

# **The WCO Guide to: A Glossary of Workplace Terms**

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**Prepared by**

Nicola Gillen (Editor)

**The Workplace Consulting Organisation**

**[www.workplaceconsulting.org](http://www.workplaceconsulting.org)**

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## Introduction

This glossary of workplace terms is intended as a single source document for explaining workplace terminology. It is intended as a live document that will be updated over time. It is organised alphabetically.

**Activity Based working** is a term that has come to describe the alignment of work activities with work settings or spaces. It can imply desk sharing but does not have to.

**Activity Based work settings** are collaborative and individual work settings within which work takes place e.g. a quiet room for concentrated work, a soft seating area for informal collaboration. Also known as **Alternative work settings**

**Agile Working** is a term used in North America and now more widely elsewhere, to describe how people work across a variety of spaces. The term usually implies using desk sharing to allow the building to rapidly respond to organisational (headcount) change.

**Alternative work settings** are collaborative and individual work settings within which work occurs, also known as **Activity Based work settings**, e.g. a quiet room for concentrated work, a soft seating area for informal collaboration.

**Alternative work strategies**, is a term used to describe three concepts – remote working, non-dedicated space or desk sharing in office buildings and non-standard working hours.

### **Ancillary space**

The usable area provided accommodating locally shared spaces e.g. vending, printing, local meeting spaces

**Amenity space** refers to spaces other than desking e.g. coffee areas, meeting rooms, restaurants, conferencing, social and sports facilities.

### **Breakout space**

*Settings in the open plan areas to support social interaction and informal meeting for small groups. Also often referred to as 'Soft seating Area'*

### **Building Supply**

Workplace consultants may refer to the Building Supply as the total area, quality and quantities of spaces in a given building. Engineers may use the term to refer to the air flow provided by the building services or power distribution.

### **Core Area**

The area containing lifts, stairs, common lobbies, plant and service areas, ducts, WCs and vertical structures.

### **Current Capacity**

Workplace consultants use the term to refer to the staff/desk?? population that could be accommodated in a building or on a site with the constraints of the existing fit out.

**Desk sharing** usually refers to a team area where people share desks between them e.g. 12 people sharing 10 desks. The team 'owns' the team area and always works from the same area when in the building.

### **Dynamic density**

Dynamic density is a measure of space efficiency used in a desk sharing environment, where more than one individual is allocated to a single desk. The dynamic density of an area is calculated by dividing the total Net Internal Area by the total headcount that use it. This figure will give a lower density per person than static density (defined later) i.e. less space per person.

### **Fit Factor**

The allowance of space in a space budget to take account of the fact that fitting into actual buildings inevitably means some inefficiencies in space will occur.

This can be due to:

- natural obstructions (columns, awkward angles, etc.)
- the size of floors (if they do not fit the size of divisions/units precisely)
- the configuration and shape of floor plates
- the building's planning grid (office sizes may be dictated by window mullion locations).

**Flexible Working** usually refers to a contractual arrangement where an individual will work an agreed minimum of hours over a non standard working week or month, e.g. a compressed week, four day week. The phrase is also used to express a workplace strategy that encompasses flexible hours, desk sharing and mobility.

**Free address** refers to the ability of a flexible worker to choose any empty desk or workspace when in the office.

### **Gross Internal Area (GIA)**

Floor area of building(s) measured to the internal face of external wall or atrium wall including internal structure and core. The GIA includes the following areas: core, primary circulation and net internal area. It excludes roof plant and any totally unlit areas.

**Hot desking** refers to people using an unassigned desk. Hot desking is usually associated with either 100% shared work environments that are often seen in the large consultancies or a small number of unassigned desks within a department used by visitors dropping in. Also known in some organisations as '**hotelling**', especially where a formal desk booking system is in place.

**Home-working** initially referred to as 'teleworking' or 'telecommuting', and was generally working from home at least one day a week in a PC-based 'home office'. With the migration from PCs to laptops and the advent of wireless technology, the term is now associated with a much broader context of 'working from home practices', but it should be noted there are still regulations relating to a company's responsibilities for official 'home-workers'.

**Hotelling** is a term used to describe a hot desking environment or a 100% shared work environment or building. It can also refer to the additional services that may be provided to support desk sharing such as a formal desk booking system or a concierge.

**Mobile officing**, mobility or move to mobility, these terms are used for unassigned workplaces in office buildings. These are often used in North America in place of "flexible working".

### **Net Internal Area (NIA)**

The remaining internal floor area of a building after the Core and any structural elements, eg. columns on the floor plate have been subtracted (i.e. the space that a tenant would pay rent on within the commercial sector) Sometimes this is referred to as net letable by property agents/brokers.

Total floor area of a building to internal face of external or atrium walls excluding core, internal structure and plant. In the UK it is often referred to as net letable by property agents/brokers.

### **Net Usable Area (NUA)**

The usable area remaining after the Net Internal Area and Primary Circulation have been subtracted.

**New Ways of Working** is a term coined by DEGW in the 1990's and refers to aligning work space to work activities. New Ways of Working challenges the assumption that people only work at a desk. Work is actually carried out across a number of spaces over the course of a day, New Ways of Working looks to understand work patterns and match the space provided to those activities.

**Nomadic working** or nomadism generally refers to working in non-purpose-built office spaces or 'third places', such as hotels, cars, trains, home or planes. It is closest to the concept 'work anywhere/anytime'.

**Non-dedicated space** refers to space that is not owned by an individual.

**Occupancy level** as there is no industry standard terminology, caution is required when interpreting occupancy or utilisation study results. The WCO recommends that for workplaces other than learning environments the following definitions are applied:

**Occupancy level** refers to the average amount of time a building as a whole is occupied by staff – it provides one overall figure of building occupancy, averaging departments and time etc; This figure is often calculated using swipe card entry data, PC log in data or observation studies. It provides one overall figure of building occupancy.

**Occupied** refers to measurement or observation of the time a person is present in the space, regardless of their activity;

Also refer to the definition of Utilisation.

**Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE)** is the process of evaluating buildings in a systematic and rigorous manner after they have been built and occupied for some time. A POE provides feedback of how successful the workplace is in supporting the occupying organisation and individual end-user requirements. Industry advice is to wait at least three months after move-in before conducting a POE in order to allow an initial settle period.

### **Potential Capacity**

The population that could be accommodated in a building or on site.

### **Primary Circulation**

The area required to maintain routes for life safety, linking access and egress points, lifts and stairwells. Size and area occupied will be established with reference to local statutory codes practice.

**Quiet booths/pods/study rooms:** Fixed, enclosed study rooms provide spaces for either single occupancy e.g. teleconference use or small groups of two or three people to work collaboratively. Acoustic privacy is important.

**Remote Working** refers to anytime when people work from a location other than their primary office location.

**Satellite offices or locations** tend to be around the outskirts of large cities, and are different from suburban branches because of the provision of flexible/non-assigned space only – often booked on a 'hotelling' basis.

### **Seat Count**

The total number of occupiable seats in the Office Area, including formal and informal work spaces. In contrast, the desk count is the number of desks available.

**Serviced offices** are a range of solutions, from use of non-occupied space in other companies' office buildings, to serviced office suites with shared meeting rooms and public spaces.

### **Static density**

The static density (or occupational density) of an area is calculated by dividing the total area by the total headcount permanently based in that area. This figure is based upon one to one desk allocation. Building regulations are based upon static densities.

**Sharing ratio:** The expression used to define the ratio of desks to people being used for space budgeting purposes (e.g. 100 desks for 120 people = 1.20 or 120% or 10:12). This is often expressed in reverse ie a ratio of 10:8 staff to desks.

**Soft seating Area:** Settings in the open plan areas to support social interaction and informal meeting for small groups. Also often referred to as 'breakout space'.

**Space budget:** A tool (usually excel based) used to calculate total space requirements by summing up the space needed for all relevant space components, worksettings, meeting spaces, circulation, fit factor etc. A space budget will often include formulae to calculate the most appropriate proportion of support spaces. Can be used to model scenarios of space use.

### **Space Demand/requirement**

Is a numeric description of an organisation's total demand for space. The Space Demand is built up from summing the 'forecast' of individual Workstations into workspace Area and adding, Ancillary Space, Amenity Space, and Fit Factor.

**Third places** are non-traditional work locations not including the - office or home, and are part of the new mix of physical settings. Examples are libraries or coffee shops, but there is also a concept emerging for buildings designed specifically for mixed use.

**Touchdown Area:** A range of work settings supporting short intermittent work such as checking email between meetings.

**Utilisation:** as there is no industry standard terminology, caution is required when interpreting occupancy or utilisation study results. The WCO recommends

that for workplaces other than learning environments the following definitions are applied:

**Utilisation level** usually refers to the average amount of time different types of spaces or floors are used by different departments, grades of people. This figure is often calculated using a Time Utilisation Study (sometimes referred to as a space observation survey or similar) which usually involves a trained observer following a set route and recording how spaces are being used over a period of time, usually recommended to be two weeks. The data can also be gathered via a sensor based system. The data can usually be broken down by departments/space types/days/time etc. The Utilisation level gives a finer grain of data than an occupancy level which typically refers to an entire building.

**Utilised** refers to observation of when a person is both present or when there are signs of occupancy but no one is physically present;

Also refer to the definition of Occupancy.

**Video-Conference Room:** Enclosed room, technology-enabled to support collaborative work sessions and enhanced connectivity with remote groups.

**Virtual office** is a reference to the concept that one's office is actually wherever you access your technology.

**Workspace Area**

The configuration of space and furniture within an Office Area that enables a person to work. This includes secondary circulation.

**Workstation**

Area occupied by the individual office worker and accompanying furniture.

## References

\* 'Making Flexible Working Work', 2010, BCO, OCCO.

Working Without Walls (2004) joint publications of OGC and DEGW.

Working Beyond Walls (2008) joint publications of OGC and DEGW.