Thriving in a hybrid work environment

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Intro

No longer a buzzword, the **hybrid working model is being embraced by companies across a range of sectors.** Companies who - either out of convenience or necessity - have cemented this approach into their workplace strategy.

Proof that hybrid working is here to stay,a survey of 2,000 Australian workers by Swinburne University and Deloitte found that 78% of workers who can work remotely want the option to work hybrid or from home, as do 39% of on-site workers.

And given employee preferences coupled with the cost of real-estate, a 2022 JLL Property Group study says that 73% of organisations globally plan to make all office spaces open and collaborative, with no dedicated desk spaces.

We are all different, so it makes sense that our style of work would differ too. The beauty of hybrid working is that when there is no one size fits all, there is the power to choose.



But is it a case of giving employees the choice then equipping them with the right collaboration tools and hoping for the best? This e-book will delve into the modern-day challenges of hybrid working and the untapped opportunities companies can now capitalise on with the right repertoire of tools and analytics at their fingertips.

78% of workers want flexibility

73% of companies plan to increase their flexible space

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Hybrid working in the digital era



The rise of hybrid working is largely due to advances in digital technologies, which have made **remote work more accessible and efficient than ever before.** With video conferencing, instant messaging, and cloud-based collaboration tools, remote teams can now communicate and collaborate with ease, regardless of their location.

Digitisation of workplaces means the argument that employees can't perform the same tasks from home no longer stacks up. Consequently, investing in the right workplace tech has become a priority as **companies seek to balance the benefits of remote work with the advantages of in-person collaboration.**

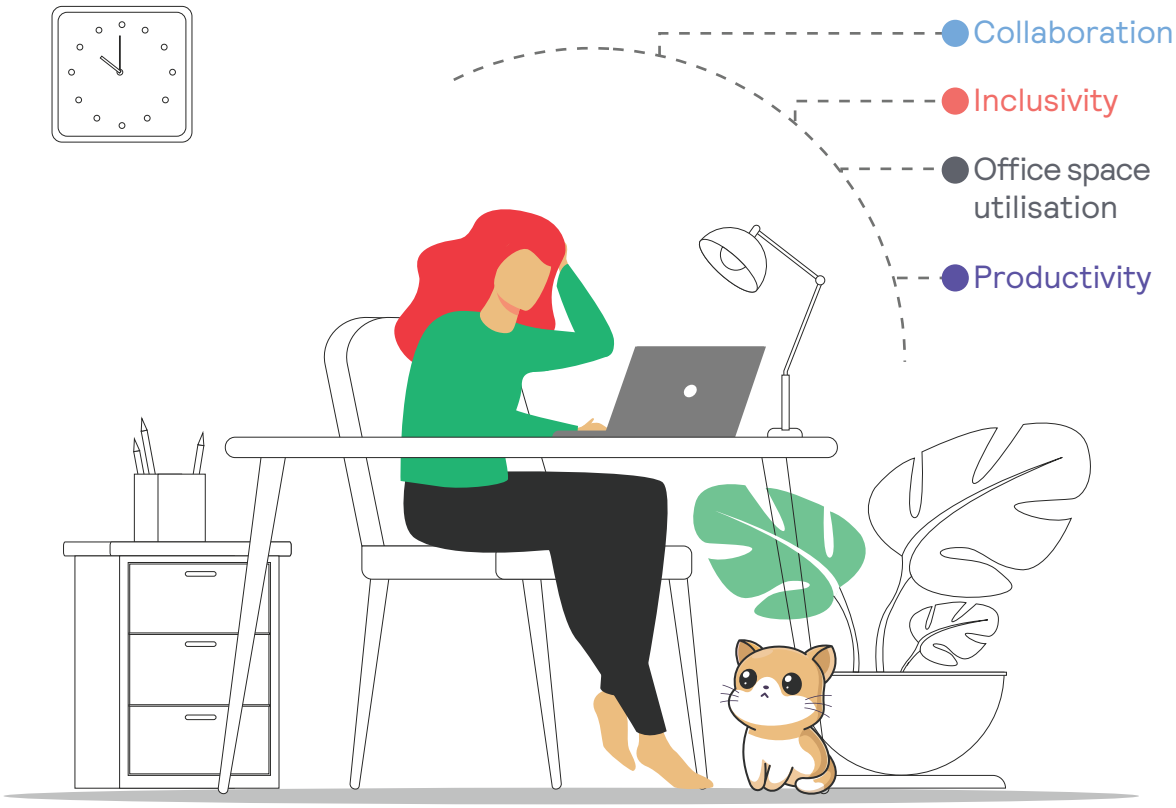


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Challenges of hybrid working

The common sentiment around the challenges associated with hybrid working typically centres around productivity, and of course, connectedness. However, when we were forced into a complete remote working scenario for almost two years, the old misconception that employees need to be seen to perform, was largely contradicted. Whilst productivity was perhaps at times hard to measure however, a more common challenge that arose was that **workers were experiencing burnout compounded by social isolation.**

As a provider of workplace tech that facilitates hybrid working, we live and breathe this concept. We are also out talking to companies large and small about their lived experiences, and here is what we find to be the most prevalent challenges of the hybrid working model.



CHALLENGE 1

Team collaboration and connectedness

The importance of providing the right tech to allow all employees to succeed from anywhere is well understood. The optimal mix of cloud based platforms and collaboration tools have certainly minimised the level of disruption caused when workers were suddenly forced to work from home. However since returning to the office and offering employees the freedom to arrange their work week between home and the office, **both the traditional assigned desk model and the modern activity based working (ABW) are falling short.**

The traditional fixed desk model is not only inefficient in the new world of work, but it also lacks the **flexibility of team-based working and ability to meet the demands of changing team needs.** For instance, if project teams could plan and sit in close proximity for the duration of the project, this might foster easier and less disruptive collaboration.

If hot-desking sounds like the solution, then think again. **The problem with hot desking is that it is typically a case of 'first-in-first-served'**, which is is inherently incompatible with flexible working and even more so with team-based working.



SOLUTION

- Having access to a team focussed interface which **gives employees real time visibility of their team's planned movements** on a given day and an overview of where everyone will be sitting eleviates the hassle of being locked into a pre-arranged plan or having to communicate a change of plans after hours.

- If a key benefit of coming into work is for the face-to-face interaction it facilitates, then the ability to **seamlessly coordinate time spent together via a purpose-built tool** ensures teams stay better connected in a more flexible way.

CHALLENGE 2

Inclusivity

Hybrid working is undoubtedly a more family friendly work model. Cutting out the commute and obligatory 9-5 physical presence in the office means **employees can easily maintain family commitments** and better juggle their work with their household.

It has also **opened up geographical barriers for employees** and potential talent residing in remote areas. New opportunities arose for talent who once deemed it untennable to commute to the office on a daily basis, or would perhaps be otherwise ruled out as a suitable candidate in the interview process.

With a hybrid working ratio now working in their favour, combined with flexible working hours, it would seem this model is the holy grail for inclusivity. However in a downsized office with a desk booking system, in particular, a 'first-in-first-served' hot desking system, **employees who need to start and finish later risk missing out,** which goes against inclusivity. Think of a parent who does the morning drop-off or a colleague who commutes for over an hour in the morning.

Inclusivity extends to decision-making. It is important to give **all employees the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process** by setting communications protocols and supporting them to plan in office days to maximise face-to-face interaction.



SOLUTION

- The solution lies with **flexible tech which keeps this in mind and upholds inclusivity.** With the ability to book a desk at any time from anywhere, teams can create neighborhoods where team members can gain priority access to that space and avoid missing out on a workpoint.

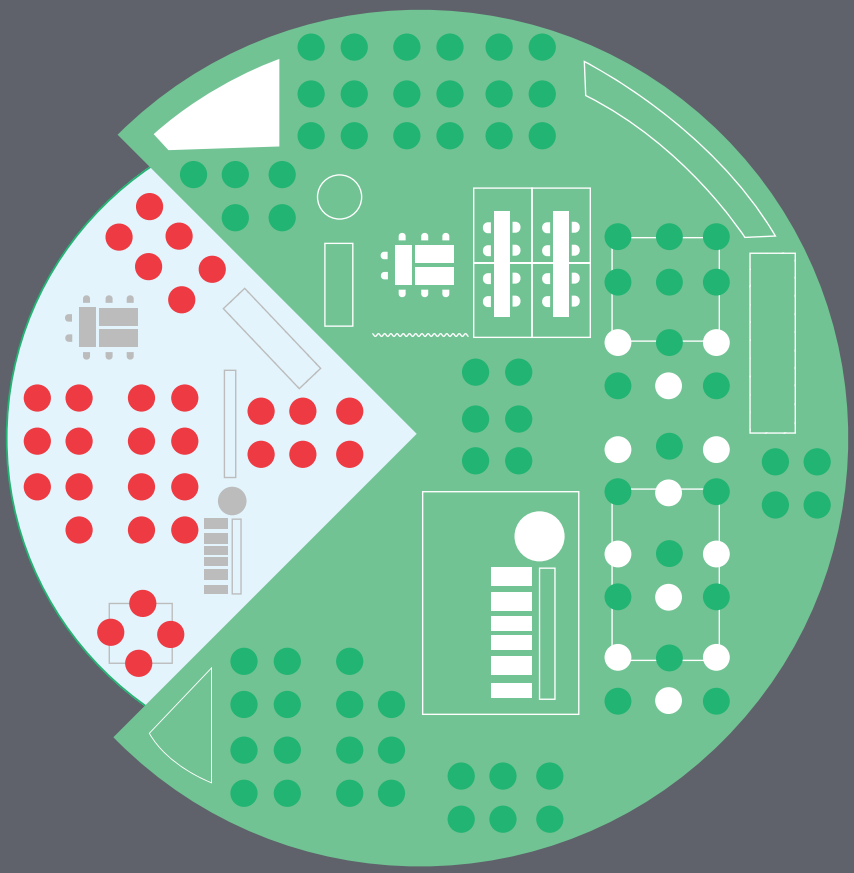
- Giving employees visibility of the floorplan with associated bookings allows for **effective planning of time spent in the office,** no matter what hours they work.

CHALLENGE 3

Office space utilisation

It's not just a case of downsizing, implementing a desk booking system and hoping for the best. **Workplace Managers or Corporate Real-estate Executives want to know if the space is being utilised effectively,** which is an ongoing process.

As the old saying goes, **'if you can't measure it, you can't manage it'**. And if that's the case, then you certainly can't optimise it.



SOLUTION

- With the help of workplace analytics, **Workplace Managers or Corporate Real-estate Executives gain a live snapshot of the floorplan and monitor trends.**
- Setting up a personalised dashboard automatically returns the **metrics they want to see to make informed decisions.**

CHALLENGE 4

Productivity

Chopping and changing can disrupt workflow, further exacerbated when staff need to find a desk and get set up every time they come into the office. In fact, an Indeed survey of over 1,000 workers found that an average 18 minutes were spent a day trying to find an appropriate workspace.

As a general rule of thumb, **time in the office is best spent collaborating and planning as a team, while working from home is ideal for independent working on assigned tasks.** Therefore, depending on the versatility of project requirements, pre-set home/office days might be too rigid for the evolving needs of a team or individual on any given day. Rather, **giving employees the flexibility to choose and plan week to week or day to day allows for the best use of office/home time** and reduces potential frustration of projects not flowing as they should. However, this may require employees to coordinate with each other day by day and limit the flexibility of a last minute change in circumstances.



SOLUTION

- Reducing the 'resource finding' aspect - car space, desk, locker, room - by allowing employees to prebook from anywhere can combat the loss of productivity experienced upon arrival.

- Ability to **plan work weeks in a way that suits individuals and their teams and making this truly flexible** via a tech that negates the need for teams to continually coordinate with each other, but rather view everyone's planned movements in real time and receive notifications of team member bookings.

Untapped opportunities of Hybrid workplaces

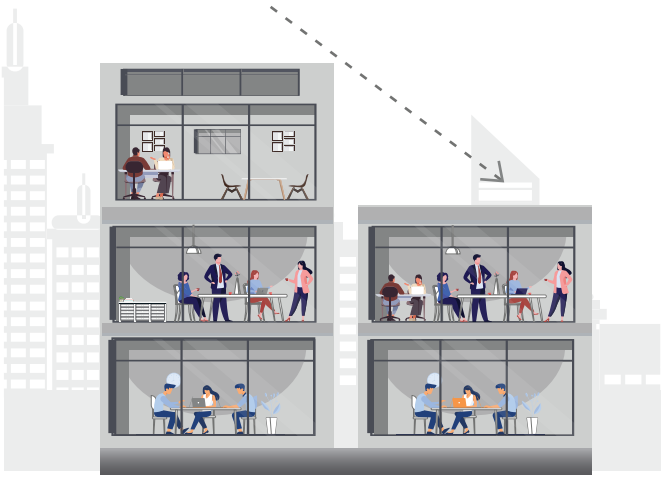
In a hybrid world where many desks remain unoccupied some of the time, companies are seizing the opportunity to reduce their office footprint and therefore overheads. In short, there's no reason why this shouldn't be a win-win for all



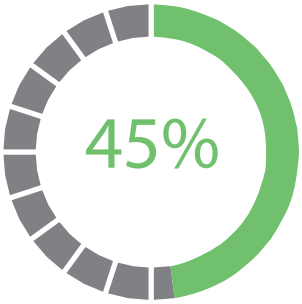
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Downsizing to optimise space utilisation

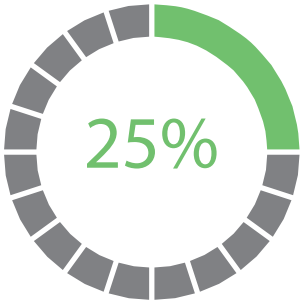
Compared with the traditional fixed desk office model, we estimate that there is a **potential to save 45% in available space under a technology-enabled team based hybrid model, and 25% compared with ABW.** Not to mention the benefits to the employee experience.



This is because under the ABW model, employees get in, store their belongings and float around from task space to task space throughout the day. Then when it comes time for independent working, they need a suitable desk to be available (i.e. the hot desking model). Whilst this is already a win compared to the traditional 1:1 desk model, it requires just-in-time availability of a myriad of resources, whether they are utilised or not. **The technology-enabled hybrid model on the other hand, with the ability to book a workpoint (i.e. desk hotelling) and measure utilisation of resources (analytics) offers the 'sweet spot' of matching available space with required space.**



Space saving potential compared to traditional assigned desking



Space saving potential compared to modern hot desking

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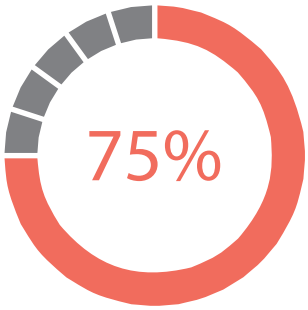
Real estate cost savings

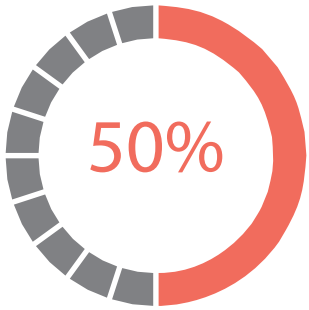
Here is a comparison of the estimated space requirements under the different models and a breakdown of the potential savings offered thanks to space optimisation.

	Traditional Office Model	Activity Based Working	Tech Enabled Hybrid
Available space	100 desks per 100 employees	75 desks per 100 employees	55 desks per 100 employees
ft2/employee	10-12 m2	7-8 m2	5-6 m2
Average cost*	$10,000-$12,000 per employee	$7,000-$8,000 per employee	$5,000-6,000 per employee

* Based on a leasing cost of $1,000m2 in Sydney's CBD. (Source: Statistica)

According to a 2022 survey of 350 companies by Knight Frank found that half of the world's biggest companies (>50,000 employees) planned to downsize their office space by 10-20% by 2026.





75% of large companies now demand flexible workspaces

>53% planning a moderate downsize (of 10-30%)

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Enhancing the Employee Experience

When it comes to hybrid working, the Employee Experience, or EX, should be top of mind. **Offering employees a choice and complete flexibility about whether to work from home or the office is already a win for their wellbeing.** However, if you want to optimise your office footprint by reducing the number of desks, it pays to consider the EX implications - and solutions! - for better organising their workspace and collaborating with their teams.

> The employee experience is about making your employees' lives easier. Whether it be by giving them the right tools to succeed, empowering them to configure their work environment as they please or prioritising their health and wellness. Put simply, it's about adopting a people-centric approach.

Samantha Simpson,
Workplace Behavior Expert &
Nura Space Product Owner



For those of us who are somewhat habitual, our desk set up is vital and consistency is key. But if it is no longer viable to have an assigned desk we use only some of the time, **we need to harness technology to help us minimise the friction.** And for a mixed generational workforce, a fragmented mix of workplace tools which are less than user friendly can lead to frustration or reduce the tendency to use them effectively, if at all.

Instead, an integrated platform with a user-friendly interface can increase the uptake and allow for better optimising of the office space.

Employee engagement

According to a survey by PWC, 63% of respondents working in hybrid or remote settings reported a higher job satisfaction than 50% of on-site only workers.

While an EY survey found that 54% of workers globally would quit their jobs if flexibility was off the table.

These statistics highlight the importance of giving employees the flexibility and trust to structure their work arrangements in a way that works best for them. By allowing employees to make choices that suit their personal and professional needs, companies can not only increase job satisfaction and engagement but also improve overall productivity and well-being.

We know that when forced to work from home for an extended period of time, employee engagement suffered due to employees feeling less connected to their company and colleagues.

Again, the **hybrid working model strikes the perfect balance between flexibility and connectedness.** That's because workplace culture is more than a workstation and computer, it's the coming together of people in an environment built just for them. After all, companies invest significantly in well considered, employee-centric office space for a reason and employees want to enjoy them too.

The question then remains, how do you measure and improve employee engagement on an ongoing basis? There are a myriad of engagement monitoring tools and periodic surveys to measure how employees 'feel', **but what about tools to measure how they 'behave' and utilise the resources provided.** With a tech enabled hybrid working model, reporting on the type of metrics around resource utilisation and employee behavior your company wants to know becomes an automated process.



63% of hybrid workers report job satisfaction compared with 50%

54% of workers would leave their job if flexibility wasn't offered

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Employee wellbeing

A 2022 Future of Work report by PWC found that 51% reported a better work-life balance, 38% more time for exercise and 37% reduced stress and burnout. Australian workers believe that having control over their work hours and location is important for their mental health and well-being.

But it doesn't take a study to delineate that cutting out the daily commute and set office hours does wonders for work-life balance and commuting costs. The same PWC study reported that 63% of respondents were saving money on travel. While a 2021 Sydney University study found that Australians could save an average of 90 hours of commuting per year and over $900 of out of pocket expenses working from home, a chunk of which is up for grabs for employees working from home some of the time. That's 90 hours and $900 better spent on themselves.

Moreover, employee wellbeing has now firmly taken the stage in workplace strategy, with the provision of well-being facilities and family friendly policies an example of this.

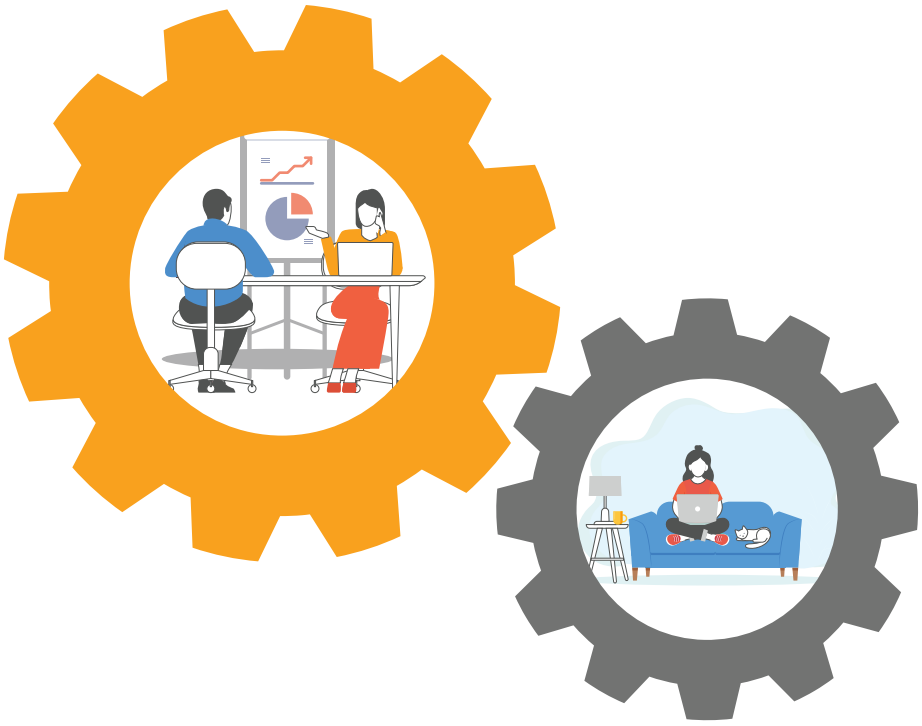


51% of hybrid workers report a better work-life balance

90 hours of commuting potentially saved per year

How to make Hybrid working work

Mapping out your hybrid workplace strategy is a first step. However, if you want to offer flexibility, it is near impossible to predict exactly how your space will be utilised without technology. Therefore, the strategy needs to be ready to evolve to ensure it is effective and continually optimised. Nura Space can help you plan for the future by forecasting future utilisation figures.



Here are some measures to effectively manage a hybrid workplace:

- Work with line managers to design policies and processes that suit their teams - build these into a flexible tech like Nura Space.
- Analyse metrics and take on board employee feedback to continually improve the employee experience and space utilisation.
- Empower employees with the necessary tools to make hybrid working as seamless as possible and reduce any barriers to productivity and collaboration.
- Keep it simple and be selective with the range of workplace tools.The fewer fragmented tools you expect employees to use will reduce costs, improve productivity and increase the adoption rate.
- Ensure the hybrid working policy is inclusive with strong communication and feedback channels on the organisations hybrid working strategy/rules/policies.
- Make in-office days count by harnessing tech to coordinate office days with team members but also avoid overcrowding.

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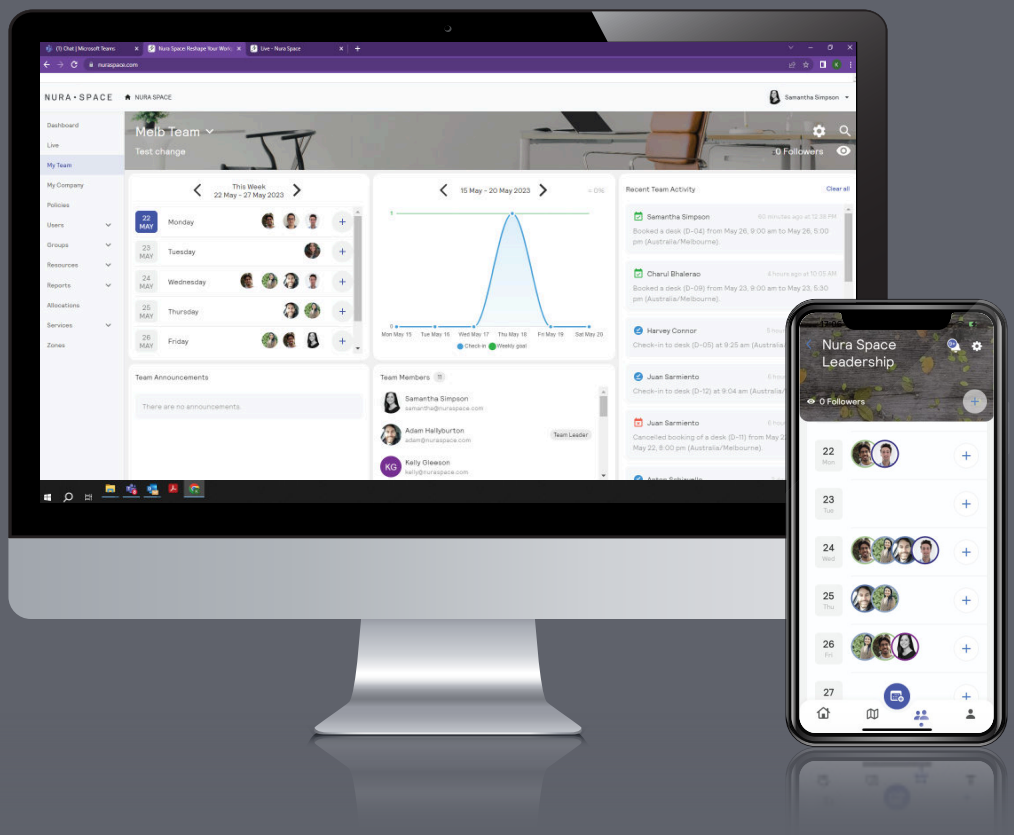
Nura Space has you covered

By using a flexible and scalable Workplace Management Platform (WMP) like Nura Space, teams can design truly robust and adaptable hybrid workplace policies and procedures that suit them. And Facilities Managers can easily measure how the space is being utilised in order to continually optimise it.

Here are just some of the features that make this possible.

Employee Experience (EX):

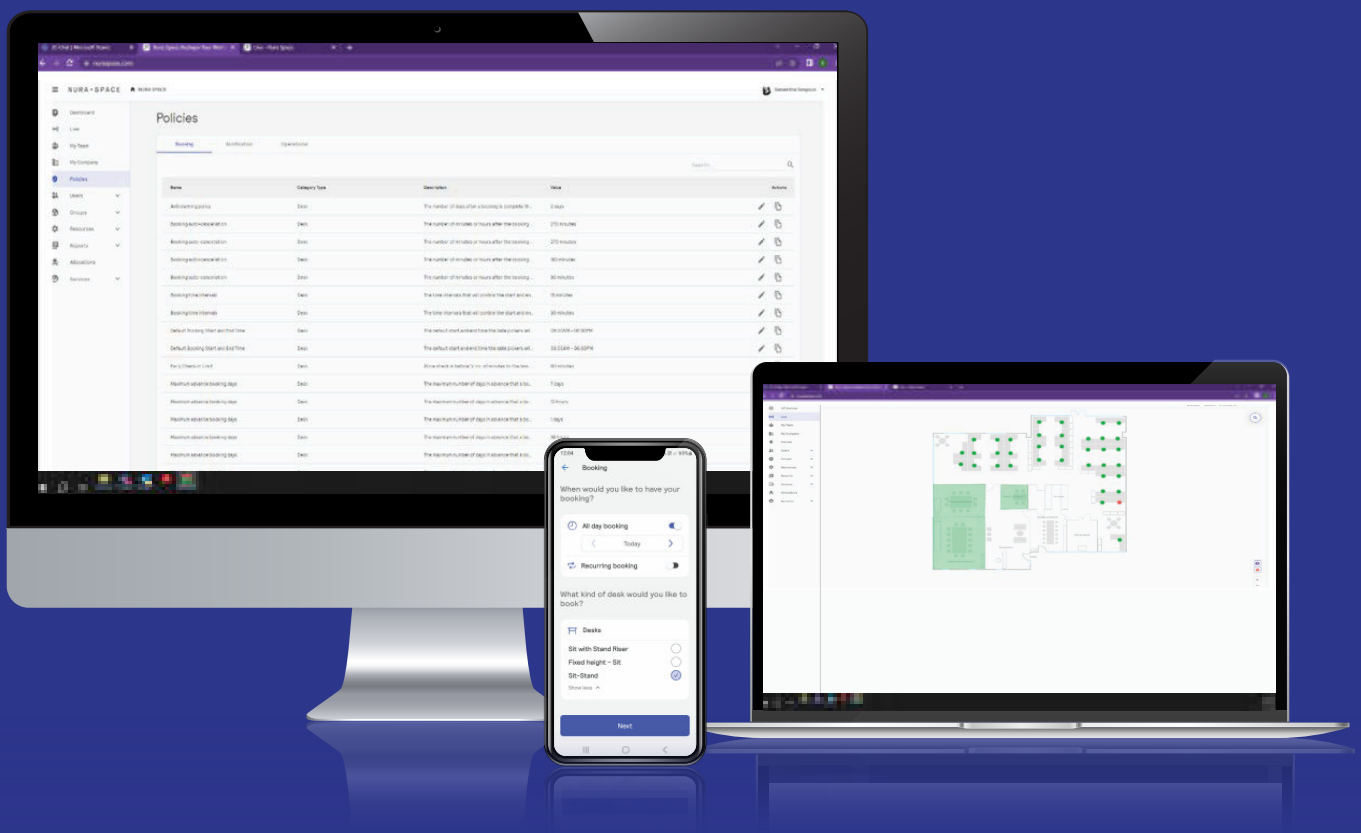
- Allows all employees to locate and book a suitable desk in advance from anywhere
- Team focussed interface to enhance opportunities for collaboration



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Flexibility:

- Designed with your unique floorplans and hardware
- System admins can easily toggle on and off to enable only features that suit their business/department. Rules can also be set up based on specific hybrid workplace policies and permissions etc.



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Simplicity:

- Seamless integration with Microsoft Active Directory, Office365, MS Teams and more. API's are available for retrieval of workplace data
- Multiple booking systems built into one - desk, locker, meeting rooms and carpark



Measurability:

- Gives a live snapshot of how the space and resources are being utilised
- Offers dashboards set up with metrics that managers need to see over time to make informed decisions (utilisation data, behavioural trends)

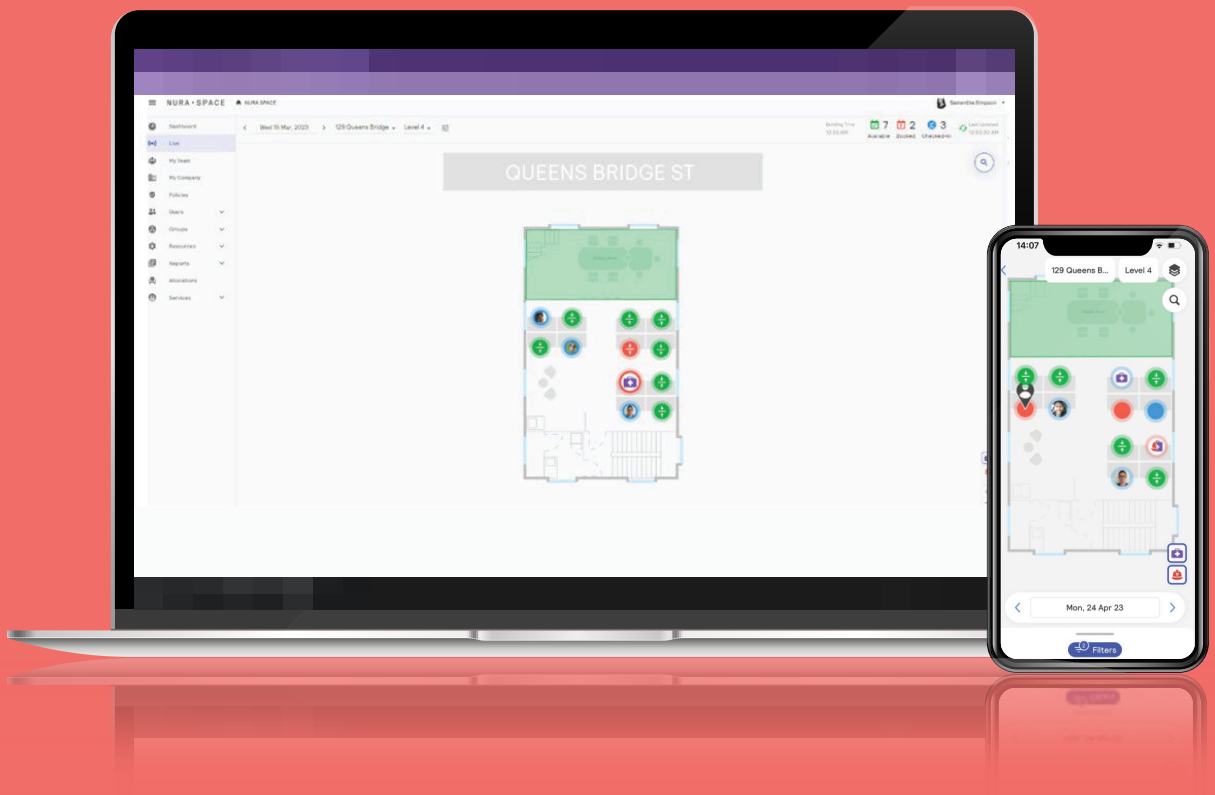


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Compliance:

- Shows how many fire wardens or first aiders are on site and exactly where they are sitting at any given time in case of emergency

- Generate automated reports and set up with certain alerts according to a company's safety policies



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Resources:

https://www.swinburne.edu.au/news/2022/06/new-swinburne-edge-research-shows-flexible-work-is-here-to-stay/

https://www.business.att.com/content/dam/attbusiness/ebooks/incisive-future-of-work-study.pdf

https://www.servcorp.com.au/en/blog/business-networking/the-cost-saving-benefits-of-hybrid-work-for-businesses/

https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/workforce/hopes-and-fears-2022.html

https://www.ey.com/en_au/news/2021/05/more-than-half-of-employees-globally-would-quit-their-jobs-if-not-provided-post-pandemic-flexibility-ey-survey-finds

https://www.pwc.com.au/important-problems/future-of-work/future-of-work-report-2022.pdf

https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2021/04/19/how-much-time-and-money-do-commuters-save-working-from-home.html

https://www.businessinsider.com/worlds-biggest-companies-downsize-office-space-for-hybrid-working-2023-6

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