Density

How to write a good occupancy sensor RFP

A great RFP results in a vendor that aligns with your goals and a solution that works the hardest for your workplace. Based on the many examples that have come across our desk, these are the key ingredients of a good RFP.

1 | Clearly define objectives and context

- Articulate your measurement goal. How would you prioritize making smarter real estate decisions, improving the employee experience, and increasing space efficiency?
- What kind of data do you need to achieve these goals? Real-time, historical or both?
- Which sites are you focused on? Are you replacing a previous system, opening a new office or testing a pilot?

2 | Assess the importance of privacy and data security

- Be explicit about the importance of compliance with data protection and GDPR standards for your company. If there are legal requirements, call them out.
- Do different vendors capture or process images, audio or other personally identifiable information (PII) data? How is data stored?

3 | Be specific about your accuracy needs

- State how you intend to use real-time vs. historical data and ask vendors how they will meet those needs.
- Check if vendors differentiate human occupancy from “signs of life” like personal items including mugs or backbacks.
- Do you need analytics down to individual spaces (meeting rooms, phone booths, desks) or only at the floor level?

4 | Inquire about ease of installation and cost of maintenance

- Do you have internal resources to support installing overhead sensors? If not, ask about self-installable options.
- If looking at non-powered options, ask about whether hubs are needed to support battery-powered sensor fleets and about the maintenance required.
- For non-powered options, also consider total cost of ownership—systems that look cheaper upfront may not be when battery replacement costs, labor and sensor downtime during swaps are factored in.
- Ask to speak to reference customers to get the full picture.

5 | Ensure integration and API capabilities

- Effective occupancy sensors come with robust integration abilities. Request information on open APIs that integrate into your existing workplace management systems. A quick call with the vendor’s technical team can be clarifying.
- Ask about compatibility with real-time wayfinding solutions and analytics platforms for comprehensive space management.

- When vendors have a chance to understand your context and ask clarifying questions, it yields a better experience and result for everyone. Include windows for Q&A and presentations before bid submission.
- Invite vendors into early discovery calls. Use those conversations to inform your thinking and RFP.
- Find out how many people would support your account across sales, deployment and analytics and if you can talk to some of those teams
- Also, consider starting with a smaller proof of concept (PoC) with the potential to scale to a larger-scale deployment based on results.

Sample vendor questionnaire

General questions

1. Describe how your sensor captures occupancy while ensuring individual privacy.
2. Detail calibration steps required per space type.
3. Can you provide third-party accuracy studies and methodologies?
4. Explain your over-the-air update process and version cadence.
5. What are the typical maintenance tasks and the personnel required?
6. Can we connect with one of your existing customers to discuss their experience and utilization of the data?
7. How are firmware updates handled and do they cause downtime?
8. How easy is it to redeploy your sensors to different floors or offices depending on the need to measure or reconfigure different spaces?
9. What is the system's uptime and latency for data coming from the sensors?

For optical (camera-based) sensor vendors

1. What does the sensor "see" at the source?
2. Does the system count "signs of life" (like a mug or backpack) as a person?

For battery-powered sensors

3. What happens to battery life in high-traffic areas?
4. Do batteries in high-use areas die sooner than others?
5. Does the system require a separate hub and does that hub need power?
6. Do you recommend professional installers for setup?
7. Can I talk to one of your customers who has had sensors up for a few years?

For WiFi-based system vendors

1. Can your system determine what side of a wall someone is on?
2. What happens when someone doesn't have a WiFi device or has privacy settings enabled?

For thermal sensor vendors

1. How does your system handle overlapping heat signatures in crowded spaces.