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Ready Or Not, It's Time To Track, Manage, And Integrate Workplace Data

Insights-Driven Enterprises Have The Data To Win With Employees

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Project Director:
Sarah Brinks,
Senior Market Impact Consultant

Contributing Research:
Forrester's Infrastructure & Operations
research group

Executive Summary

The global pandemic makes it likely that employees will navigate their new hybrid and remote styles of working for the foreseeable future. This uncertainty creates tension and stress. To reduce this tension, workplace decision-makers need to reevaluate their workplace strategy, reassess their organizations' use of distributed offices, and offer more flexible forms of space utilization. This enables employees to feel safe and acknowledged while improving productivity and satisfaction.

A workplace decision-makers' current and future ability to collect, manage, and track workplace data determines their organizations' data readiness. Currently, global corporate real estate decision-makers are at different points in their workplace optimization journey. We found that many firms were woefully unprepared to support a primarily remote workforce when the pandemic hit. However, high-readiness firms are collecting more data and gathering actionable insights that provide critical benefits.

Locatee commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate how global enterprises apply data and workplace management solutions to enable productive, efficient, and safe office environments. Forrester conducted an online survey with 321 global facilities, real estate, or workplace strategy decision-makers across multiple regions and industries to understand the global perspective of facilities, real estate, and workplace strategies. We found that organizations with high data readiness have clearer direction from their leadership than low-readiness firms. High-readiness firms are twice as likely to have unity at the leadership level to effectively build their workplace strategy compared to low readiness.

Find out your organizations' workplace readiness score

Key Findings →

Key Findings

Skilled staff and the right technology improve data readiness.
Improving data readiness requires a multidimensional approach utilizing the right people and data. Data should be accessible and used across the enterprise. High-readiness firms leverage workplace management tools that enable key stakeholders to collect, report, and manage workplace data effectively and accurately.

Collecting data across a fragmented landscape creates challenges. Decision-makers struggle to collect workplace data. At best, 40% of firms collect employee satisfaction scores. We found that most firms plan to collect more data over the next three years, though. Data landscapes are becoming more fragmented as decision-makers leverage partners and third-party sources to fill data gaps. Data accessibility and management challenges make this fragmented landscape more complicated.

Data readiness creates visibility to identify gaps limiting progress.
High-readiness firms have more visibility and connectivity across their locations, allowing them to identify gaps that are limiting progress faster than low-readiness firms. Low-readiness firms see nearly all capabilities as gaps and therefore struggle to identify their top priorities or where to start.

Firms struggle to get actionable insights from important data.
Team mobility, sustainability, and employee satisfaction data is cited as the most important to collect and manage today. These data types align to the overall corporate real estate priorities decision-makers have identified. Yet, firms find it challenging to get actionable insights from these data types. Without actionable insights, data doesn't help the business or employees. Improving data readiness is critical to quickly accessing actionable insights.

The State Of Data Readiness Today

The corporate real estate (CRE) market is transitioning from legacy and unscalable methods of managing workplaces to new digital technologies. These new technologies enable data-driven decisions that foster more productive, efficient, and safe office environments. To achieve these objectives, CRE execs, property and facilities management teams, and related stakeholders (e.g., HR managers, IT professionals) should leverage digital technologies and insights to optimize office space and resources. As workplace optimization and insight become a priority, decision-making is moving beyond facilities teams to include various strategic decision-makers.

We assessed how ready firms are today to collect, manage, and track workplace data. A data readiness score was determined across three key pillars: technology, people/data, and knowledge/skills. Nearly a quarter (23%) of respondents' organizations in the study were considered high readiness, 22% were considered low readiness, while the remaining 55% fell into the medium-readiness group (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Data Readiness Framework

Readiness is based on three key capabilities:

Readiness to collect, manage, and track workspace data for optimal workspaces **today.**

Readiness to collect, manage, and track workspace data for optimal workspaces **for the future.**

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Locatee, July 2021

High-readiness firms effectively collect, manage, and track their workplace data and are prepared for the future with integrated and dedicated workplace data management tools and trained staff members who can turn insights into actions quickly. This improved data readiness plays a vital role in business success and better employee experiences. High-readiness firms are in a better position to collect more data and discern actionable insights that offer widespread benefits to employees and the business. They have a more holistic view of their workplace, identify gaps, and overcome challenges faster. These benefits keep employees happier, safer, and more productive.

Firms that fail to improve readiness risk losing good employees, wasting money and resources on underutilized spaces, and not meeting requirements. Clear and united leadership ensures challenges are addressed and overcome quickly. This requires enterprisewide buy-in from all key stakeholders. Low-readiness firms often look from the bottom up for inputs, causing scalability, budget, and implementation challenges. We found that:

- **Overreliance on spreadsheets or poorly integrated data management tools impacts readiness.** Technology is a key pillar of data readiness. Without the right technology in place, firms are left with an incomplete and inaccurate view of their workplace, resulting in poor and slow decisions that negatively impact employees and the business. Dedicated workplace data management tools are the best option, but only 7% of firms currently use them. A good alternative is an integrated workplace management tool that analyzes data from multiple systems. Thirty percent of respondents said their organizations use this alternative today. However, the majority of firms (43%) are primarily using data management tools that integrate with a single system. This limits accessibility and speed to insights. Perhaps most concerning is the nearly one-fifth (21%) of respondents whose organizations are still using spreadsheets to track workplace data. Buy-in from leadership is required to make technology investments and advance readiness.

75%

of respondents said their firms' investments in technologies that enable employees to manage and monitor the office environment have been helpful.

- **Health and safety, sustainability, and efficiency are top priorities.** As the percentage of onsite workers dropped well below pre-pandemic levels, decision-makers expressed greater interest in applying data insights to meet shifting workplace priorities and investment objectives (see Figure 2). High-readiness firms collect more kinds of data and therefore have more insights into how their business functions and the gaps that need to be filled. Because of this, their priorities closely link to business outcomes like improving energy efficiency and capturing real-time data to improve efficiency. Low-readiness firms lack the data, technology, and skills needed to accurately assess key priorities, leaving them to focus on tactical objectives that they hope will help business outcomes (see Figure 3).

Figure 2

Estimates Of Workforce Styles Of Work

● Hybrid (remote and onsite)   ● Primarily onsite   ● Primarily remote

BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

53.8%

24.3%   24.5%

CURRENTLY

42.3%

33.6%

26.2%

IN 2022

39.0%

35.4%

27.8%

Base: 321 global facilities, real estate, or workplace strategies decision-makers
Note: Showing means
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Locatee, July 2021

Figure 3

Top Priorities Today For Facilities And/Or Corporate Real Estate

● High readiness   ● Low readiness

Priority	High readiness	Low readiness
Improve energy efficiency to meet sustainability objectives	43%	34%
Capture real-time data to improve efficiency and operations	42%	34%
Ensure the health and safety of employees and visitors	42%	43%
Digitally track and manage assets from a single system	39%	26%
Assess requirements for current and future corporate real estate investments	38%	29%
Optimize multisite real estate portfolio utilization	28%	36%
Enable seamless employee and visitor navigation in buildings	24%	30%
Identify office space or workspace maintenance requirements	22%	49%

Base: 144 global facilities, real estate, or workplace strategies decision-makers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Locatee, July 2021

- **Technology investment is slow among low-readiness organizations.** Decision-makers who are slow to invest in the necessary technology will inevitably fall behind their competitors and risk low employee satisfaction. Leadership needs to allocate budget for technology that integrates across systems and creates better data democratization across the organization. We found that high-readiness firms have already invested or expanded their investment in technologies to improve efficiency, optimize workplaces, and monitor office environments, while low-readiness firms are stuck in planning cycles (see Figure 4).

High-readiness firms have clear direction from their leadership, while low-readiness firms look from the bottom up for inputs into their facilities, real estate management, and workplace strategies.

Figure 4

Planned Technological Investment

● High readiness

CURRENTLY INVESTED/EXPANDING

Technology to capture and leverage data to improve building operation and efficiency	38%
Technology to optimize use of building space or office space	35%
Technology to enable employees to locate and/or book assets	34%
Technology to optimize the use and maintenance of our facilities' assets	28%
Technology to enable employees to navigate throughout the building	28%
Technology to enable employees to manage and monitor the office environment	24%
Technology to optimize the use of our real estate portfolio	22%

● Low readiness

PLANNING TO INVEST IN 12 TO 24 MONTHS

Technology to capture and leverage data to improve building operation and efficiency	51%
Technology to optimize use of building space or office space	51%
Technology to enable employees to locate and/or book assets	37%
Technology to optimize the use and maintenance of our facilities' assets	44%
Technology to enable employees to navigate throughout the building	47%
Technology to enable employees to manage and monitor the office environment	40%
Technology to optimize the use of our real estate portfolio	53%

Base: 144 global facilities, real estate, or workplace strategies decision-makers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Locatee, July 2021

Data Collection Challenges Slow Readiness

Until remote work orders upended office utilization plans in early 2020, the business case for dedicated workplace data management investments was not well understood. Viewed through this lens, common challenges, such as patchy data management, a lack of stakeholder buy-in, and inadequate partner collaboration, become easier to understand — but no easier to resolve. Critical challenges faced by firms today include:

- **A limited collection of critical workplace data.** Only 40% of respondents reported that their firms collect employee satisfaction data. Even fewer collect device-tracking, navigation, and team mobility data. These gaps are significantly wider when comparing readiness groups (see Figure 5). Collecting more data does not automatically make firms more ready to achieve actionable insights. Instead, it allows firms to achieve a more holistic view of their workplace and adjust their strategy to fill gaps and address challenges faster.

Figure 5

Data Organizations Collect Today

● High readiness   ● Low readiness

Employee satisfaction score	Device-tracking data	Sustainability goals and compliance tracking	Office space usage	Personnel density
70% / 23%	66% / 23%	64% / 20%	62% / 30%	62% / 26%

Navigation	Floor occupancy density	Conference room occupancy	Team mobility	Desk occupancy
61% / 13%	61% / 21%	55% / 16%	53% / 17%	51% / 26%

Base: 144 global facilities, real estate, or workplace strategies decision-makers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Locatee, July 2021

- **A fractured view of the data landscape.** The majority of workplace data is collected internally, creating a potentially chaotic data landscape of homegrown tools. This causes a fractured view with inaccurate data. In fact, 61% of decision-makers agreed their IT team prefers to build their own tools instead of onboarding partners. Without a holistic view of their data portfolio, decision-makers struggle to get actionable insights from any of their data types. High-readiness firms with strong leadership unity are better positioned to align IT teams to utilize integrated tools that ensure data accuracy and accessibility.

55% of decision-makers said their organizations' workplace data comes from too many sources for them to effectively manage.

- **Organizational and tactical factors complicate information gathering.** Firms face a lot of challenges as they collect, manage, and track their workplace data. These challenges often test the limits of their employees' energy and patience as they work with the data to glean actionable insights. To improve readiness, leaders will need to unify around the organizations workplace strategy to address both organizational and tactical challenges in equal measure. Top ranked organizational challenges decision-makers face with trying to deploy technologies to manage their workplaces include achieving stakeholder collaboration (50%), finding scalable solutions (50%), and obtaining necessary buy-in from internal stakeholders (39%). More than half of firms face tactical challenges that limit their workplace strategy (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Top Tactical Challenges

● Not at all challenging   ● Slightly challenging   ● Mildly challenging   ● Challenging   ● Very challenging

55%
Challenging/
Very challenging

Getting buy-in to run an efficient and optimized CRE strategy

4%
16%
26%
32%
22%

Collecting real-time data (e.g., air quality, utilization, assets)

7%
15%
24%
26%
28%

54%
Challenging/
Very challenging

53%
Challenging/
Very challenging

Getting budget to run an efficient and optimized CRE strategy

6%
18%
23%
31%
22%

Base: 105 to 129 global facilities, real estate, or workplace strategies decision-makers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Locatee, July 2021

- **Data readiness plays a significant role in the types of challenges firms face.** High-readiness firms have identified the scalability of their solutions and concerns about implementation as their top overall challenges in deploying technologies to manage workplace real estate. Low-readiness firms lack buy-in from stakeholders, are unclear about the ROI, lack funding, and simply don't know where to start (see Figure 7). High-readiness firms have the staff in place with the training needed to identify areas to improve internally or leverage partners, while low-readiness firms struggle to even begin their workplace insights' journey.

Figure 7

Overall Challenges Faced In Deploying Technologies To Manage Workspace Real Estate

● High readiness   ● Low readiness

```
61%
43%              49%
                 33%              43%                              37%
          32%                    41%              26%                      29%
                 27%                                                12%
```

| Scalability of solutions | Implementation concerns | Lack of buy-in from operational stakeholders | Unclear ROI | Lack of funding | We don't know where to start. |

Base: 144 global facilities, real estate, or workplace strategies decision-makers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Locatee, July 2021

- **Low-readiness firms fail to see the gaps that hold them back.** A key consequence of low readiness and not knowing where to start is not having the awareness to recognize gaps within the organization. High-readiness firms are far enough on their journey that they already identified the gaps in their organizational capabilities. They are nearly twice as likely as low-readiness firms to have identified the need for improved connectivity across all locations. Additionally, they're also nearly two times more likely than low-readiness firms to see gaps in meeting ESG, security, or privacy requirements.

Nearly 30%

of low-readiness firms don't know where to start deploying technologies to manage workplace real estate.

The effort, budget, and training firms require to move from a low-readiness firm to medium and, eventually, high readiness is worth the investment to receive the benefits attained by becoming a data-ready firm. Decision-makers should start by identifying which of the pillars of readiness (technology, people/data, and knowledge/skills) they need to improve first — but they don't have to do it alone. Partners can help improve data readiness by filling critical knowledge gaps in workplace strategies and execution. They can also simplify their data ecosystem creating a more holistic view of data portfolios and identifying gaps.

Capturing insights from a diverse set of workplace data can offer key benefits, such as:

- **Better insights that improve workplace data readiness.** Firms that address their gaps and challenges across the three pillars of data readiness collect more data and see significant employee and business benefits. This starts at the top. Leaders need to unify around their organization's workplace strategy, gathering the required buy-in from key stakeholders. Once there is buy-in, leaders should identify the technology and staff/skill shortages and invest to fill them. High-readiness firms have taken these steps and see significantly higher benefits (see Figure 8). Improving data readiness may require a cultural shift, but when it leads to cost savings, happier employees, and improved efficiency, low-readiness firms must realize they can't afford to wait.

Figure 8

Benefits Seen From Capturing Insights

(Showing "Significant benefits" and "Transformational benefits")

- High maturity
- Low maturity

95%
44%
Team mobility (e.g., workspace mobility)

92%
47%
Sustainability goals and compliance tracking

93%
61%
Device-tracking data

84%
53%
Office space usage

85%
54%
Navigation

Base: 144 global facilities, real estate, or workplace strategies decision-makers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Locatee, July 2021

- **Increased productivity from employees that feel more valued and heard.** One core impact of the pandemic has been the attention on employee wellness. As new virus variants continue to surge and businesses close and reopen, employees look to their employers to take their needs and safety seriously. The energy applied by leadership influences how employees experience their work environment: Employees are more likely to believe that the company provides the resources they need to be effective; agree that their company is customer obsessed; and believe the company is very creative compared with other companies known for creativity.[1] Ultimately, an effective workplace data management program should benefit the business as well as the employees. Workplace optimization is an example of an initiative that pays mutual dividends, such as increased employee satisfaction and improved employed productivity, safety, cost savings, and efficiency of facilities operations. High-readiness firms have gained these benefits at much higher rates than medium- and low-readiness firms (see Figure 9).

- **Improved buy-in through partner guidance.** Decision-makers at low-readiness firms cited challenges with a lack of buy-in from stakeholders and simply not knowing where to start. Partners can play a critical

Figure 9

Key Benefits Experienced From Workspace Optimization

● High readiness   ● Low readiness

	Improved employee productivity	Increased employee satisfaction	Improved efficiency of facilities operations	Improved employee safety	Ability to better meet ESG requirements	Better articulated ROI and impact of our program
High readiness	58%	57%	53%	51%	45%	43%
Low readiness	36%	38%	20%	32%	16%	23%

Base: 144 global facilities, real estate, or workplace strategies decision-makers
Note: Showing top 6
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Locatee, July 2021

role in data transformation. They provide the tools and fill skills gaps so low-readiness firms can find the solid footing needed to collect, manage, and diversify workplace data. Partners are important to workplace strategies by reducing the complexity of the data landscape through integrating tools (71%), building and maintaining the same level of connectivity at all locations (72%), and working with any network infrastructure (66%). Overall, high-readiness firms see partners as nearly twice as important across all capabilities of their workplace strategy compared to low-readiness firms. Partners can also help business outcomes by improving firms' abilities to meet both security and privacy requirements, so data is kept safe and private.

67%

of firms said partners that help them meet ESG requirements are important to their workplace strategy.

Transitioning to high readiness is a process that requires investments in people, processes, and technology. It also demands complete organizational buy-in and a commitment to gather as much pertinent data as possible. While it might be daunting, this transition can be done. Leverage insights from a diverse set of workplace data, integrated technology, and skilled staff. Organizations can then manage the workplace data needed in an accurate and efficient way across their complex ecosystem and bring actual value to their customers and employees.

7 out of 10

of firms said capturing employee satisfaction scores have created significant benefits for their business.

Key Recommendations ⟶

Key Recommendations

Forrester's in-depth survey of 321 global facilities, real estate, and workplace strategy decision-makers and their readiness to become data-driven organization yielded several important recommendations:

Improve data readiness to meet your evolving return-to-workplace requirements.

As firms emerge from global pandemic lockdowns, many expect employees to return to the office. To ensure employees feel productive and engaged in the office, stakeholders should reassess their data readiness through technology investments (i.e., redesigning office spaces, investing in technologies to ensure safe and healthy offices, facilitating employee productivity, and enabling efficient operations). Firms that have made these investments see significant gains, including more productive and satisfied employees who feel safe at work.

Prioritize data collection and accessibility.

Diverse sets of data are required to create robust workplace strategies. Corporate stakeholders can use data insights, including space usage, employee occupancy, and asset usage (e.g., conference rooms, desks), to guide your workplace transformation. However, data and insights are often siloed and inaccessible to key stakeholders, which creates barriers to actionable insights. Invest in technology that enables a holistic view of workplace data. Leverage technology to democratize data and ensure access among stakeholders who can also use this information to optimize office space, address maintenance issues, and enhance resource efficiency.

Seek assistance to improve internal data skills and enable seamless data insights.

Many firms are investing in tools to transform their office environments and enable employee productivity. However, corporate stakeholders are often limited in their ability to accurately interpret and translate captured data into actionable insights. Assess your internal employee skill sets and technical expertise to identify gaps. Seek partners to help you fill those gaps, assist with seamless data tool and technology deployment, and identify relevant opportunities to integrate captured insights into key processes and employee experience initiatives.

Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of 321 global facilities, real estate, or workplace strategy decision-makers at organizations in North and Latin America, EMEA, and APAC to evaluate to explore facilities, real estate, or workplace strategies. Survey participants included decision-makers in operations, IT, facilities management. Questions provided to the participants asked about the data they are collecting today, what they need from partners, benefits experiences, and challenges they face. Respondents were offered a small incentive as a thank you for time spent on the survey. The study began in July 2021 and was completed in July 2021.

Appendix B: Demographics

REGION	
North America	**23%**
Latin America	**30%**
EMEA	**23%**
APAC	**24%**

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	
5,000 to 9,999	**12%**
10,000 to 19,999	**67%**
20,000+	**21%**

TITLE	
C-level executives	**4%**
Vice president	**42%**
Director	**45%**
Manager	**9%**

LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY	
Final decision-maker	**45%**
Part of the team	**40%**
Influence decisions	**16%**

NUMBER OF GLOBAL OFFICES	
Under 50	**48%**
51 to 100	**31%**
101+	**23%**

TOP 4 INDUSTRIES	
Consumer product goods and/or manufacturing	**16%**
Technology and/or technology services	**15%**
Retail	**15%**
Manufacturing and materials	**11%**

TOP 4 DEPARTMENTS	
Operations	**39%**
IT	**25%**
Facilities management	**20%**
HR/training	**7%**

Appendix C: Endnotes

[1] Source: "Being Well At Work Makes Work Go Well," Forrester Research, Inc., May 14, 2021.

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