Smaller Spaces – Bigger Results
Moving from Office Spaces to Engagement Environments

An AVI-SPL White Paper

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Introduction

Watch an episode of Mad Men or an old movie with a workplace setting and the importance given to office space is unmistakable. Junior workers, crowded into a common “bullpen,” strive to earn their way up to their own tiny, private offices. Executives reside in expansive suites, gobbling up huge chunks of office real estate. The message is clear. Private is more important. Bigger is better.

In today’s environment of worker mobility, soaring real estate prices, and an increased need for virtual collaboration, that’s not the case anymore. Office space is no longer the primary reflection of company rank and prestige. The focus has shifted from the physical footprint to the actual use of office space. The growth of remote workers and the need to connect employees scattered throughout the world has caused the walls to come down and has ushered in the era of smaller, flexible workspaces.

Advances in unified collaboration technology from industry leaders like Polycom have enabled this transition. Voice has been the vehicle of choice for connecting in-house and off-site workers, but the advent of pervasive video and enablement of content sharing has enhanced collaboration to levels not previously possible. As a result, office workspace has been reduced as organizations move toward open collaboration spaces and smaller huddle rooms.
The reduction in the size of meeting rooms hasn’t adversely affected worker productivity. In fact, the move to these spaces has in many ways increased collaboration effectiveness and staff engagement. This paper will discuss the ongoing evolution in the use of office space and how it has affected meeting dynamics, the benefits organizations have realized as a result, and some things to consider as your company begins to move toward a smaller space environment.

**Changing Workspace Dynamics**

If it feels like your office space is shrinking, it’s not your imagination. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average occupied office space per employee has declined from nearly 204 sq. ft. in 2010 to just over 191 sq. ft. in 2014.⁠¹ A survey by real estate and workplace professionals predicts space per worker will fall to 100 sq. ft. by 2017. A quarter of respondents said they already were at that number. One of the main drivers of the trend was the desire of businesses to move to “smaller but smarter” offices.²

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**Graph: Usage Factor Is Shrinking Over Time**

*Occupied Office Space Per Employee*

“Gray Space” accumulated during Great Recession

Advances in technology are making the shift to smaller spaces possible. Remote workers are rarely in the office, and those who are on site tend to spend most of their time collaborating with other team members in common areas. The fastest growing of these workspaces are small, huddle rooms that typically hold six or less people. Companies are finding that more work gets done in these small environments than in larger meeting rooms.

Another significant change in these collaboration spaces is a shift from the “bowling alley” configuration where people sit lined up at a conference table looking up at a video wall display. Smaller meeting rooms lend themselves better to gatherings “in the round” — a more natural circular engagement that dates back to the dawn of time. By removing seating hierarchy, people tend to connect and collaborate at a higher level.

Source: Understanding the Huddle Room, Wainhouse Research, 2015. Estimate of the total number of meeting rooms, including immersive (telepresence) suites, boardrooms, large meeting rooms, and huddle rooms, around the world.
Benefits of Smaller Spaces

Better Engagement
Business success today is increasingly shifting from one driven by individual contributors to one where group collaboration is key. Such teamwork is much more effective in smaller rooms where teams can gather to discuss issues and resolve problems. With an estimated 50 million “huddle rooms” in existence, businesses are clearly buying into the improved productivity that comes from these smaller spaces. Many feel that smaller group meetings bring out the cooperative and supportive nature of the individual worker, resulting in better outcomes for the business.

Enhanced Virtual Collaboration
Organizations consider collaboration a key driver of innovation and idea creation. As the workforce becomes more dispersed and remote, this collaboration must now be virtual as well as physical. Designing smaller workspaces with the latest in video technology enables employees to collaborate effectively everywhere, from anywhere. Video collaboration overcomes distance barriers and allows organizations to assemble the best teams and talent on projects regardless of location. This makes collaboration more effective and efficient in terms of time saved, time to market, and cost.

The walls are coming down in many companies to drive space efficiency and productivity. Businesses are trying to promote cost savings, faster decision making, and increased revenue in every inch of their real estate investment.

Increased Employee Satisfaction and Retention
Millenials are increasingly entering the workforce and seek a flexible work environment and appropriate work/life balance. However, that doesn't mean they all want to work remotely. One study from Georgia Tech showed that while millenials desire flexibility in their work experience, more than 40 percent prefer to work mainly from one office. Creating small collaboration spaces where workers can meet with team members helps meet that need and drives employee satisfaction. And while flexible working has primarily been viewed as an employee benefit, it has been shown to improve remote worker productivity by 39 percent.

More Efficient Use of Technology
The walls are coming down in many companies to drive space efficiency and productivity. Businesses are trying to promote cost savings, faster decision making, and increased revenue
in every inch of their real estate investment. Incorporating advanced unified collaboration technology enhances the smaller collaboration rooms by allowing people to get work done more efficiently. Enabling these spaces with technology provides better collaboration outcomes than can be achieved in cavernous conference rooms or individual cubicles.

**Reduced Real Estate Costs**

The need for more and better collaboration environments and the transition to smaller workspaces has an additional financial advantage for businesses. Only a quarter of respondents to a recent Cushman & Wakefield survey cited cost control factors as a primary driver of their workplace transformation program. However, since real estate costs are typically the second large expense item after salaries, any reduced cost in that area clearly makes a significant impact to the bottom line.

**Drivers of Workplace Change – Globally**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTORS</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce real estate costs</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attract and retain employees</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase communication and collaboration</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase employee productivity</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase creativity and innovation</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve agility and customer responsiveness</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduce churn and facilities costs</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve work-life balance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduce other costs (e.g., paper, utilities, travel)</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduce carbon footprint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhance business continuity and disaster recovery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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Considerations When Moving to Smaller Spaces

Creating smaller, effective collaboration spaces is more than simply reducing square footage. You need to make sure you leverage the appropriate technology to get the most from these spaces and understand the impact this technology will have on your IT environment.

Technology Enablers

Polycom, a leader in the UC space, continues to develop products that are key technology enablers in making the most effective use of these smaller environments. These innovations include:

- **Polycom® RealPresence Centro™**: Purpose-built to revolutionize team collaboration, RealPresence Centro draws all participants to the center of the experience regardless of their location. RealPresence Centro 360-degree cameras and sensors, and intelligent switching create a virtual circle where everyone remains in close eye contact — even as people move around the room. Virtual participants join the meeting via four touch-sensitive displays that enable more collaborative interactions.
• **Polycom® RealPresence Trio™**: The first smart hub for group collaboration. It transforms Polycom’s familiar three-point conference phone into a voice, video, and content sharing system that fits perfectly in a small room environment. Teams are able to gather, hear one another clearly, easily share content, and see one another with the convenience of a touchscreen device.

• **Polycom® RealPresence Debut™**: A simple, affordable enterprise grade video conferencing solution ideally suited to the unique needs of huddle rooms and other small collaboration environments. RealPresence Debut uses a specially designed camera with a wide field of view that works perfectly in smaller spaces that are sometimes wider than they are deep. The compact design of RealPresence Debut allows it to sit comfortably on top of a monitor while its integrated stereo microphones are optimized to capture every voice equally.

• **Polycom® RealPresence® Group Convene™**: Delivers rich video and content for small group and personal collaboration. It is a flexible system that allows you to deploy the right solution based on the unique needs of each room or environment. RealPresence Group Convene is a simple way to extend collaboration to huddle rooms and smaller meeting spaces. The system can be placed on a table or mounted on a wall to ensure everyone can be seen and heard clearly.

Polycom® RealPresence® Group Convene™ is an attractive and simple way to extend collaboration to huddle rooms, smaller meeting spaces, and open workspaces — wherever people gather.
• **Polycom® Acoustic Fence™ and NoiseBlock™ Technology:** When implementing huddle rooms or small open spaces a key challenge is ensuring quality audio. Ambient noise outside the workspace can disrupt the team and reduce meeting effectiveness. Polycom is addressing these issues with a series of advanced audio solutions. Acoustic Fence confines the audio in small spaces in open environments. Microphones inside the space pick up the audio from the meeting while a series of other microphones establish a “fence” boundary that keeps sounds outside the area from disturbing participants. NoiseBlock uses algorithms to pick up and block typing and paper shuffling noises from participants on the call.

**IT Impact**

Your primary concern is How your teams will get value out of these smaller collaboration spaces, so it helps for you to understand the science that links the technology with collaborative engagement and efficiency. You are likely aware of the technology that is available to enhance smaller spaces but you may look outside for integration experts that can help you design and implement the best solution for your organization.

*A managed services program that provides remote and onsite services that can prevent disruptions, fix problems, and handle a wide range of technical and creative functions can be the key to ensuring an effective and always available UC environment.*

The effectiveness of these smaller spaces will lead to their greater use and will put more pressure on your IT group to make sure the technology works — all the time. You may not have the resources required to manage the entire UC environment and may consider outsourcing some or all of it. The rapid evolution of the technology in the UC space may also be a reason to consider engaging outside help.

An expert integrator like AVI-SPL can work with you to define your collaboration goals and create solutions that improve the ability of your employees to work together and share knowledge. They can also ensure the integrity and reliability of your UC system so your IT staff can focus on your network and security. A managed services program that provides remote and onsite services that can prevent disruptions, fix problems, and handle a wide range of technical and creative functions can be the key to ensuring an effective and always available UC environment.
Summary

As the workplace continues to transform, it’s become clear that smaller spaces can yield big outcomes. By enabling smaller work spaces, you are gaining more collaborative value for your company. Implementing small huddle rooms and in-the-round environments enable smaller team engagements that become a valuable component of your overall collaboration strategy.

Organizations that are transforming their workplace can rely on video collaboration solutions to support their innovative initiatives. The transition to smaller spaces brings real business benefits by reducing operational costs, improving space utilization, increasing employee engagement, supporting a global workforce, and attracting and retaining valuable employees.
About AVI-SPL
AVI-SPL is the world’s leading integrator of communication and collaboration solutions that support organizations of all types. Our certified engineers design, build, and integrate systems for video collaboration, digital signage, 3D visualization, AV distribution, and intelligent building control.

We also provide a wide range of remote and onsite support services, including cloud-based video conferencing. We have nearly 40 offices across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the UAE, as well as an international network of solution providers in 30 other countries.

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About Polycom
Polycom helps organizations unleash the power of human collaboration. More than 400,000 companies and institutions worldwide defy distance with secure video, voice and content solutions from Polycom to increase productivity, speed time to market, provide better customer service, expand education and save lives. Polycom and its global partner ecosystem provide flexible collaboration solutions for any environment that deliver the best user experience, the broadest multi-vendor interoperability and unmatched investment protection. Visit www.polycom.com or connect with us on Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to learn more.

Resources:
2. The Office is Shrinking as Tech Creates Workplace Everywhere, by Haya El Nasser, USA Today, June 5, 2012.
3. Understanding the Huddle Room: Maximizing the Value of these Underutilized Spaces, Wainhouse Research, Polycom, 2015