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# The A-to-Z Guide on Hoteling (and Why It's in High Demand)




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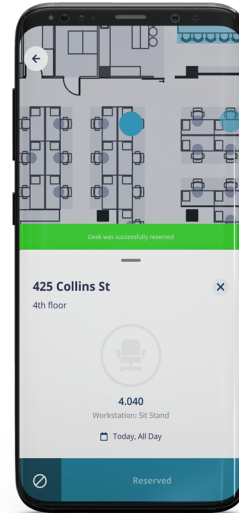
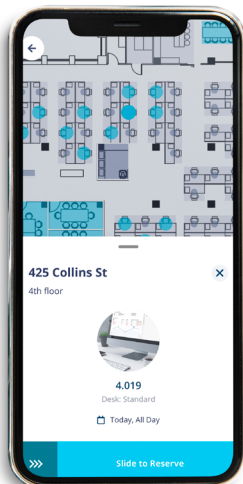
Prior to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) knocking the wind out of the economy, businesses of all sizes and types were embracing a new workplace management strategy: hoteling. The term may elicit visions of the hospitality industry. However, hoteling for workplace management is about maximizing space and providing flexible scheduling options for employees.

### HOTELING:

*“A workplace management process that allows employees, visitors, and guests to search for and reserve a workspace (desk, cubicle, phone booth, etc.) for a specified period of time.”*

COVID-19 forced many employers to lock their doors for months. When the time came to head back to work, business owners faced a different reality. The days of sitting shoulder-to-shoulder at desks are over—for now. Social distancing standards, advanced cleaning needs, and contact tracing fast-tracked hoteling for many employers who need ways to bring employees back as safely as possible.

In this guide, we'll discuss the nuances of hoteling and how employers can use it to adapt to the “next normal” and welcome employees back to work as safely and efficiently as possible. Then, we'll highlight ways to use workplace management technology to structure and manage hoteling for your specific needs.



## Hotel vs. Hot Desk

Let's clear the air on one point: hotel and hot desks are not the same thing. Both are types of agile workspaces, but the similarities stop there. **Hot desks** allow employers to open to anyone who claims them on a first-come-first-served basis. They can sit there as long as they want and are free to move from hot desk to hot desk at will.

Hotel desks are governed by a reservation system that allows a person to choose a seat and keep it for a set period of time. No one else can occupy the space and, unlike hot desks, employees can be pickier in choosing their workspace. Need a quiet space for meetings? Reserve an office or small conference room. Want to work with your team? Choose a hotel desk near their office location.

In our COVID-19 world, hot desks aren't really a viable option. The free-for-all aspect doesn't mesh with social distancing and hygienic practices. Hotel desks can be better controlled and monitored using a centralized integrated workplace management system (**IWMS**) that manages reservations, blocks and releases workspaces, and triggers cleaning regimens.

# Hoteling Benefits for the Workplace

Business owners realized the benefits of adding hotel desks to their agile workplace planning long before the pandemic hit. In fact, hoteling is a strategic asset to leverage in myriad circumstances. The value proposition for employers and employees goes beyond short-term response to health crises.

Hoteling is particularly enticing for several types of companies at different stages of development—regardless of industry or locale:



**GROWING:** Companies on the precipice of growth—but can't yet afford to scale their facilities—are prime hotel desk candidates because they can accommodate additional employees while maximizing existing space.



**CONSOLIDATING:** For larger businesses trimming the fat and consolidating facilities, hotel desks offer a way to shrink the workplace footprint without downsizing employees.



**REMOTE WORKFORCE:** Employers with remote workforces still need some form of physical workspaces. Hotel desks are a step down from dedicated workstations and a step up from hot desks or open seating.



**COWORKING SPACES:** The coworking model relies on hoteling. Without a reservation system, dynamic check-in and check-out, and holistic space management, coworking spaces can quickly become chaotic and disorganized.

The real winners of a well-managed hoteling system are employees. The days of static 9-5 work days are waning and workers want flexible options that fit their fluid lifestyles:

- > **REMOTE WORKERS:** Hoteling provides a way for remote employees to conveniently work

in the office. The absence of a dedicated desk may deter off-site workers from regularly coming in—there's the fear of working in “any available space.” Hoteling ensures they have a reservable space that fits their needs for a particular day.

- > **COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK:** Giving employees the choice of where and how to work helps unlock their full productivity potential. Hoteling strengthens team dynamics between on-site and remote workers. Off-site employees can reserve a space near or within their department and immediately plug into the office dynamic.
- > **PART-TIMERS AND CONTRACTORS:** Hotel desking can be a quick fix to creating space for project staffers, part-time employees, and contractors. Whether the project lasts a day or a month, versatile desking options ensure everyone has a place to sit. Hoteling provides part-time employees with “dedicated” spaces where they can collaborate and connect with their teammates.
- > **CONSULTANTS:** Many consultants spend time in-house during their tenure. Instead of clearing permanent space for them, hotel desks allow flexibility for when they come to the office and provide spaces to meet with business leaders and employees.

Hoteling is a great way to bring flexibility and productivity to your workplace. But it takes more than designating a few desks as hotel hot spots. Employers must create and maintain systems, protocols, and processes to ensure hoteling reaps the benefits they want.

# Standardize Your Hoteling Processes

The great thing about hoteling is that it works at any scale. It doesn't matter if there are 10 desks or 150 workspaces, the process is the same for all employees whether they're reserving a 10-person conference room or single desk for half a day.

Standardizing hoteling requires an **IWMS** to manage each step of the reservation, use, and tracking process:



1) An employee uses a calendar app to search for the right hotel desk



2) They submit a reservation request to the system, which checks desk availability



3) The IWMS confirms the reservation and sends an email with pertinent details to the employee

4) The reservation system is updated with the new occupancy information

5) Shortly before their visit, the employee receives a system email with reservation information



6) Using their calendar app the employee checks in on the scheduled day and time

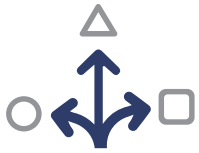
This bare-bones framework becomes more complicated depending on the situation. Taking payment, providing IT access, processing cancellations, and addressing special requests all have a place in the standard hoteling process. It's imperative to build necessary functions into the central reservation framework and ensure they're transparent to whoever reserves a hotel desk.

## Making the Most of Hoteling

The advantages of hoteling are many. When managed well, hoteling is an efficient way to ease back-to-work transitions, administer and track COVID-19 guidelines, save money, and improve employee experience.

Getting the most out of hoteling is where your IWMS plays its most-critical role in collecting and managing hotel desk reservation and use data. Here's a quick dive into five of the top strategies for companies to maximize hoteling in the workplace. Lay the groundwork for these before shifting to a reservation system. Or, if you already rely on office hoteling, use these tips to refine your existing system.





## DIVERSIFY BOOKING OPTIONS

The convenience of **flexible workspaces** is that they're open and available when employees need them. For hotel desks, availability is governed by reservations. If employees can't book a hotel desk, they can't use it. Companies should diversify booking options and methods to maintain broad—yet controlled—accessibility to workstations.

### *Examples include:*

- > **Email reservations** via an automated system or administrative booking process
- > **Messaging apps** with real-time access to desk availability and booking options
- > **Portal booking** on a company's intranet site or through a workplace mobile app
- > **Live booking** at a kiosk or touchscreen located at the hotel desk

Make it simple for employees to see available space and book through many channels. On the flipside, have a system in place that can organize and process bookings from various inputs.



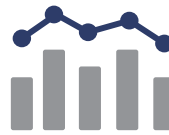
## CENTRALIZE WORKSTATION MANAGEMENT

Companies should centralize their reservation management systems. Without a clear-cut funnel for booking requests and desk management, the hoteling system begins to break down. Automated efficiency comes by centralizing the reservation management process in your IWMS.

- > How many desks are available right now?
- > How are requests processed and reservations made?
- > What confirmation standards are in place?
- > How can employees change or cancel their reservations?



Workstation management software automates everything from reservation requests/changes to utilization metric measurements so facilities managers can better shape their hoteling systems.



## TRACK OCCUPANCY AND UTILIZATION METRICS

How do you know if your hoteling system is efficient? Like all workplace development initiatives, set key performance indicators (KPIs) for hoteling. Occupancy and utilization metrics shed light on how well you're managing hotel desks, as well as measure demand.

Hotel desks occupied 100% of the time each week indicates a need for more workspaces, while a 15% usage rate offers opportunities to use space for other options. Other factors like the length of a booking, types of employees who book space, and the physical location of popular/unpopular bookings highlight hoteling best practices. The more you know, the more you can improve.

Tracking hotel desk utilization also supports contact tracing for COVID-19 and other health crises. In the event of a confirmed case, facilities managers can pull the hotel desk log for recently used workspaces to begin the contact tracing process and notify employees who booked and used specific desks. Your IWMS is key to collecting, pulling, aggregating, and analyzing usage data.



## DEFINE AND ENFORCE SPACE PARAMETERS

Part of maximizing hoteling is acclimating employees to the practice. Teach them how to book space and illustrate the benefits; then set expectations for how, when, and why hotel desks are convenient. As employees acclimate to hoteling, their confidence will grow.



# Hoteling: The Future of Workplace Management

Start with rules, expectations, and general hoteling parameters. Establish and explain the following concepts to employees before introducing a desk reservation system:

- > The parameters of desk booking (how long, where, how, when, why)
- > Hotel desking etiquette and reasonable expectations for use
- > Best practices for rebooking, changing reservations, or cancelling
- > How to handle conflict or get answers to questions about hoteling

Think of this as an education primer. People are much more willing to try something when they understand it. Educate employees on hoteling before urging them to adopt it and the prospect of reserved desking won't seem so complicated or uncertain.



## OFFER DIVERSE AND AMPLE SPACE

Space diversity is one of the hallmarks of flexible space and broad office utilization. Not everyone needs the same type of workspace, and different types of work necessitate different types of work areas. Hoteling allows you to provide booking opportunities for different types of space to increase adoption and stay true to the concept of a flexible workspace.

Some employees may prefer a blank-slate desk where they can open their laptop and spread out to work. Others may prefer a standing desk near a window. Some may need a room with A/V capabilities. Hoteling can even extend to conference rooms and other gathering spaces. Any space that supports reservations becomes part of the hoteling ecosystem. Make sure your ecosystem is rife with diverse workspaces.

You're bound to encounter challenges and setbacks with hotel desks. You can't plan for everything! What will make or break your hotel desking strategy is your ability to adapt for and adjust to problems and challenges. Pay attention to the critical in-between steps and perfect granular details will take hoteling to another level.

When the process works as quickly and smoothly as your workers expect it to, they'll be more inclined to use it. Perfecting the process is the first step in gaining support for hoteling and the best way to keep employees using it.

## SpaceIQ<sup>®</sup>

Learn how SpaceIQ can help make hoteling a key component of your back-to-work and longer-term workplace strategies.



- Interactive Floor Plans
- Push Notifications
- Calendar Interface

[CLICK HERE](#)



- Desk Booking Restrictions
- Future Room Bookings
- Robust Search Options

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- Self-Service Web Forms
- Email Integration
- Microsoft Exchange Extension

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# Checklist: Best Practices to Maximize Workplace Hoteling

- Communicate clearly**  
*Gather meeting data from your workplace*
  - Help them understand how hoteling will be used
  - Explain the benefits to your organization
  - Address any concerns they may have
  - Promote hoteling and recruit staff advocates before implementation
  
- Use interactive floor plans**  
*Get instant visual feedback*
  - Try out changes before implementing them
  - Visualize how your space will be used in real time
  
- Integrate your software and IT**  
*Make the transition easier for your employees*
  - Integrate with sensors, exporting options, team communication tools, and HR applications
  - Use APIs to customize your software integration
  - Equip work spaces with all necessary software, equipment, and sign-in information
  - Implement standard document storage protocols such as cloud storage for quick document retrieval from any location
  
- Ensure mobile accessibility**  
*Use mobile apps for convenience*
  - Reserve space at the office or at other locations
  - Encourage employee use of mobile apps to check workspace availability before arrival
  
- Provide various types of workspaces**  
*Accommodate job responsibilities in your space usage plan*
  - Promote collaboration by setting up “neighborhoods” where teams can work together
  - Include quiet spaces for concentration, large spaces for collaboration, and private spaces to make phone calls
  
- Digital wayfinding**  
*Use kiosks and other digital signs throughout your workspace*
  - Guide guests and employees through halls along a social distance-friendly path
  - Label desks and rooms to help employees confirm their reserved spaces and require confirmations upon arrival
  - Help guests find their way to the location or person they need with searchable directories
  
- Establish cleaning protocols**  
*Communicate your cleaning policy and clarify as needed*
  - Confirm that the area has been cleaned before employees arrive
  - Provide contact information for employees who have questions
  
- Be flexible and learn from your mistakes**  
*Challenges are inevitable*
  - Expect questions and problems
  - Accept feedback
  - Make changes as you learn
  - Observe and report successes





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