



*REAL STRATEGY*

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Commercial Real Estate Strategy  
& Implementation Solutions

***TALENT RETENTION IN THE MODERN OFFICE:***  
*Perspective on GCWorkplace*

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## Preface

### *The Modern Office: Perspective on GCWorkplace*



*PSPC OFFICE GATINEAU*

The perspective of many people especially in Ottawa is formed by Government either directly or indirectly. Ottawa's largest employer is making changes to how it houses their employees and it affects everyone at large. Many employers have to match this minimum workplace standard created by the government. Quality of workplace is measured by many in comparison with GCWorkplace.

Why is Ottawa's largest employer changing the way they work? For too long the idea of a modern workplace has carried a negative, even scary, connotation. Many people think of government being behind, in this case they're leading. The Canadian Government has many of the challenges associated with big companies and are still paving the road to workplace innovation.

## *About The Author: Darren Fleming*



*Darren Fleming, MBA*

*Chief Executive Officer, Broker of Record*

*Real Strategy Advisors Ltd.*

Darren has been an industry leader in the commercial real estate sector for over 20 years providing expertise in the areas of workplace strategy and commercial real estate brokerage. Darren has worked with some of Ottawa's most active commercial design builders and major commercial real estate brokerages. With exceptional consulting and business strategy skills, he is an experienced leader and provides C-Suite level advice to his clients.

## SECTION 1: An Introduction to GCworkspace



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAWORTH INC. (HAWORTH.COM)

For some time, change makers in government have been looking to develop a re-imagined workplace with technology and design that better serves Canadians. In an effort to provide flexibility to where and how employees work, and empower them with tools that allow that shift and foster collaboration and well-being, GCworkspace came to be. As the largest occupier of office space in Canada's National Capital Region, Real Strategy Advisors is excited to present our perspective on how the federal public service is seeking movement towards an improved workplace.

### Background

Part of the Government of Canada's Blueprint 2020 vision was for the Government to create a space where employees feel confident and everyone has the tools to embrace new ways of working, attracting a diverse workforce to serve Canada's evolving needs. Their new space strategy, entitled, "GCworkspace" aligns with this vision, playing a critical role in shaping the vision into reality.

Real Strategy Advisors recognizes that GCworkspace is not solely the physical workspace — it's also about the people. By embracing flexibility and developing

a workplace that empowers people to choose how, when and where they work, the Government hopes to lead an inspired model for inclusivity. A modern workspace that is designed with employees' needs in mind creates a happy, healthy and motivated workforce. Focused, healthy people means more productive and creative outcomes and in turn, Canadians receive superior products and services from their Government.

### What does the workplace of the future look like?

The new GCworkspace design is driven by seven dimensions: digital, inclusive, healthy, flexible, efficient, collaborative and environmentally sustainable.

The Government of Canada's vision for GCworkspace highlights the importance of each element:

"...to create the best conditions for a culture of innovation within the Public Service by leveraging modern digital tools that will enable us to collaborate government-wide efficiently. We aim to design healthy workplaces that are green and sustainable for the future while putting into place actions that ensure



#### Consulting

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inclusivity and offer flexibility to all our employees.”  
–PSPC Workplace Solutions Moonshots

On their mission to build a workplace that empowers staff to embrace innovation and transformation, strategists had to consider the barriers in current workspaces that prevent this behaviour. Balance is key, with shared spaces for bouncing around ideas and co-creating, and individual spaces that were functional and equitable for all. By designing a workspace to suit the varying needs of its staff, the Government of Canada will attract a diverse and engaged workforce.



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEELCASE (STEELCASE.COM)

Making the most efficient use of space is a core function of GCworkplace. While some critics have voiced concerns it's only intended as a space reduction strategy, it is important to consider the green implications at the core of every decision for GCworkplace. By using space efficiently, not only is this reduction in space adapting a more flexible environment for employees, but it is also reducing the Government's environmental footprint.

## What does this mean for employees in the Government of Canada?

Redefining the work experience, especially in the often change-averse public service, requires a complete shift in how employees envision their workplace.

GCworkplace also recognizes that these changes cannot be applied as one-size-fits-all, and must extend beyond the office. Providing support for employees to be successful in their new workplace also includes ensuring that teleworking is a seamless transition with the same functionality and tools that staff can leverage while in the office.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KNOLL (KNOLL.COM)

Different activities and types of work require different environments, and activity-based workplaces (ABW) focuses on this as their main design principal. To make work more enjoyable and effective, ABWs don't force employees to be assigned to a specific workstation and allow for movement and autonomy so that staff can decide how and where they want to work, and what tools they require. Placing emphasis on the employer to learn, collaborate and focus on what they want, how they want, also builds trust between the employer and employee.



## Workplace Strategy

Is the layout of your office optimized for staff productivity, happiness, performance, and retention?

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## SECTION 2: Introvert-Friendly Offices

The trend of open office spaces can be very beneficial to extroverts, but not everyone works well closely surrounded by others. Successful employers are focused on ensuring that their place of work has room for all types of people to be productive.

With more and more businesses taking a millennial-driven approach and adapting open concept office spaces, it's critical to create additional spaces away from the hustle and bustle of an open space where employees can retreat when they require quiet and calm.

### *A little flexibility can go a long way*

Introverts make exceptional collaborators, and open office spaces are ideal for communicating with your peers, but it's all about striking a balance. Giving staff the option to come in a bit earlier or stay a little later gives a chance to take advantage of quiet time in the office. Introverts tend to be energized from stretches of alone time, so having an hour or two in the morning before the rest of the office arrives can set them up for success in the day ahead.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAWORTH INC. (HAWORTH.COM)

Allowing flexible hours and the ability to work remotely as needed accommodates a quiet space for introverts. Giving employees agency over their work environment creates a more balanced and manageable workload, especially for tasks that require quiet and concentration. When employees are empowered to take the time when they need it to work from home, they are more likely to be happy in their job, leading to greater employee retention.

### *Create a quiet place to concentrate*

Private work spaces or quiet rooms are another option, where employees can carve out time to brainstorm and complete tasks in an area free from distractions and the noise of an open office environment. Having a space that employees can go to recharge will keep introverts from feeling overwhelmed and increase productivity.

People thrive in work environments where they feel supported, and quiet rooms are an easy way to give employees space to clear their minds when they need it. Quiet rooms, also known as reflection rooms, are becoming a fixture with progressive workplaces as they adapt to create a more inclusive environment for today's workforce. Even an outdoor walking space or patio can be an alternative place to go when introverts need a space outside an open concept office to think clearly.

It's a real shame to lose employees because a business hasn't provided an environment where everyone can thrive. When employees can work in a space that suits their needs, they are happier and more productive, leading to stronger teams and successful companies. As the rise of open concept office spaces steadily climbs, these simple considerations for space can have a significant impact on retaining talent and ensuring both extroverts and introverts can prosper in the office.

### **SECTION 3: A flexible work environment for an inclusive workforce**



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEELCASE (STEELCASE.COM)

Offering flexibility to all employees seems like a simple enough offering, but it requires a significant shift in how employees experience the workplace. Changing the culture of any company — let alone every government department — is not an easy task. The process requires a strong change management strategy and innovative thinkers who are open to the changes to come. The public service may not come to mind when considering agile, digital-friendly places that are open to change, but a shift is on the way...

That shift will be heavily driven by the people. Redefining the work experience requires redefining how employees envision their workplace. What do they want from a workspace? What do they need to get their work done efficiently? What contributes to their well-being at work?

### **Working Remotely**



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAWORTH INC. (HAWORTH.COM)

What does embracing flexibility look like? For employees, their vision of a workplace will change to a more adaptable and agile environment.

Working remotely, whether at home or another space out of the office, allows for a greater work-life balance. Freedom to choose the hours and location that best serves the work employees do and the lives they lead can be a powerful force driving employee engagement and productivity. That kind of autonomy leaves room for family commitments, hobbies, friendships, appointments, and so much more. Changing behaviours in the workplace will require leadership styles that support a more flexible, more autonomous way of working.





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## Assigned and Unassigned Workspaces

Promoting an environment that provides access to various workspaces puts emphasis on the employees' needs and preferences. If the optimal workplace is a flexible environment, then employees should not need to be tethered to a specific desk!

Functional spaces can be grouped by noise level, activities and other zoning considerations. Setting up social spaces with couches for collaborative brainstorming and partitions that can be dismantled and shuffled around as needed are some examples of adjustable furniture that will contribute to a more flexible environment.

## The Activity Based Workplace

Becoming active with trends in workspace environments and remote and mobile working is critical to retaining and attracting diverse talent. What's becoming more common for workplaces is creating an infrastructure that allows work to be done

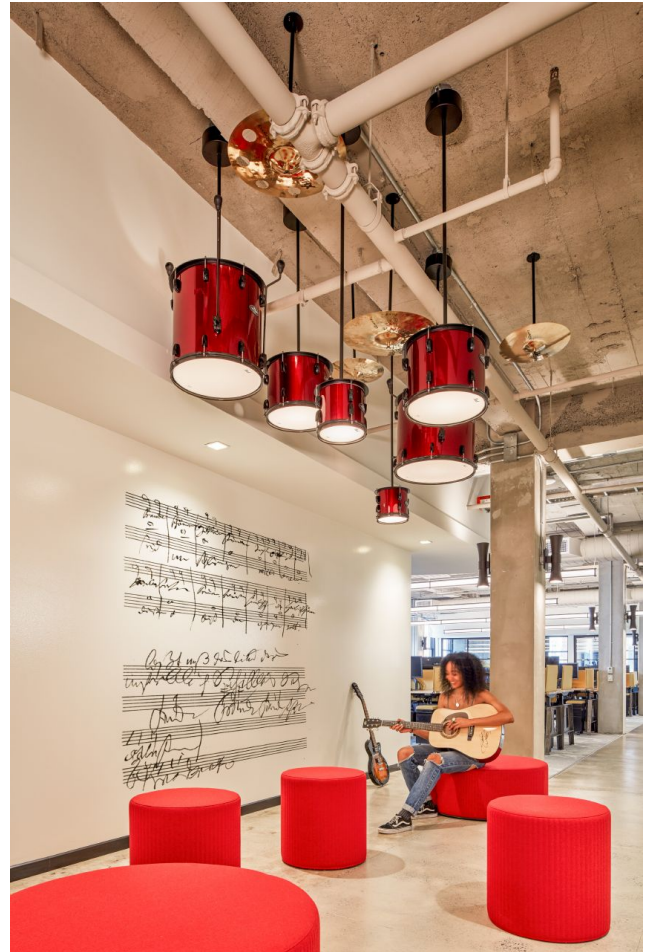


PHOTO COURTESY OF HAWORTH INC. (HAWORTH.COM)

in different spaces that will be most efficient for varying tasks. Allowing people to move more fluidly between activities is the main design principal behind activity-based workplaces (ABW).

This design concept does not assign employees to a particular workstation and provides freedom on how to work, where to work, which tools will be best used and who to collaborate with. This is seen with workspaces for different activities like video conferencing, working with a team, and quiet spaces for solo work and personal phone conversations.

The movement and autonomy of staff to decide how and where they want to work, and what tools they

require puts the emphasis where it should be: on the people. When employees can learn, collaborate and focus over the course of the workday, workspace design has been successful.

## SECTION 4: A modern workspace designed with health in mind



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEELCASE (STEELCASE.COM)

A welcoming, aesthetically pleasing and supportive environment has a serious influence on employee job satisfaction, the ability to think creatively and the quality of work. As research continues to support the connection between job satisfaction and employee wellness, we see emerging trends to create work environments with health at the forefront.

Employers have become increasingly focused on both physical and mental health for employees. But what does this look like in relation to an office space layout?



PHOTO COURTESY OF KNOLL (KNOLL.COM)

## Design for a healthy body — and mind

The new workplace promotes physical health and wellness by designing a workspace that facilitates movement throughout the day. With unassigned workstations and functional spaces grouped by noise level and activity type, there is more fluid movement over the course of the day as employees change workstations based on their different tasks and priorities. Promoting injury prevention initiatives, ‘walking’ meetings, as well as the use of the stairs in internal employee channels will be increased. There will be greater emphasis on outfitting stairwells like you would a hallway, with internal posters and memos, in efforts to make these areas more attractive.

Woven into the design of the modern workplace are spaces that encourage social connectivity and comfort, providing places for respite and movement. By contrast, workplaces that create isolation and barriers to physical activity foster a disengaged, less healthy workforce. As greater emphasis is placed on the importance of mental health, supporting mechanisms must be brought into the workplace to accommodate this shift.



Quiet rooms for reflection, privacy and prayer support mental health and inclusivity. Providing a space for quiet and reflection between the busy activities of a day at the office gives employees a chance to recover, reset and check-in with themselves. Stress is also reduced simply from knowing that the work culture encourages people to work from the location that suits their needs. This culture that enables a better balance between work and personal life creates healthier, happier employees.

## Bringing nature into the office



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEELCASE (STEELCASE.COM)

A healthy indoor environment is critical to wellbeing. Reducing air quality contaminants and allowing employees to adjust temperature and airflow will not only reduce cost and emissions but also create a healthier workforce.



### Project Management

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Sometimes, just being able to look out a window can create calm. Quiet lounges with views of outside have been used in layout solutions for the modern workplace, as well as easy access points to outdoor environments.

Workspace solution designers are encouraged to follow biophilic design strategies, sourcing qualities of the outdoors and bringing them inside. Because humans respond positively to nature, creating a natural environment with shapes and features from the outdoors will contribute to greater well-being.

## SECTION 5: A sustainable place to work and grow

The vision of a green workspace may seem broad, but this very lack of focus can create more opportunities for greening initiatives with both social and environmental sustainability weighed in every decision. By way of definition, environmental sustainability focuses on the physical environment itself; how can we reduce our impact on the environment? How do we promote behaviour that reduces harm to our planet and ourselves? Social sustainability looks at dimensions like equity and diversity, well-being and health of the workforce to build a more conscious, inclusive culture.

A healthy workplace has a smaller environmental footprint. Green implications are part of every decision that goes into creating a GCworkplace. By using space efficiently and creatively, we deliver a more flexible environment for employees, while also reducing an organization's environmental footprint.

Sustainable features in workplaces come in quite a variety. Structurally, there are many options to keep us on track to a healthier planet, while meeting certifications such as LEED, and tools such as WELL, and FitWELL. Flexible furniture and spaces with walls and partitions that can be rearranged and demounted are just a few physical constructs that have a sustainable purpose by reducing construction waste. But there are plenty of ways to make an office more adaptable without investing in major renovations and using more materials!

## *Adaptability, equity and flexibility for all*



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAWORTH INC. (HAWORTH.COM)

Employee well-being begins with fostering an inclusive environment. Encouraging a more mobile workforce reduces the amount of people commuting to the office each day, and supports virtual collaboration and working more digitally. This modern workplace



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEELCASE (STEELCASE.COM)

philosophy expands on the definition of what we consider an office space to be, with flexibility towards telework and non-standard office hours. This openness promotes mental and physical health, which is key to creating social sustainability.

Social sustainability comes in when we go beyond the physical environment. We can foster a workplace culture that learns to adopt Agile principles and helps employees work through challenges, giving them the change management training and tools to empower themselves.

It is increasingly important to place emphasis on supporting and celebrating inclusivity in today's polarizing climate. This shift requires a mobile and adaptable workforce. By not sticking to one definition of what a workspace is (such as an office or a cubicle), your business can design with employees' diverse needs in mind. Lowering greenhouse gas emissions, limiting construction waste, and reducing overall space occupied by the workforce will make room for a promising, sustainable future.



### **Property Management**

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## **SECTION 6: Digitalization as a model for efficiency**

The design of a digital workplace should be driven to embrace a modern culture, incorporating technology at every turn. A digital workplace internalizes the fact that workflow can now occur anywhere within the office or remotely. We are no longer chained to our desk. Digitalization recognizes the importance of keeping up with trends and best practices in areas including web, accessibility, digital innovation and employee tools.

If employers want to build a digital work culture, they need to create, foster and fund an environment that enables employees to be most efficient with their work-related tasks, even if they are not officially on the clock. Whether that is in the office, at home, or at a remote location, they require tools and policies that allow them to choose the setting and workspaces that best suit their changing needs and activities.

In many workforces, employees can feel overwhelmed about adapting new technologies on digital platforms they are not familiar or comfortable using. Employers should ensure that training is prioritized, giving staff the necessary time to learn and adopt new digital tools. Training sessions, informal employee hack days, and opportunities to showcase findings and lessons learned are just a few ways to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing. Familiarizing employees, customers, and stakeholders with your digital platform is essential to encourage broad-based end user adoption, without which the modern workplace will fail.

Digitalization makes collaboration easy when employees are empowered with the tools to work in innovative ways. Providing choices supports differing work activities and styles, accommodating a more diverse, motivated, and collaborative workforce.

## **SECTION 7: An introduction to zones**

In the case of GCWorkplace, the vision is to create an environment that makes it easier to collaborate and work digitally, where productivity is optimized. A key component of this planning doctrine is the introduction of Interactive Zones within the workplace. These zones, comprised of a palette of locations within the physical workplace, are designed to provide employees choice as to where different functional tasks such as heavy computing, making sales calls, or having quiet time, occur.



A Quiet Zone’s intent is to encourage focused, quiet work to support the need for private and silent spaces. Socialization and group collaboration is encouraged and a variety of group workpoints are provided in Interactive Zones. Having a buffer zone between the Quiet Zone and Interactive Zone is where the Transitional Zone comes in. It can include both open and enclosed spaces, with individual and group workpoints. Transitional Zones are an ideal place for coats, shoes and lockers, and should be planned close by to main entrances where there is already traffic and regular disruptions. All of these zones can be made easier to identify with simple solutions like colour-coding schemes for furniture or wall finishes to distinguish at a glance. Interactive Zones should be located with enough proximity from Quiet and Transitional Zones that they remain undisturbed. Remember to appoint a team member as “cultural custodian” (think Librarian for the Quiet Zone) to ensure the purpose of each zone is respected.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAWORTH INC. (HAWORTH.COM)

WORKPOINT DISTRIBUTION FOR A FLOOR OF 1800m2 WITH A POPULATION OF 150:

- Workstations: 70
- Touchdowns: 40
- Focus Pods: 18
- Focus Rooms: 15
- Study: 1 (with 8 seats)
- Phone Booths: 5
- Reflection Points: 5
- Active workstations: 5
- Total Individual workpoints: 166
- Chat Point: 3
- Huddles: 4
- Teaming: 1
- Lounger: 1
- Work Room: 5
- Project Room: 1
- Medium Meeting Room: 2
- Large Meeting Room: 1
- Kitchenette: 1
- Equipment Area: 2
- Lockers: 150
- Shared Storage Room: 1
- Telecom Room: 1



TOP WORKPOINTS FOR THE AUTONOMOUS PROFILE:

Workstations in different configurations and offering various amounts of work surface will accommodate high levels of individual work for a variety of needs and preferences.

Focus Rooms and Focus Pods support individual cognitive tasks for shorter periods of time

Reflection Points and Active Workstations can provide opportunities for rejuvenation between long-term activities.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GCWORKPLACE DESIGN GUIDE

## SECTION 8: An Introduction to Activity Profiles

The modern workplace comes in many forms. Multiple factors including the size of your organization or department, industry and goals will help determine how you should plan your space. Additional factors including types of activities performed in the workplace, typical duration and frequency of these activities, patterns of interaction within and among teams, and overall functional/technical requirements will also help you categorize and organize your office. Mobility is accounted for in activity profiles as well. Both mobility within the workplace and mobility between the workplace and alternate locations are crucial points of consideration.

WORKPOINT DISTRIBUTION FOR A FLOOR OF 1800m2 WITH A POPULATION OF 150:

- Workstations: 20
- Touchdowns: 26
- Focus Pods: 6
- Focus Rooms: 8
- Study: 1 (with 7 seats)
- Phone Booths: 3
- Reflection Points: 2
- Active workstations: 3
- Total Individual workpoints: 75
- Chat Point: 9
- Huddles: 8
- Teaming: 8
- Lounger: 3
- Work Room: 6
- Project Room: 6
- Medium Meeting Room: 6
- Large Meeting Room: 1
- Kitchenette: 1
- Equipment Area: 2
- Lockers: 150
- Shared Storage Room: 1
- Telecom Room: 1



TOP WORKPOINTS FOR THE INTERACTIVE PROFILE:

Touchdowns will support short periods of individual work between group activities

Teaming Areas promote informal and impromptu interaction and provide tools such as writable surfaces and large monitors to enhance collaboration.

Project Rooms, Work Rooms and Medium Meeting Rooms support a wide range of needs for enclosed collaborative spaces.

Chat Points and Huddles can accommodate interactions in smaller groups that do not require the privacy of an enclosed space

PHOTO COURTESY OF GCWORKPLACE DESIGN GUIDE

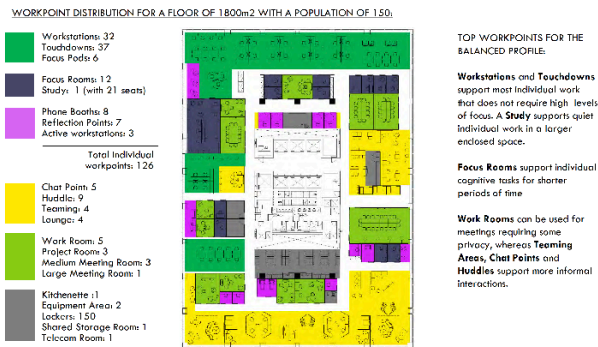


PHOTO COURTESY OF GCWORKPLACE DESIGN GUIDE

The GCWorkplace approach makes space planning easy, provided that individual employee preference and life circumstances are considered. Activity profiles are designed to categorize your business based on these factors and provide a template for the ratio of different types of workpoints you need to include. The profiles are broken into three primary models; autonomous, balanced and interactive. Our goal is to help you decide which model fits your business best, and thus have you on your way to optimizing your space.

People that thrive on focused, independent and self-driven work fall into the autonomous profile. Here, limited interaction among staff is required and the highest number of individual workpoints is included. Internal mobility is less important here, as individuals move around less to complete tasks. According to GCWorkplace, the typical ratio of an autonomous profile organization would be comprised of approximately 75% individual workpoints, and 25% collaborative workpoints, depending on the styles and personalities of your team and the frequency of remote or home based work.

People who prefer an even combination of independent and co-dependent work fall into the balanced profile. Here, staff must have the ability to work by themselves but also the opportunity to easily speak and collaborate with one another when needed. Mobility is more important in this profile, as staff move around to different zones more often and the possibility of remote work increases. According to GCWorkplace, the typical ratio of a balanced profile organization would be comprised of 50% individual workpoints, and 50% collaborative workpoints, again depending on the styles and personalities of your team and the frequency of remote or home based work.

Finally, people who rely on the frequent or exclusive collaboration with individuals and teams fall into the interactive profile. In this case, staff work mostly with each other and the highest number of collaborative workpoints are required. Mobility is most important in this profile, as staff are constantly moving from workpoint to workpoint. According to GCWorkplace, the typical ratio of an interactive profile organization would be comprised of 25% individual workpoints, and 75% collaborative workpoints.

Planning your space based on the level of employee interaction and mobility within your office is crucial. However, Real Strategy believes you must consider the individual needs and preferences of the people on your team in order to produce the best results. The activity profiles presented in GCWorkpalce provide an excellent starting point for a conversation about which ratio of workpoints you require.

## WORKBOOK: Office Space Calculator

ROOM TYPES	QUANTITY	DIMENSION (W')	DIMENSION (L')	TOTAL AREA (SF)
<b>Hardwall Offices</b>				
Executive Offices				
Director Offices				
Standard Offices				
Small Offices				
<b>Open Plan</b>				
Manager				
Standard				
Small				
<b>Meeting Rooms</b>				
Board Room				
Conference Room				



ROOM TYPES	QUANTITY	DIMENSION (W')	DIMENSION (L')	TOTAL AREA (SF)
Small Room				
<b>Other Rooms</b>				
Large Reception				
Small Reception				
Copy Room				
Kitchen				
Break Room				
Server/File Room				
Specialty Space				
<b>Subtotal:</b>				
<b>+ Circulation Area (30%):</b>				
<b>Total Useable Area:</b>				
<b>+ Common Area Factor (15%):</b>				
<b>Total Rentable Area:</b>				



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