

Making the most of space

A business needs to maximise its space. To have more space than you need imposes an unnecessary cost burden, but if your business is expanding you need to be sure that you will have adequate space when it is required.

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The way you design and use your space has an important effect on productivity and quality and also helps to reflect the image you are trying to create for your business.

How do I start planning my space use?

Start with a three-step approach:

- calculate the space needed for each area of your business
- prepare a forecast of the way your space requirements are likely to change over a period
- cost out the space requirements you have arrived at, look at the different ways you satisfy these requirements and test out the results against your business plans.

Putting the figures together

Add together all your individual space requirements to calculate how much you need now. Then look at each element and try to assess how it could vary over time. This calculation would give you your theoretical space requirement but you would need to allow extra for circulation space and corridors: perhaps about 25%. Do not forget equipment such as photocopiers and faxes which occupy space.

Once you have prepared this breakdown you can start testing it against your existing space or you can start looking at other property options.

What if I have too much or too little space?

By the time you have done your preliminary planning, you will begin to get a feel for the way space is driven by your business' requirements. You may have concluded that productivity is being affected by lack of space or you may realise that you have some space that is surplus to requirement. If you want to avoid taking on more space or if you want to free some of your existing space for sub-letting, there are various options you should consider.

Will an open-plan layout save me space?

In many cases, yes. A lot of fixed offices are generally a more expensive and less flexible use of space. So always challenge whether fixed offices are necessary – but do not forget that you will need some meeting rooms for private meetings or client presentations.

It is a good idea to approach your planning from the standpoint of **space needed for the job** rather than **space that reflects status**.

How important is choice of furniture?

The type of furniture you use has a big impact on the amount of space you need. Business furniture falls into one of two main categories: freestanding or system furniture. System furniture is designed in the form of components which can be put together to form workstations. It is likely to be expensive but in most cases can save you space and therefore money.

Could hot desking save on space?

Quite possibly, though it depends on the nature of your business. The principle of hot desking or shared workspace is that you do not allocate a personal desk or workstation to each employee. When they are in the office, employees use whatever workstation is free. This works best when individuals spend a fair part of their time away from their desks – on site or visiting clients.

How should I deal with surplus space?

Usually by sub-letting it to provide a rental income. The first step is to arrange any surplus space into areas which are capable of being let. This means that the space has to be divided off from the rest of your premises and a separate entrance will need to be provided for the tenant.

If you occupy your premises under a lease, before you get to the point of undertaking alterations or building work you will need to check what restrictions there are on sub-letting and what permissions you will require from your landlord. Your chartered surveyor will be able to help to explain the situation and advise you on procedures. Your chartered surveyor will, of course, also be able to help with the approach to marketing your surplus space.

Finally, you might save some money on business rates. Once you have vacated the surplus space and divided it off, you could have it separately rated, then pay reduced rates on the vacant part.



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