Workplace Redesign

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Why Study Workplace Redesign?

Numerous organizations have undergone or are considering undergoing a workplace redesign. Redesigns range in scope from updating furniture to completely changing the way people work.

Redesigns can have a significant impact on:

- Cost
- Productivity
- Engagement
- Attraction of Talent

Organizations grapple with finding the most effective and efficient redesign strategy.

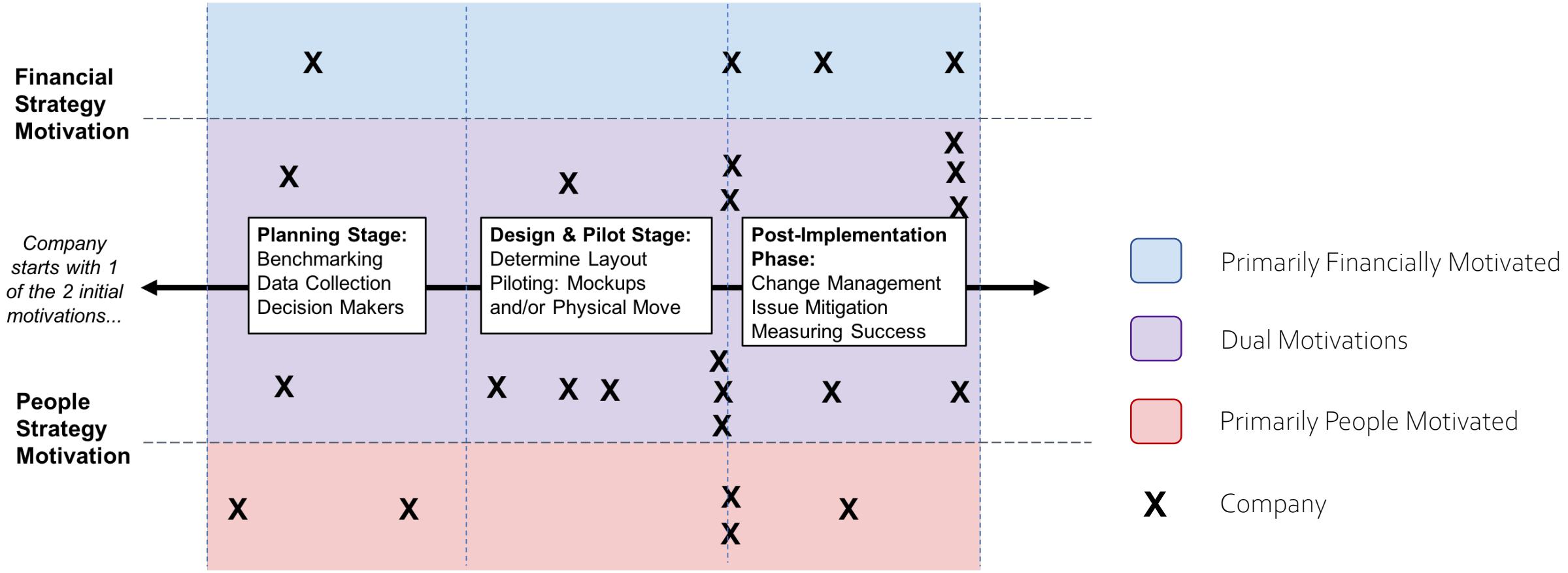
Our Goal: To provide context and insights on the most common strategies in this space, along with recommendations for those embarking on this journey.

Study Methodology

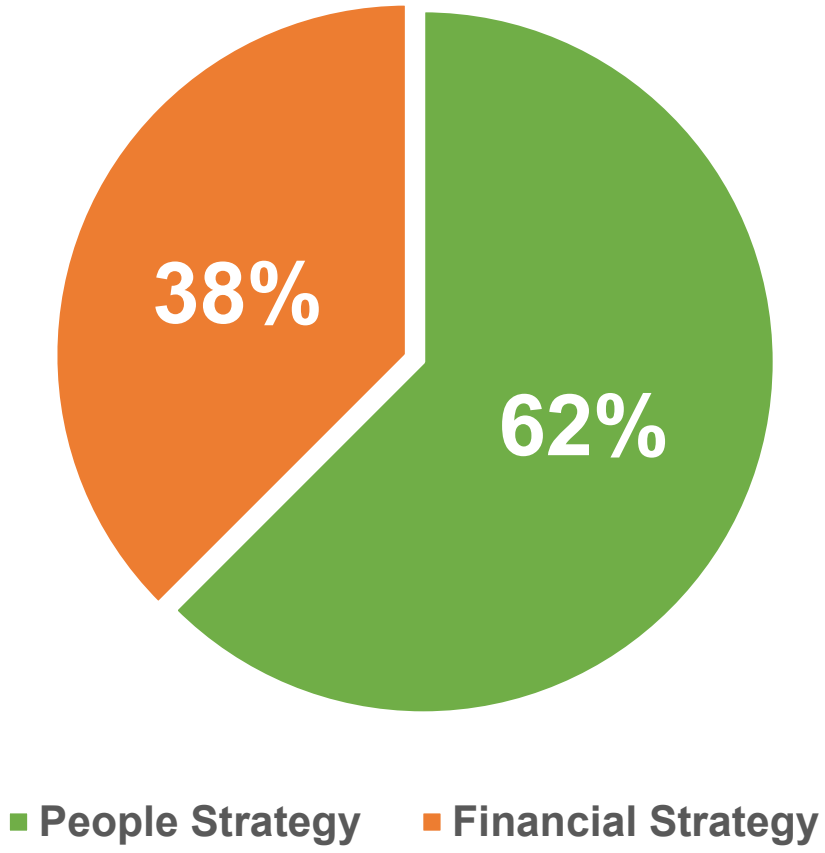
- Number of companies in study: 25
- Variety of industries, sector, and company size
- Titles of participants ranged from “Director of HR” to “Head of Real Estate & Location Strategy” to “Director of Organizational Design”
- 60-minute phone interviews with structured set of questions

Analysis Techniques:
- Qualitative & quantitative coding
- Sentiment analysis

Workplace Design Strategy Spectrum



What Motivated The Redesign?

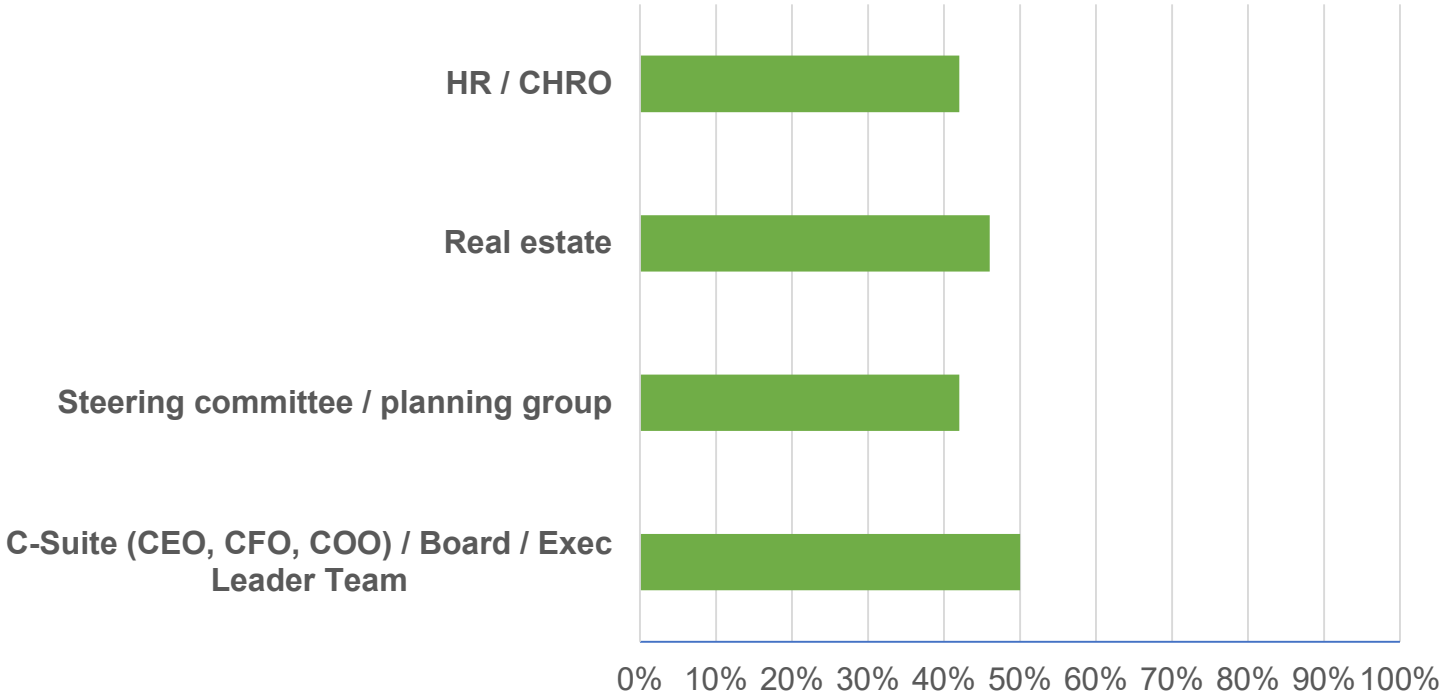


*Categories are not mutually exclusive

People Strategy Primary Drivers	
Enhancing collaboration / engagement	46%
Competing for talent	42%
Employee experience	38%

Financial Strategy Primary Drivers	
Financial savings	38%
Building updates	21%
Utilization of space / need more space	21%

Key Decision Makers

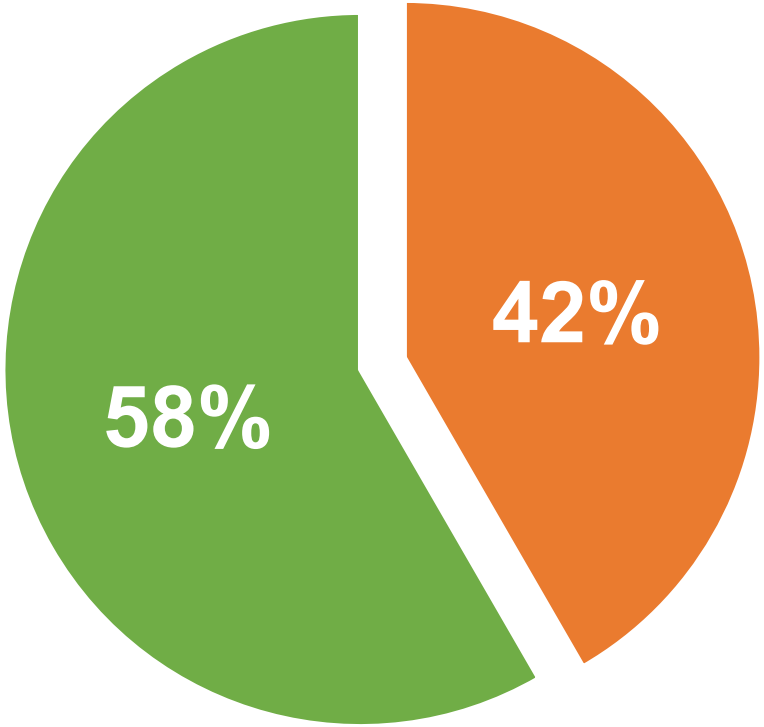


Percentages reflect companies who reported a specific decision maker

**Categories are not mutually exclusive*

Key decision-makers vary by company and by stage of the redesign.

HR's Role in the Process

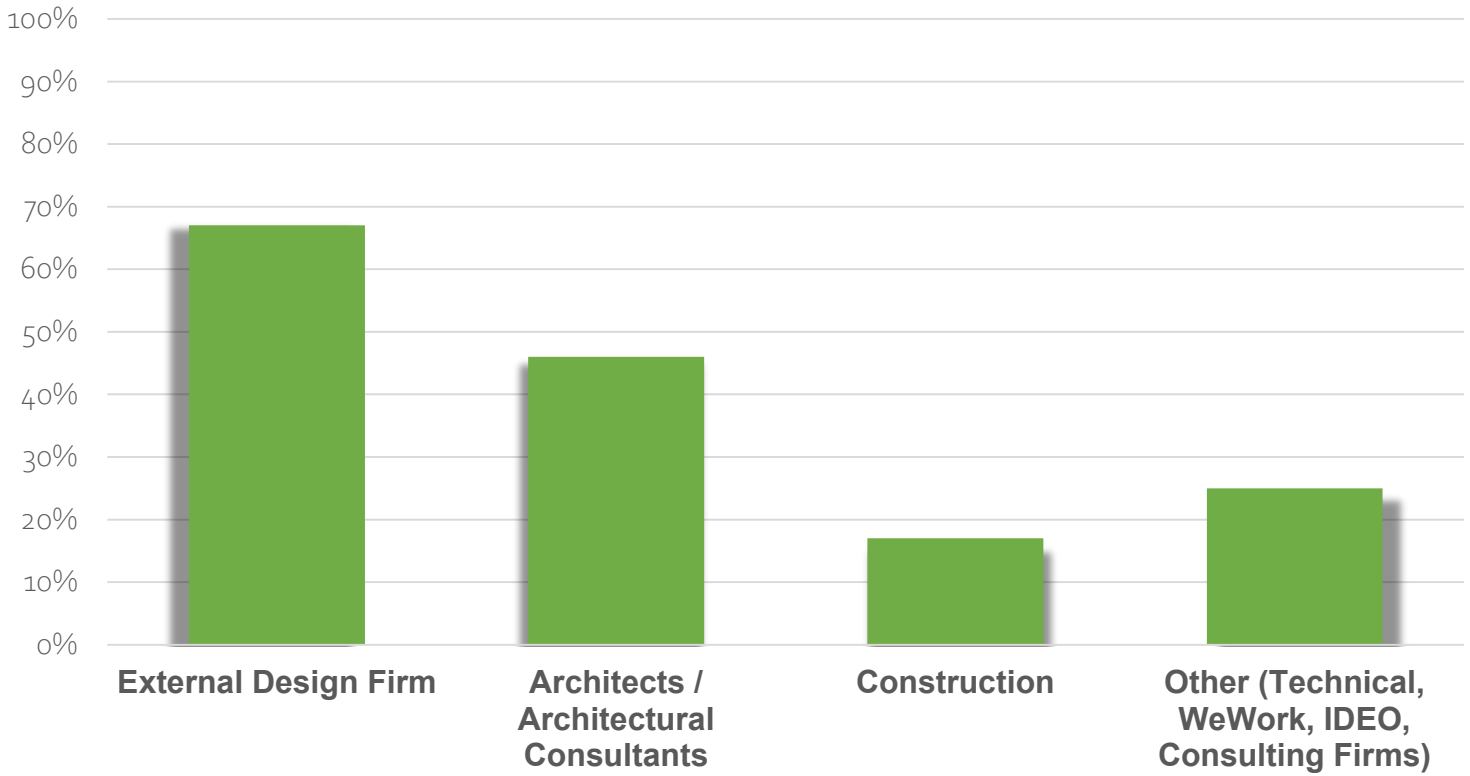


Strategic Behaviors
Messaging
Decision making
Engaging employees / employee experience

Non-Strategic Behaviors
Validation
Intermediary
Reactive issue mitigation

While HR's role tends to be variable across companies and is industry agnostic, the most commonly reported HR roles involved engaging employees in the redesign process.

Companies Who Reported Using A Specific Type of External Partner



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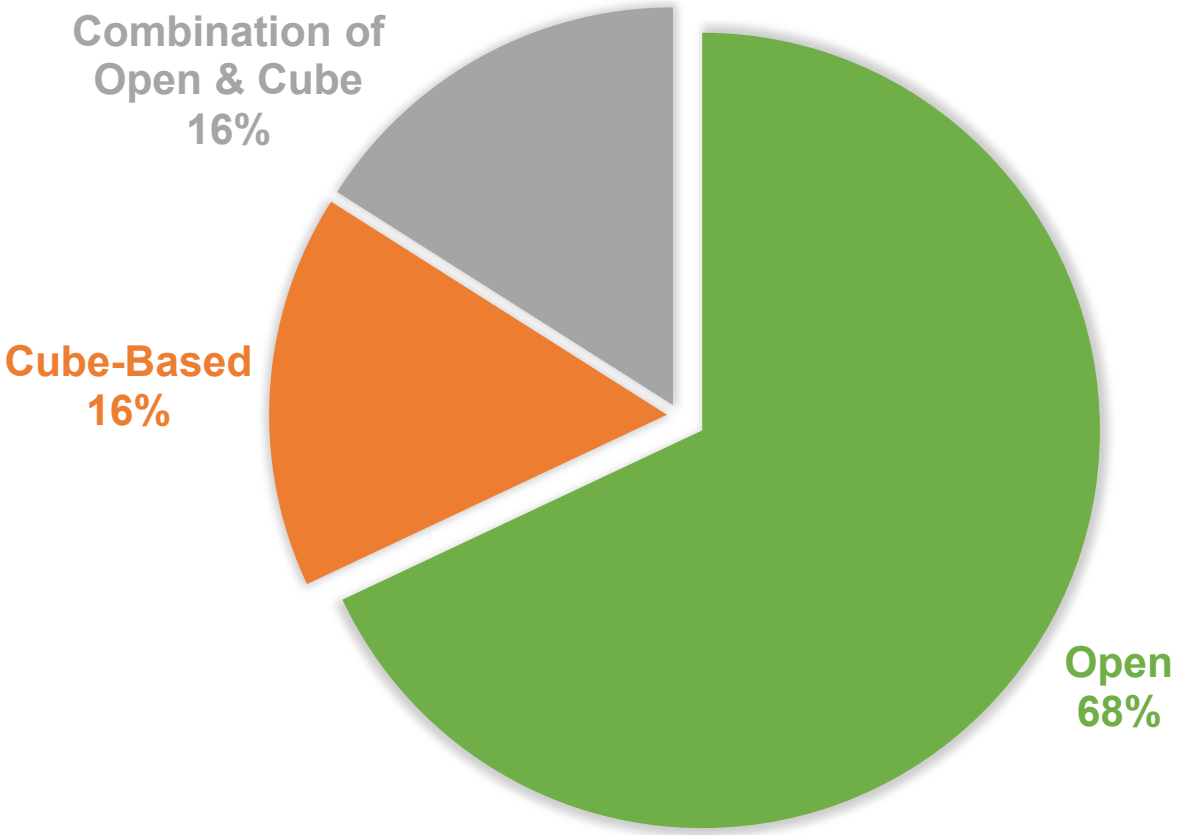
Companies tend to use different partners at different phases of their redesign.

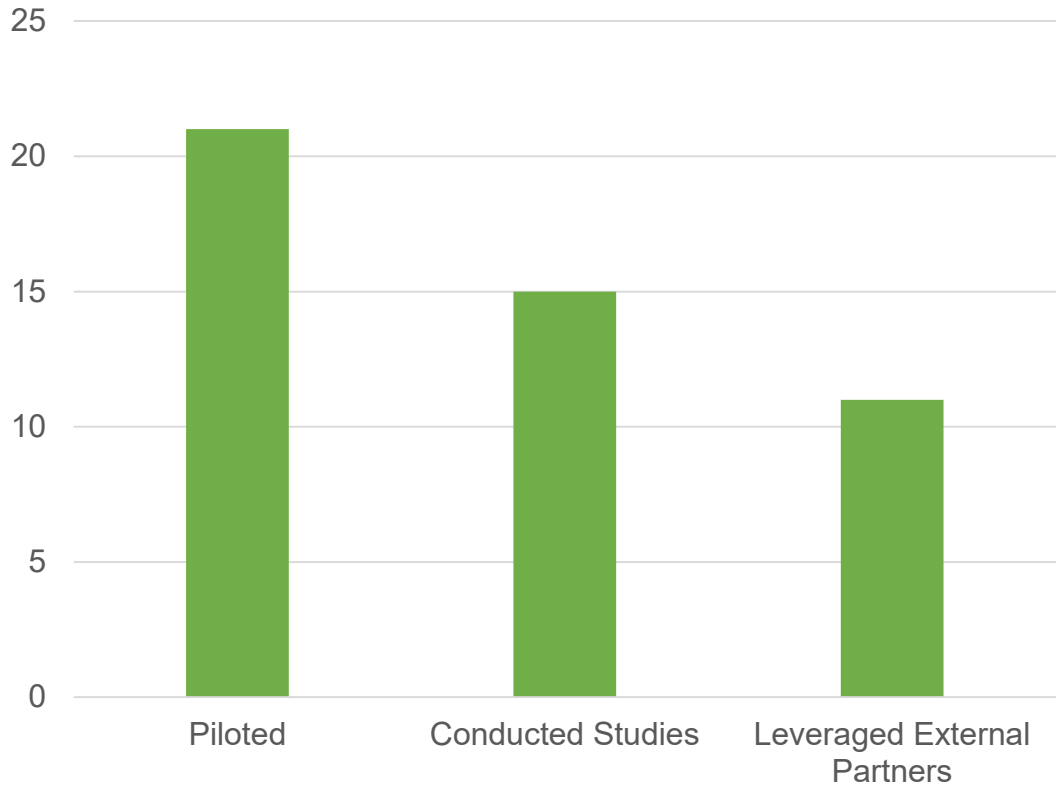
Which Layout Is Primarily Used?



A majority of companies use an open-space layout concept.

Activity-Based Work (ABW) was also a common trend. ABW provides employees with a variety of work spaces designed for different tasks and working styles.
72% of companies utilize ABW concepts.

How Did You Decide Which Layout to Use?



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Of the 21 companies that reported using pilots:

- **67%** of the companies utilized mockups (e.g., furniture fairs, tours of a model space, etc.)
- **33%** utilized a larger scale pilot (e.g., a full move)

How Were Employees Involved in the Design Process?

Are employees involved in the design process?	
Yes	88%
No	12%

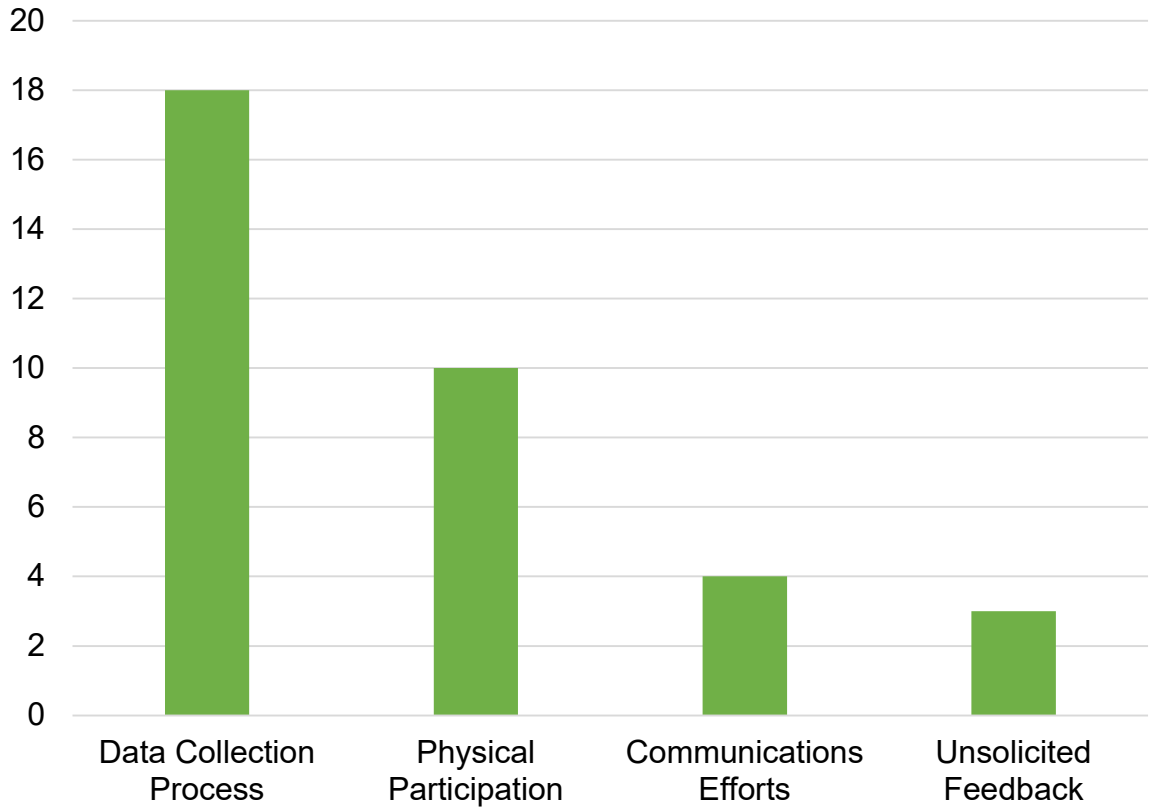
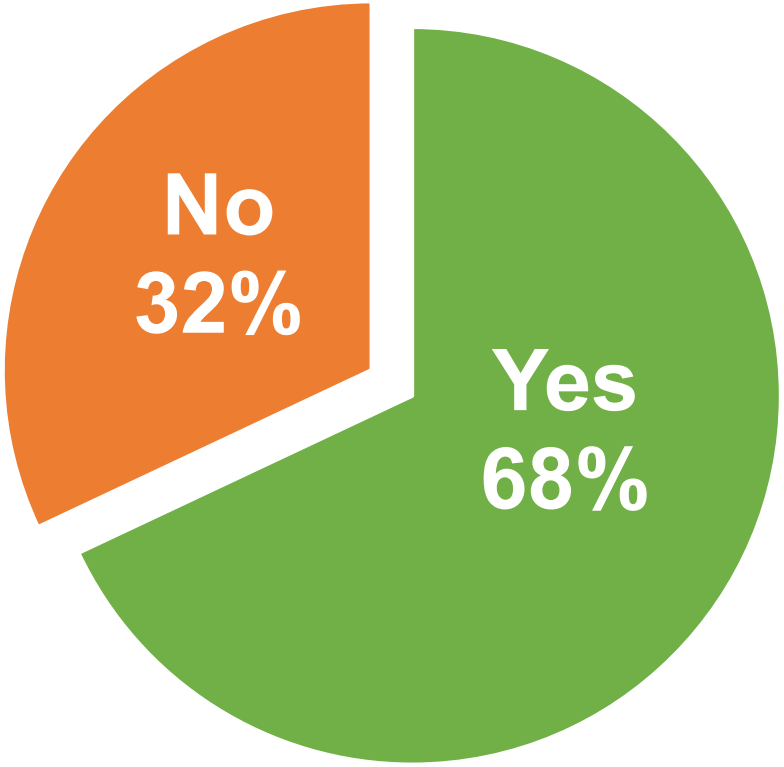


**Chart based on the 88% of companies that answered "yes" to this question*

**Categories are not mutually exclusive*

The most common way to involve the voice of the employee in the design process was via surveys.

Is Your Workplace Design Standardized Across The Company?

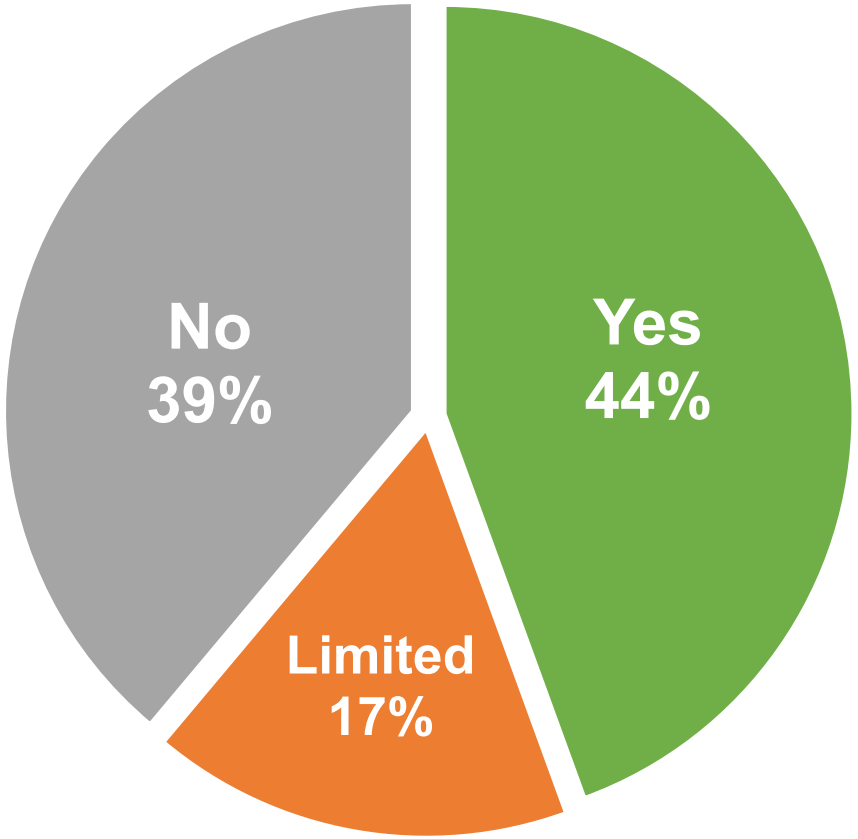


Not every company has a rigid design – many allow for flexibility.

52% of companies allowed for local customization on the basis of specific needs of the group / job function.

Standardization: Having one design or a set of design options that are applied across the entire company.

Are Employees Allowed to Personalize Their Workspace?



**Based on the 19 companies that answered this question*

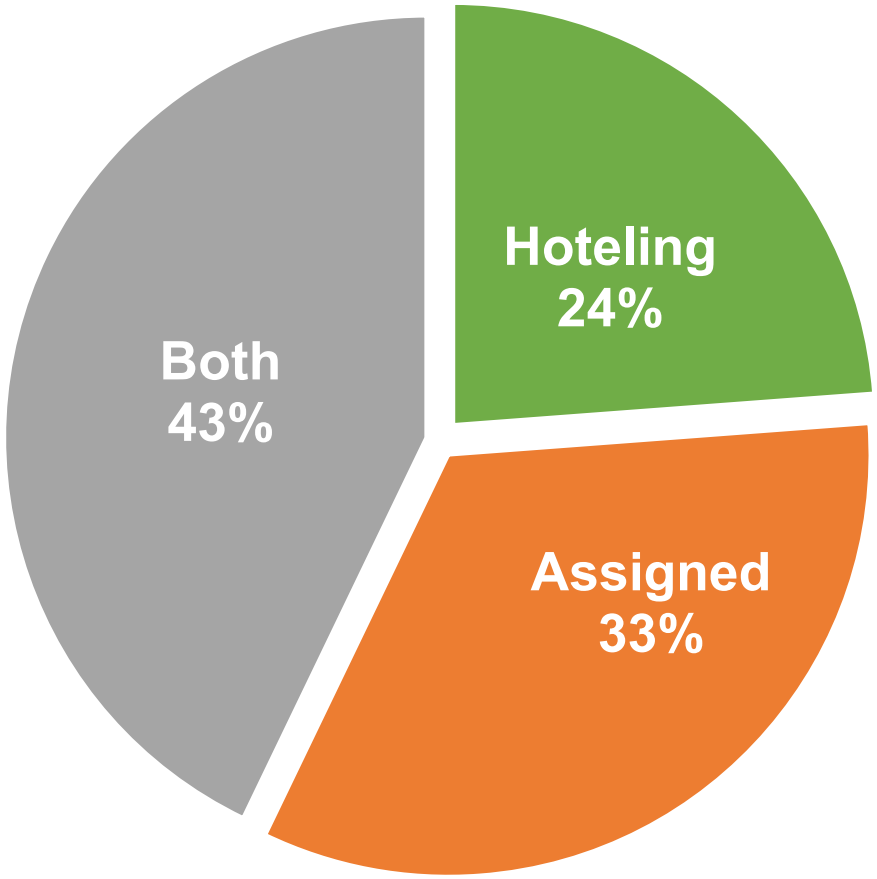
Yes – Allowed to Personalize

- Allowed to permanently decorate space with personal items (e.g., family photos, plants, etc.)

Limited Personalization

- Allowed to decorate your work station for the day, but must take it with you at end of day
- Allowed to decorate lockers, shared photo boards, etc.

Hoteling vs. Assigned Seats

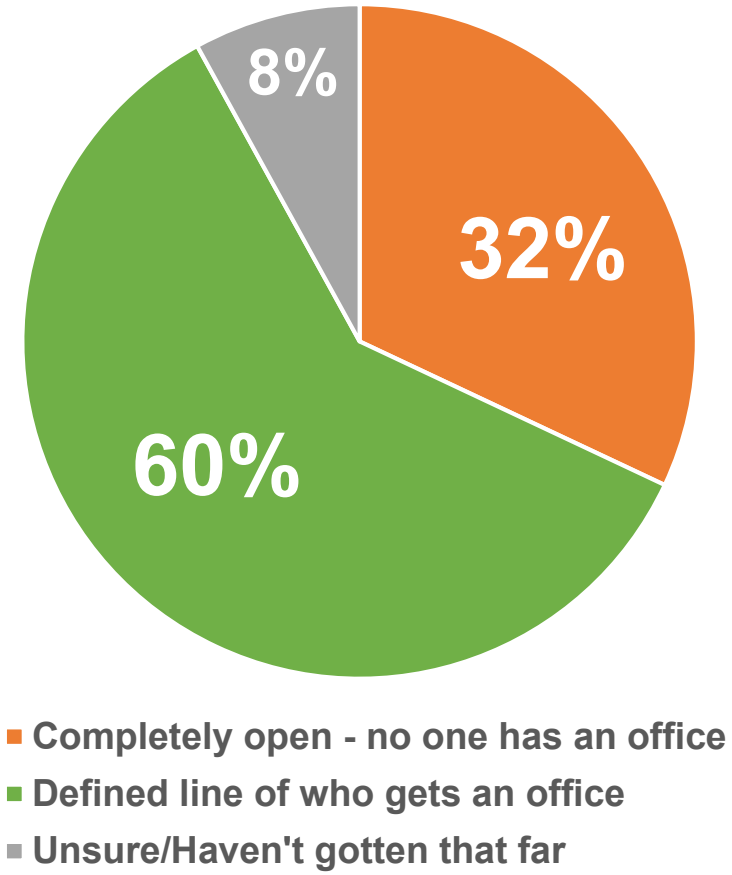


*Based on the 21 companies that answered this question

Most companies are utilizing both assigned seating and hoteling.

Some companies are unable to move towards the trend of hoteling, primarily due to privacy concerns.

How Do You Handle Hierarchy in Your New Space?

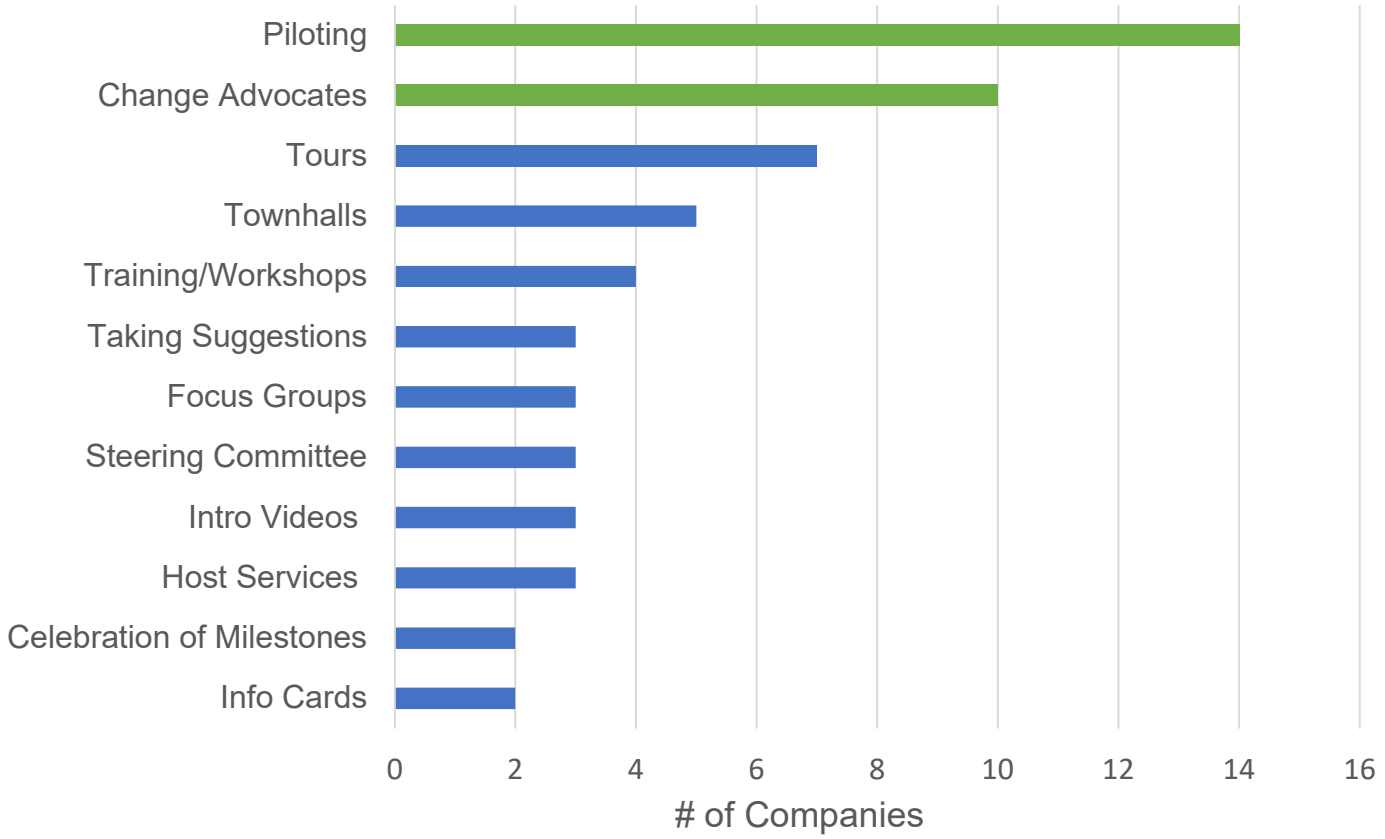


This was an issue that many companies grappled with.

Most common criterion was assigning offices based on EE level (65%).

Other criteria: Amount of space, business unit, job function, location, specific needs/by request

Common Change Management Methods

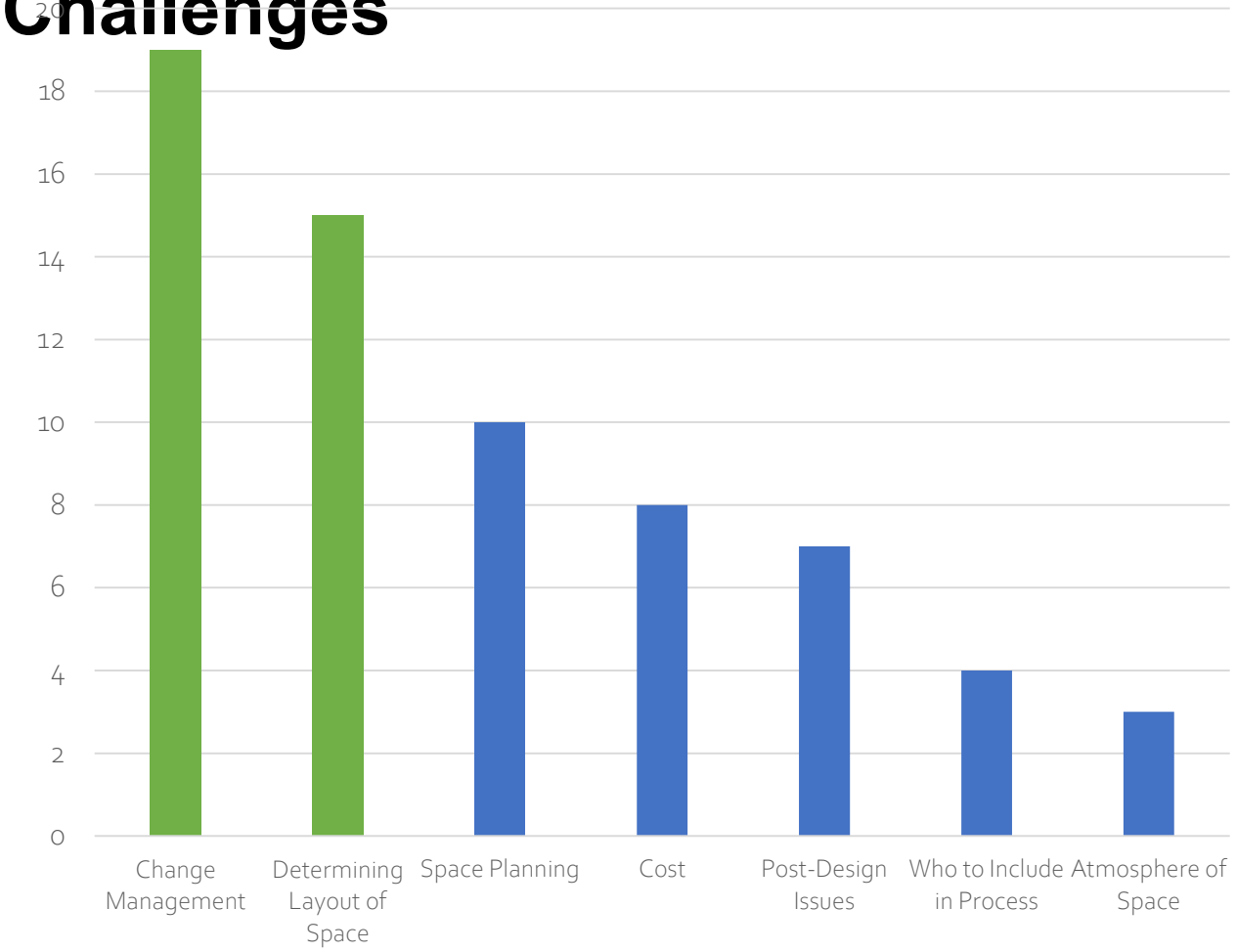


**Categories are not mutually exclusive*

Piloting was also the most common change management method.

Other methods included etiquette training and introduction videos.

Commonly Reported Concerns & Challenges



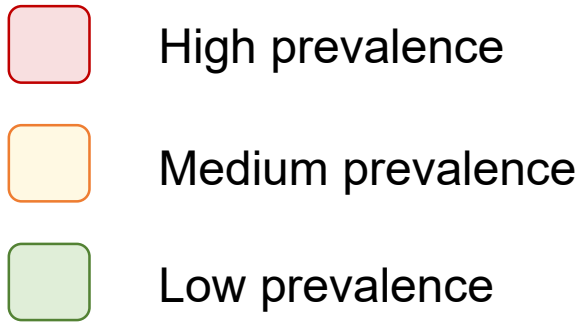
**Categories are not mutually exclusive*

Change Management: Changing mindsets and behaviors of employees to work differently.

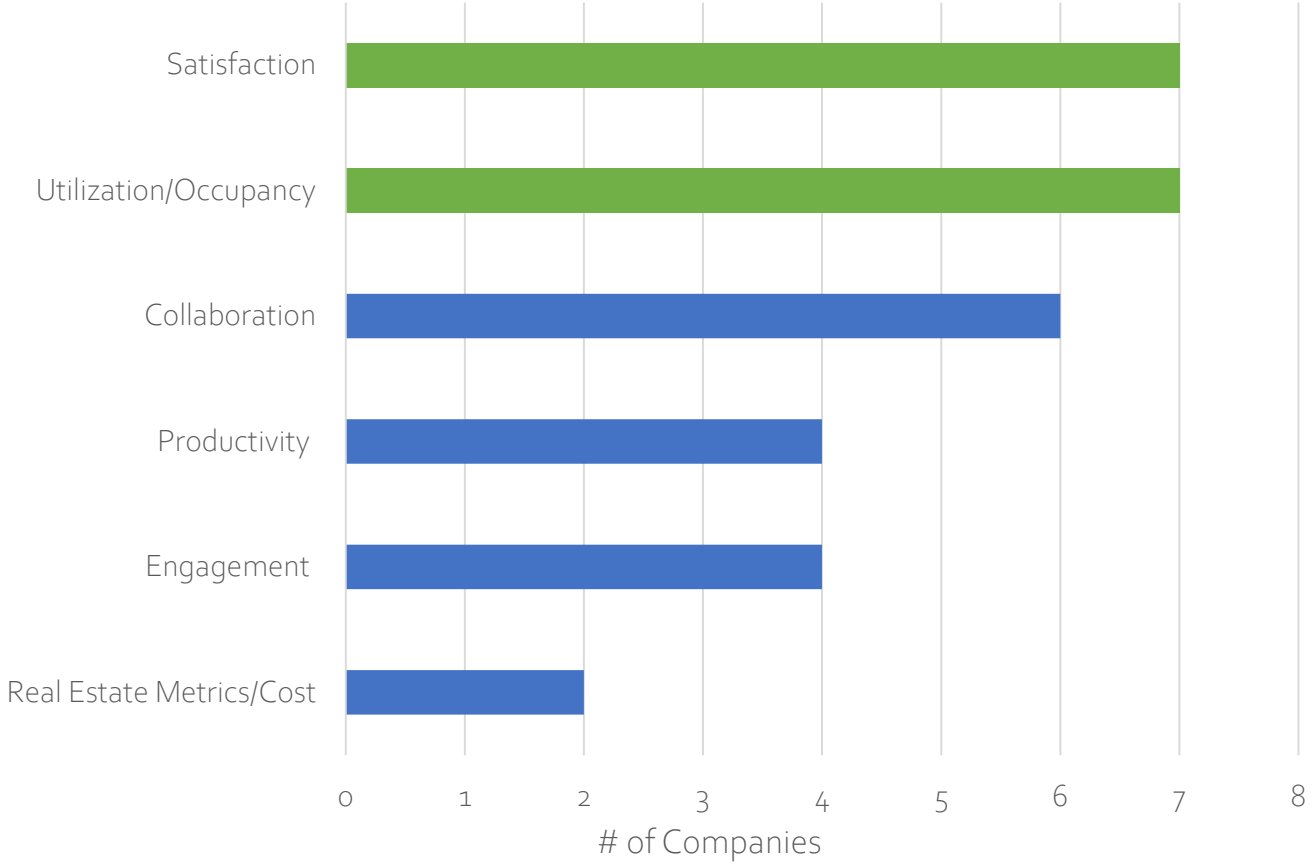
Determining Layout: Getting the right mix of huddle spaces and conference rooms, allowing for adaptability.

Issue Mitigation Strategies

Issue Category	Mitigation Strategies
Work Privacy	Privacy screens on computers, building out more private rooms/phone booths, acoustic panels on walls, increase in flex work options
Lighting	Shades for afternoon sun, dimmer lights, open seating near windows, adjusting the height of panels to limit lighting, special dark rooms created for people with light sensitivity
Handling Complaints	“War rooms”, pulse surveys, ticketing systems/facilities service requests, temporary help desks, proactive communication strategy
Noise	White noise, headphones, sound masking, construction only after hours, choosing ceiling tile and carpet that absorbs more noise
Temperature	Comfy App, flexibility in where you can work
Lacking Personalization	Photos in lockers, shared boards in neighborhoods



Commonly Reported Success Measures



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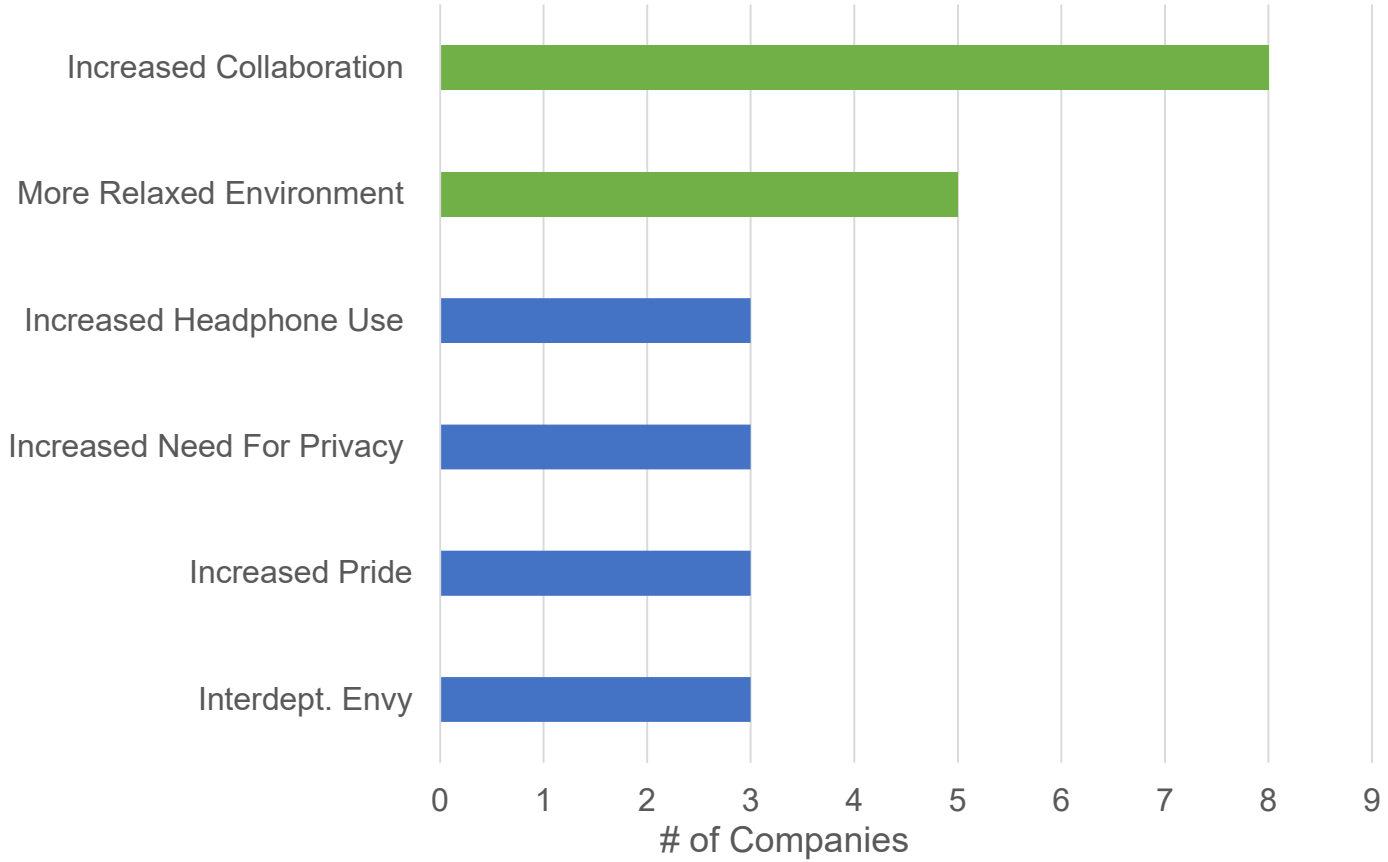
100% used surveys as a means of collecting data to measure success.

Sample survey questions:

- Is it easier to collaborate?
- On average per week, how frequently are you working in X workspace?
- How does your existing work environment support productivity?

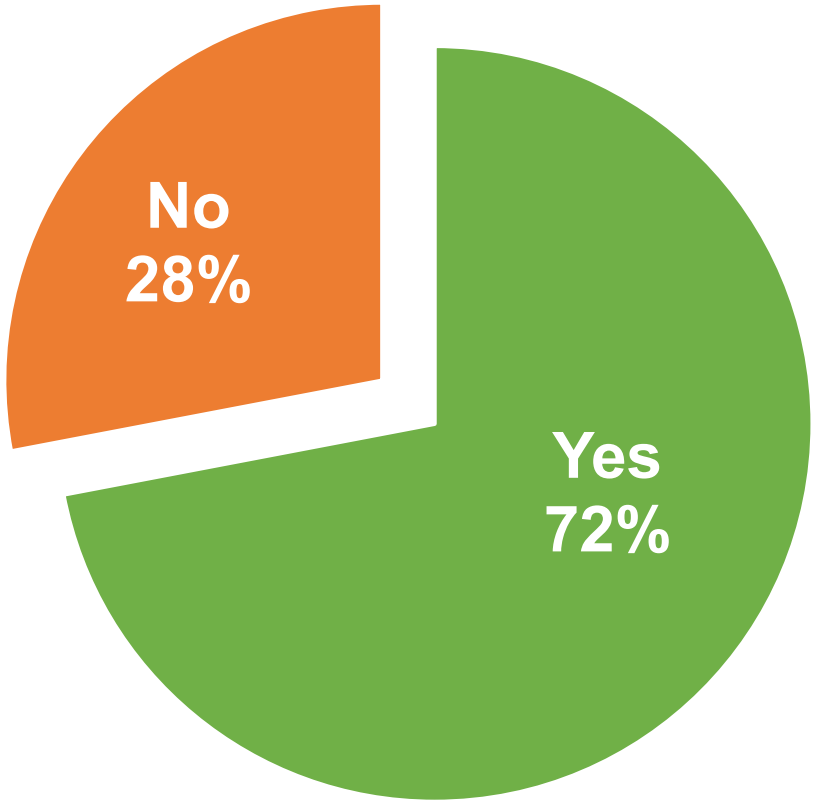
Most Common Behaviors Observed Post-Redesign



**Categories are not mutually exclusive*

The most common observation was people engaging with each other more frequently through spontaneous interactions.

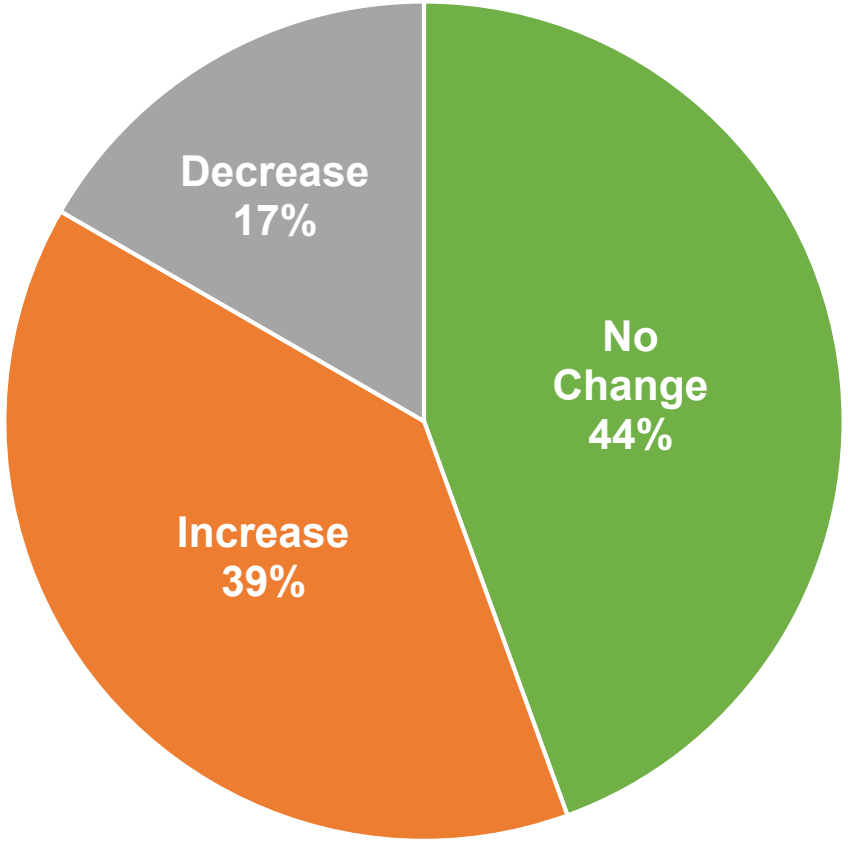
Do You Have A Formal Remote Work Policy?



72% have a formal policy, but enforcement is up to managers.

28% said no defined nor standardized policy is in place, ultimately leaving decisions to the team and their managers.

Effect of Redesign on Remote Work



*Based on the 18 companies that answered this question

Overall, respondents had mixed opinions on how redesign impacts remote work trends.

21% had the explicit aim of bringing people back despite the growing trend of remote work.

If You're About to Embark On This Journey…

1. What are your primary strategic drivers?
2. Take the time to understand your employees
   - Your business context is more important than trendy articles
3. Consider HR's role – they can make a big impact if they're involved early on
4. Consider common pitfalls:
   - Too much reliance on forecasted headcount
   - Retroactive space planning
     - # of conference rooms/closed-off spaces
     - Parking

Key Takeaways

- HR has an opportunity to make a greater impact in this space
  - Involvement in strategy discussions
  - Understanding needs of new & diverse generations of employees
  - Proactive change management leadership

- It's important to engage your employees in the process
  - Don't be afraid to get creative!
  - Be intentional about who you're involving
  - Pilots can be small-scale

- Still figuring out how to measure success…
  - Consider innovative methods to assess progress
  - E.g., sociometric badges, # of "collisions", third-party observation studies

Keeping an Eye on the Future…

- Infusing technology into redesign
  - "Smart Building Design"
- Incorporating wellness into redesign strategy