success

Whether your law firm is reconfiguring your current space as attorneys and staff return to the office or is taking advantage of attractive market fundamentals to commit to a new location, technology is emerging as the undeniable backbone of the new hybrid work model. A proactive and innovative strategy can support talent retention and attraction, mentorship and culture-building, operating and workflow efficiency, as well as enhanced client service and business development. It can provide the flexibility to reimagine space use, link and optimize support functions and provide a level of collaboration unimaginable even two years ago. Hybrid work is here to stay and there is no doubt that the workforce is changing. Failing to develop a holistic technology approach that considers how your entire law firm experiences the workday could threaten your ability to meet talent and client expectations even in the short term and limit your ability to operate and compete effectively - today and in the future.



*In this article, our team will help you envision the right technology strategy and outline key considerations for next steps. Our goal is to demonstrate how technology can combine with a refined space design and enable a hybrid work strategy to create an inspiring destination and workplace experience for your entire law firm.*



**The primary challenge is to create a face-to-face environment and experience that exceeds the advantages of remote work.**

## Identifying Challenges and Measuring Success

The first step to developing your technology approach is to identify the challenges to be met as your firm returns to the office. The primary challenge is to create a face-to-face environment and experience that exceeds the advantages of remote work. When in the office, engagement with onsite and offsite team members as well as clients needs to feel seamless, immediate, intuitive and collaborative. Your law firm workplace experience and culture should be reflected in the quality, ease and reliability of connection that can be enabled by the right technology solution married to the right space design. It should reinforce your mission for performance excellence and innovation. And, most importantly, it should retain and attract the talent you need to be exceptional.

Success should be measured in productivity, client service delivery, talent retention and competitive advantage. Implementation of an effective technology-integrated workplace strategy depends on the commitment and participation of real estate and senior leadership, as well as your human resources, facilities, and IT professionals in the process.

## Mapping User Profiles to Space and Technology Requirements

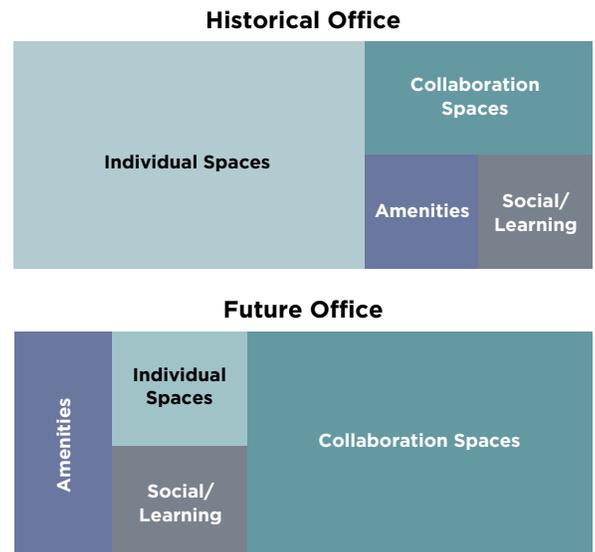
Developing an effective technology strategy begins with creating a user profile for each cohort.

- **Senior partners** are typically baby boomers and may be less tech-savvy and more reliant on administrative support. They make a clear distinction between work versus social activities and cultural needs. They entered remote work with limited tech exposure beyond email and online research. Remote work presented a steep learning curve for everything from online document collaboration to virtual meetings and on-camera conference calls. Most emerged from the remote work challenge with a higher degree of technology confidence.
- **Associates and younger partners** grew up with technology and are not wed to traditional administrative support. They are natural tech adopters, connected to their peers by social media, with smart phones and mobile devices integrated into every aspect of their lives. They distinguish, but move easily back and forth, between work and social/cultural experiences.
- **Staff members in management and support roles** relied on technology prior to the pandemic and have limited client-facing responsibilities. Many back-office roles have productively adapted to remote work. They feel highly connected to their social/cultural experiences and expect the workplace to include and engage them. They are aware of Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) issues and want to see how their employer aligns with those beliefs.

**The next step in designing a technology approach maps the profiles and the type of space needed to optimize productivity.**

Type	Work Priorities	Space Needs
<b>Senior Partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business development</li> <li>• Mentorship</li> <li>• Growing client relationships</li> <li>• Case work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private, heads down space</li> <li>• Teaming space to support clients and projects</li> <li>• Associates adjacency for mentorship</li> </ul>
<b>Associates and Younger Partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Skills development</li> <li>• Mandated continuing education</li> <li>• Case work</li> <li>• Peer collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heads-down space</li> <li>• Teaming space to support clients and projects</li> <li>• Partner adjacency for mentorship</li> <li>• Seminar space for education</li> <li>• Social space for peer collaboration</li> <li>• Location and spaces should be designed for functional flexibility to shift between hosting work tasks and more social, culture-building activities</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Members</b>	Work efficiency with reliable communications and software connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited onsite work. Onsite value is focused on team and culture building, education, project collaboration and colleague socialization.</li> <li>• Work spaces should reflect a commitment to environmentally and socially conscious materials choice and design – and there should be data available and communicated to support those priorities.</li> </ul>

**The types of spaces needed have not changed since before the pandemic, but the allocation of those spaces is changing dramatically.** Multi-use and collaboration spaces have gained importance in the hybrid workplace model. Conference rooms are being down-sized and reconfigured to allow real-time collaboration with remote team members. Modular space designs that allow for easy reconfiguration offer flexibility to accommodate growing teams and special projects. The space for private, dedicated attorney offices is shrinking, while flexible spaces that can be used for everything from Town Hall meetings to client entertainment are being expanded and reimagined. Technology is the backbone needed to optimize the performance of these evolving workspaces.



## Enabling Space Performance and Optimizing User Experience with Integrated Technology



### Optimized WiFi

As your law firm reconsiders its space use, it's critical to build the infrastructure and integrate the technology tools required to optimize space use and user experience. A key priority is to enable an untethered environment with a superior Wi-Fi network design that allows seamless connectivity from every corner of the office. In addition, you'll need to have the bandwidth to offer quality connections for remote clients and colleagues to participate seamlessly in everything from small collaborative meetings to multi-office celebrations. The current standard is the 6th generation of wireless networks (aka Wi-Fi 6), which can support large spaces with a dense population of connected mobile devices and demanding business software applications, as well as sophisticated A/V requirements.



### Quality A/V

It's impossible to overstate the importance of quality audio visual capabilities to create a seamless user experience for onsite and remote clients and colleagues. With optimized Wi-Fi network in place, be sure to design A/V solutions that have Wi-Fi or Bluetooth capability for content sharing, and the capacity to connect with any mobile device for interactive learning and collaboration. Untethered technology will be critical to enable quality A/V in flexible spaces, where hi-tech glass partition walls and retractable screens can accommodate large-format presentations that can hide in plain sight and turn a multi-use space into an immersive Town Hall experience.



### Digital Signage

Employee engagement requires the ability to visually communicate and connect with staff members in a timely and compelling way. Beyond traditional corporate communications, changeable digital signage can provide information on law firm priorities and initiatives — such as environmental policy and progress, diversity-equity and inclusion (DE&I), community involvement, space occupancy and cleaning, as well cultural and social events. The signs offer interactive functionality, encouraging exploration and engagement. A signage solution can incorporate both fixed and mobile LED technology for flexibility and can be included in collaboration and social spaces that serve both internal stakeholders and clients.



### Reimagined Conference Rooms

Remote collaboration is driving a revolution in conference room design and technology. Integration of A/V equipment and cloud-based software solutions for remote connectivity offer a similar remote and onsite user experience and more productive meetings. Sophisticated cameras and audio capture combine with 360 degree stadium seating to allow a more intimate and integrated collaboration experience for all users. Bring Your Own mobile Device (BYOD) integration intuitively allows any participant to command the meeting technology with confidence. In fact, artificial intelligence solutions exist that can start and run a meeting in addition to taking notes and attendance for you!



### Integrated Workplace Management Systems (IWMS)

Having a technology-driven, flexible workplace requires a software platform that provides data and feedback regarding space utilization. These metrics allow management to understand current usage and to develop options to optimize use. An IWMS strategy and platform should also provide users the ability to easily schedule spaces as well as all the companion support needs — from food and beverage service and special A/V requirements to marketing materials production. Users can even manage the environmental conditions. These tools simplify the successful coordination of meetings of all sizes and purpose — from client and practice group meetings to community outreach sessions and seminars.



### Future State

Communications and business technology are evolving at lightning speed. Law firm leases typically have terms approaching and exceeding 10 years, so any technology strategy has to anticipate building the infrastructure to support tomorrow's solutions. Anticipate accommodating emerging technology like sensor deployments that provide data and analytics to understand real-time space use trends, allowing for the swift adaptation of spaces to meet work needs and optimize real estate planning. Your IT team and office administrators can also look forward to the convenience and enhanced performance of firmware-based upgrades to connected equipment and devices versus hardware-based upgrades.

## Developing a Technology Strategy for the Future – Today

The future is already with us. What seems extraordinary today – like augmented reality glasses and conference rooms that look more like command and control centers than meeting spaces— are already in the marketplace for early adopters. The challenge is to plan for the future while meeting the immediate needs of the new hybrid workplace. Just as Covid accelerated the acceptance of remote work, the post-pandemic business environment offers a new opportunity to rethink the way your law firm prioritizes its technology strategy. Early and thoughtful adoption of the right approach today could be your firm’s greatest competitive advantage for growth and sustainable success.

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## Next Steps

If your law firm is ready to take the next steps toward a technology-integrated real estate strategy, the process starts with identifying an internal champion and building consensus among senior leadership. Be sure to identify someone who can persuade law firm leaders regarding the priority, expected benefits and investment needed for successful implementation. Keen consensus building, persuasive ongoing communications and excellent project management skills are important factors to guide the strategy through inevitable distractions. Be sure to select outsource partners that can guide you through costs, benefits and the process needed to implement programs across multiple sites. Create a plan and menu of options that allow each unique space to be adopted to the identified profiles and success criteria. Finally, don’t get caught on the sidelines. Develop your integrated technology strategy to support the workplace flexibility you firm needs today and into the future – and GO!

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