



# Are We There Yet?

Navigating the New Normal  
and the Return to Office

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## The Impact of Covid-19 on Real Estate and Office Trends



Wondering about the long-lasting impacts of Covid-19 on the office space? Locatee Co-CEO Myriam Locher predicts what's still in store.

Over the past two years, Covid-19 presented a constant flow of new developments and challenges for the workplace. We've witnessed office building occupancy levels drop globally along with repeated, and often unsuccessful, attempts to return back to the office.

During this time, customers facing critical and potentially life-changing decisions have relied on data gathered from Locatee. Their positive feedback and messages have been heartening reminders of our purpose at Locatee.

We've seen how:

- Pandemic task forces are using space utilization data to plan and ensure smooth shifts between working from home and the office.
- Facility management teams are informing cafeterias how many people to expect for lunch and advising their employees when to go eat to avoid overcrowding.
- Management teams are relying on daily workplace occupancy data to optimize their portfolio as they bring their workforce back into the office.

Despite the difficult circumstances, I believe that the role of office buildings, and by extension, Corporate Real Estate, Facilities, and Workplace functions, are more important now than ever before. I also think this pattern will continue once we emerge from the global crisis and restabilize in our new normal. I see two main reasons for this:

We've understood first-hand how flexible work can be  
For many knowledge workers, the office building was the only place to get work done before all of this.



The role of office buildings, and by extension, Corporate Real Estate, Facilities, and Workplace functions, are more important now than ever before.

Companies reacted quickly, investing heavily in enabling their employees to work from home and keeping operations running as smoothly as possible. After two years of working from home, office employees are coming out of this experience adept at hybrid or remote working. This has had a tremendous impact on how we view work.

We've also tested the limitations of remote working

Despite pushing the frontiers and boundaries of what we can achieve working from home, we've undoubtedly also understood its limitations: video call burnout, anyone? We've had a lot of time to learn what we can and cannot achieve with a lack of in-person interaction.

That is to say: yes, while we can hold virtual coffee meetings, this will not displace face-to-face discussions. As knowledge workers, we have first-hand experience on this now. In the absence of a physical office, many have recognized the valuable role it played in engendering a collaborative and productive workforce.

In addition to sharing with you the above thoughts and use cases, the contents of this playbook are geared to facilitate your mission as workplace decision-makers as we continue together to navigate through these uncertain waters in the world of work.

—Myriam Locher, Co-CEO at Locatee

## How Have Offices Around the World Reacted to Covid-19?

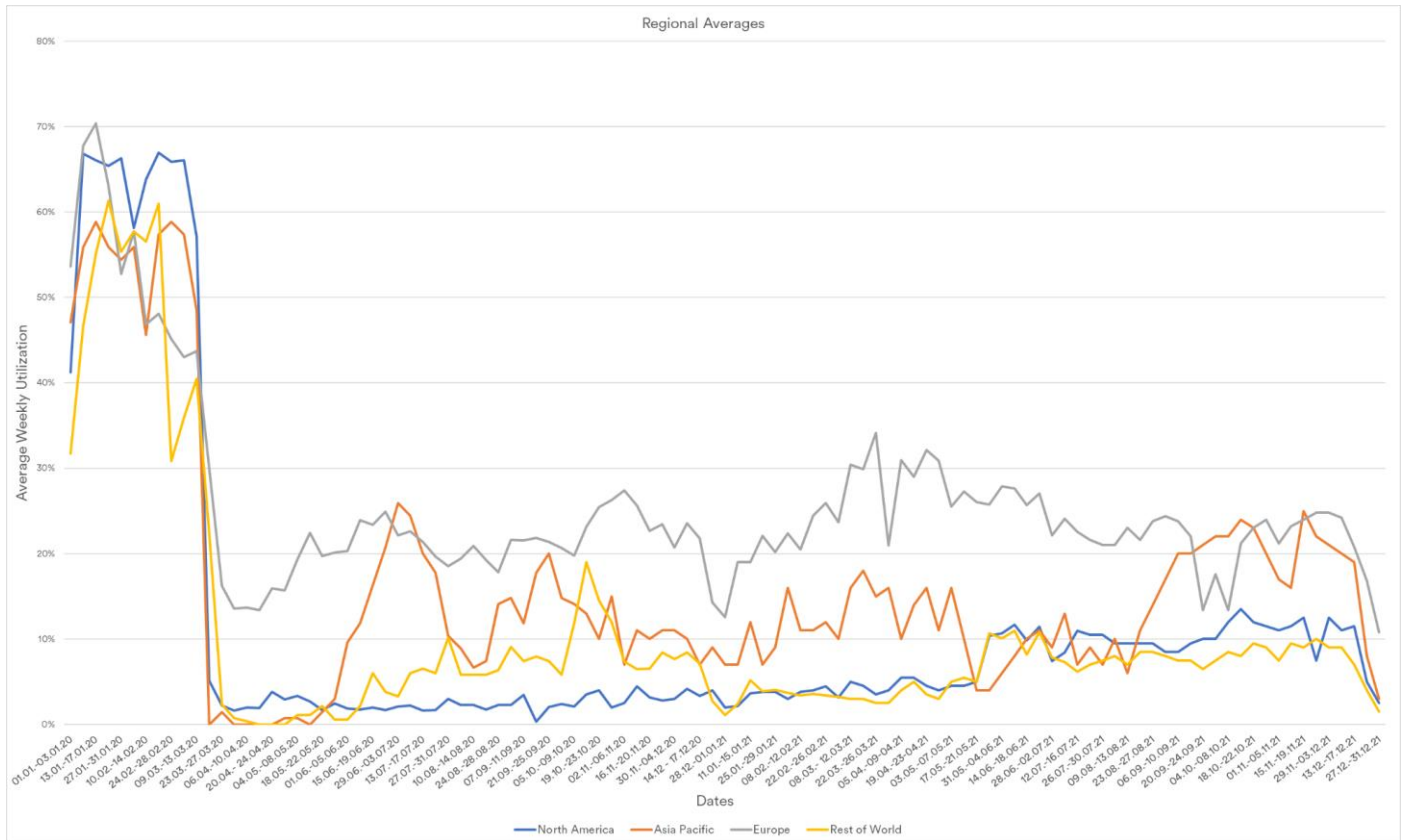
How have leaders reacted, and how do their strategies differ? Read on for our retrospective overview on global corporate real estate.

There has arguably never been a story in recent history that has gripped the necks and mouthpieces of the media in the way that the pandemic has. The floods of coverage streaming in over the past years have led to a diluted spectrum of opinions, viewpoints, and reports. In confusing times like these, can data help us try to get an objective understanding of the current reality of things?

Looking back at 2020 and 2021, we calculated the average weekly peak utilization in an effort to understand the response of offices around the world to Covid-19 and its challenges. From sudden work-from-home mandates to the implementation of staggered office hours, organizations have resorted to different tactics in the effort to allow social distancing and make their office a low-risk environment.

Here's what we found...

# Weekly peak office utilization around the world

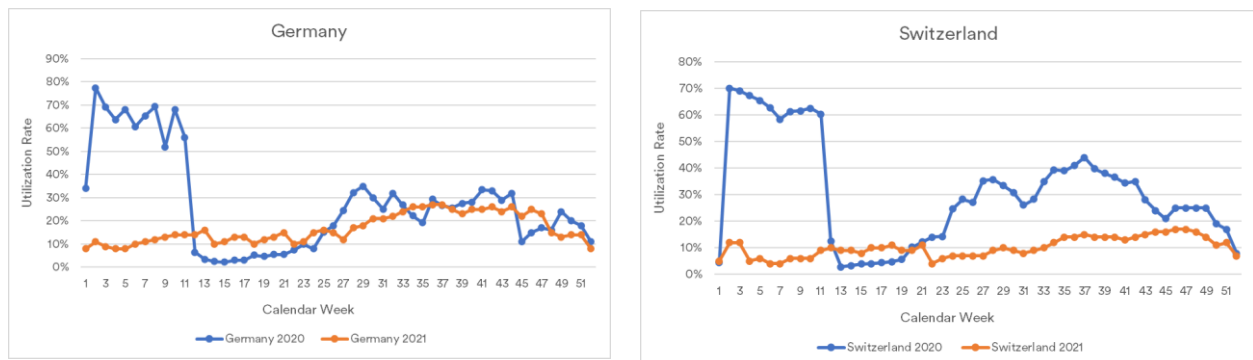


All graphs shown are based on an average of anonymized peak occupancy data collected by Locatee in the respective region \*

The Covid-19 crisis has had immense consequences on businesses, including how their rapport with the office environment is perceived. With a vast majority of knowledge workers forced to work from home for extended periods, a renewed discussion was initiated on the office, productivity, and the trust between employers and employees.

As with any crisis, different responses could be observed. [Denial...](#) [Shock...](#) [Negotiation...](#) But the reality, as we could observe over nearly two years worth of office utilization data, is that a new reality has already settled in. For almost two years, in every country we get data from, except one (China), office activity has yet to recover to levels comparable with pre-pandemic data. The overwhelming majority is often “stuck” with an average utilization rate of circa 10%, far below the 50% to 70% rates that were the norm until March 2020.

## Weekly peak office utilization in German-speaking countries



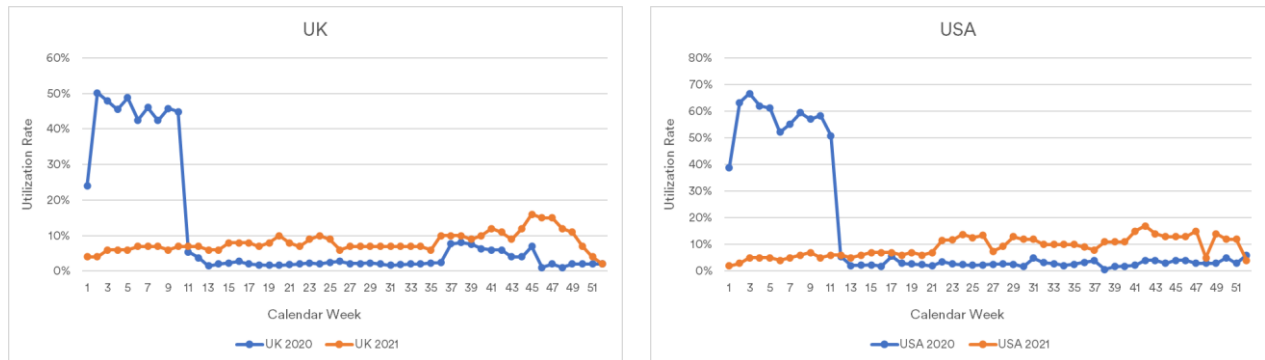
At the end of 2021, Germany and Switzerland were almost exactly where they had already been measured at the end of 2020: Germany at an occupancy rate of around 12% to 15% and Switzerland at an occupancy rate of 11%. Nevertheless, a year-on-year comparison shows clear fluctuations in the utilization of office space.

A comparison of German and Swiss data from the past two years not only shows the clear impact at the beginning of the pandemic – such as the drop in utilization in the winter months of 2020, which were dominated by contact bans. It also reveals that employees were much more hesitant to return to the office this year than in the first year of the pandemic. The curve is subject to much less fluctuation this year, which may be due to workplace strategies, increased vaccination coverage among employees, and more routine handling of the pandemic. At the same time, utilization is still far below pre-Corona levels.

In Germany and Switzerland, 75 to 85 percent of space is currently vacant - which unfortunately puts companies back where they were a year ago. This is unlikely to change in the winter months, especially with concerns surrounding new variants. On the one hand, many companies have not yet developed a solid strategy for the future use of office space. On the other hand, it is to be expected that employees increasingly resort to home offices again in view of health policy measures. This might not change again until spring, when we expect to see a fall in incidence. But, it remains to be seen whether or not we might even see this trend for a third time later this year.

By comparison, utilization rates in the U.S. and U.K. are approaching zero.

## Weekly peak office utilization in English-speaking countries



A look at Anglo-Saxon countries, the UK and US, reveals a stark contrast to the previous examples. Even before the pandemic, utilization in these countries was at a comparatively low level: 50% in the UK and 60% in the USA.

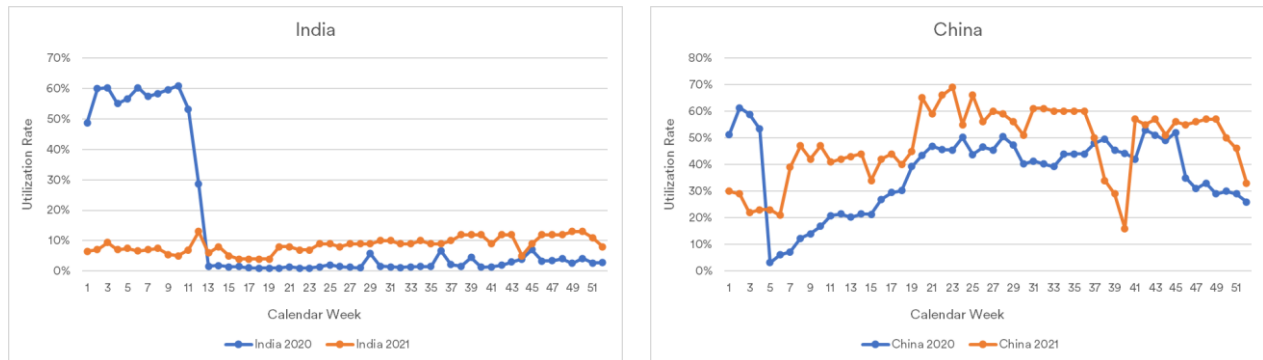
From the onset of Covid, both adopted a cautious-heavy attitude. This is made clear by the single-digit utilization rates for more than a full year. There was a very timid increase around the midway point of 2021, which potentially corresponded with vaccination campaigns in both countries.

However, these graphs show that the number of office returns were higher this year (albeit relatively low) than in 2020. Once again, this could have been related to vaccination numbers and higher levels of comfort amongst employees. On the other hand, this may have been a reaction to the lifting of restrictions in certain places.

More recently, with a renewed home office requirement to prevent the spread of Omicron that lined up closely with the winter holidays, the U.K. again had a sudden drop in utilization at the end of 2021.



## Weekly peak office utilization in Asian countries



As a whole, Asian-Pacific countries had the highest average utilization throughout the duration of the pandemic, which can be seen in the first graph comparing regional averages. But this average does not accurately represent how *every* country in Asia handled Covid-19. Looking at India, which had one of the lowest ongoing utilization rates during the pandemic compared to any country we collected data from, we see that there was at least one clear outlier in this trend.

There are a number of possible reasons that India might have had a drastically lower utilization rate compared to other Asian countries, such as China, during Covid-19. For one, India already had relatively low utilization prior to lockdowns when compared to other countries. In India, pre-pandemic utilization hovered around 60% until lockdowns began, while some Asian countries (like Singapore and South Korea) had utilization rates that we're nearly 80%.

This suggests that many workers and businesses in the country already had *some* experience working remotely, which would suggest that they were able to pivot with a bit more ease to a full-remote model during the pandemic.

This is not unlike the trends seen in English-speaking countries, which also had pre-pandemic utilization rates between 50% and 60%. It's possible that regions with lower initial utilization rates already had one foot in the door, in terms of flexible work. This, in turn, put them in a better position to work from home when Covid-19 began and can give an idea as to why utilization rates in the regions remained quite low throughout 2020 and 2021.

Amongst the most intriguing results was China. This was the original epicenter of Covid-19 and the first country that reacted with lockdowns. The result of this response can clearly be seen in the early and steep drop of utilization at 5 weeks into 2020, around 6 weeks sooner than a drop was seen in other countries. Nonetheless, over the last two years, the country had some of the highest utilization rates of all the countries observed.

After the initial lockdown, China's utilization climbed steadily and by mid-2020 had already returned to a pretty stable utilization rate that remained over 40% until the end of November 2020. In 2021, lower utilization rates appear to have coincided with reported waves throughout the year. But for the most part, utilization remained high during the year, even encroaching on pre-pandemic levels in some instances.

What's the reason that two countries on the same continent had drastically different responses compared to each other? In reality, this may simply boil down to big cultural differences.

A [study](#) done in late 2020 found that the majority of Indians liked or loved working from home and had increased efficiency, though the sentiment does [appear to be shifting](#) two years into the pandemic. On the other side of the scale, Chinese workers had a more negative opinion on working from home and [reported decreased productivity](#). Combined with a notoriously intense work culture, it's no surprise that the move to return to the office was quick.

## What Does This Mean for the Future of Work?

### The office will continue to evolve

In reality, the corporate world didn't need the pandemic for the office to start changing. Look back at the global graph. Before the pandemic, utilization rates were by and large between 50% and 75%, even in countries that have been less keen to adapt a flexible work model. Obviously, the change to more flexible work was happening. It may have been happening at a much slower pace, but it was beginning to change regardless.

As the graphs suggest, there is an ongoing trend toward low office occupancy emerging across countries. This may indicate a real structural change in the world of office work. The U.S. and U.K. show much less variation within occupancy, although policies and restrictions likely had a major impact on decisions in these countries.

Based on our [study](#) that was conducted last year, we found that there was a greater willingness around Europe, as opposed to in the US, to change office layouts, move to modern configurations, and adapt unassigned seating. In fact, European firms we're already quite far along the curve of flexible workspace configurations, with 74% having adopted either hot desking, co-working, or activity-based workspaces before Covid-19 had begun.

It's evident that flexible and hybrid working patterns had started to see the light of day before 2020. So, it would make sense that, whenever the health and safety conditions allow an unconstrained return, the return will be very unlikely to fill the office, not even to those pre-pandemic levels—new hybrid policies will make sure of that.

"The hybrid workplace is already happening," says Sabine Ehm, host of The Workplace Leader podcast and thought leadership and research manager at Locatee. "The office needs to be transformed toward the goal of increasing collaboration, employee well-being and sense of belonging, and resource efficiency. This will make it all the more important in the future to measure these on an ongoing basis to provide the right data to make fact-based decisions about office space – because there simply won't be a one-size-fits-all, cross-company solution."

## Workplace planning and management is becoming an agile function

For workplace leaders worldwide, these two years have been the opportunity to be a seminal moment in the industry. As we saw in [No Guts, No Glory](#), leaders are already taking new approaches to their decision-making, with space efficiency and employee well-being emerging as the stronger priorities for their initiatives.

The opportunity now is to significantly expand the scope of the function along these lines. To transform workplace planning and management into an agile function. A function that not only deals with long term planning, focuses on costs and works in slow timelines, but one that uses its remit to experiment, accelerate its tempo, and make data the nucleus of its action. A function that pumps new life and new meaning in the office space, aiming for employee productivity, well-being, and sense of belonging as well as resource efficiency.

## The workplace is changing for the better

It's impossible to say with certainty what the future holds for the workplace, but we look towards the coming years with a healthy optimism. We think that 2022 will be the year in which we will hear about the concrete successes and the positive impact corporate real estate, facilities, and workplace leaders, will have had with their end-users.

Gone are the days of expecting workers to spend 40 hours a week in their cubicle. The modern employee will have more freedom to choose where they work, when they work and how they work. In 2022, we expect to hear about all the ways employees were indeed brought back (some of the time) to the office – though not by obligation, but by attraction!

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*\*Locatee gathered anonymized workplace occupancy data from peak workplace occupancy data from a sample of 800 locations in 60 countries. Thus, the information and interpretations presented in this article should not be taken as definitive representations of workplace occupancy patterns for entire countries.*

## Driving Hybrid Workplace Strategy and Return to Office



Jenna Geigerman is Director, Real Estate & Strategy at Citrix. During an interview on our podcast, [The Workplace Leader](#), she shared how they are embracing the question of future user behavior and built a data journey to measure and manage how compelling their workplaces actually are.

### **How did you go about defining the future of work at Citrix? What data sources did you regard, and how are you intending to monitor things going forward?**

I think a lot of us, when we're looking at whether we have the right portfolio strategy going forward, are trying to figure out user behavior in a new way. This is because you can't assume that user behavior from the past is what it's going to be in the future.

Especially at a company like Citrix, where we have always, in theory, supported working remotely because our tools enable that. In practice, there were some teams that were more chained to their desks, either from a technological or philosophical reason, or managerial style. Like many companies post pandemic, we're moving to an employee-driven, hybrid model, where people can choose where they do their best work.

We're trying to understand what is user behavior, and how we can make sure we use that data to drive a future strategy. So, the employee data is: *How often do you come to the office? How long do you stay in the office? Where are people planning to sit? How many of those people checked in and actually showed up?*

We can compare to badge data and pull in data sources from our room booking to say, *how frequently are people booking rooms? And what size of rooms are they booking?* So that we can look at what's the right use of space, and the mix of "me space" and "we space". A lot of us think we're going to need fewer individual desks, but more collaboration space; in our future floor plans we can use some data to back that up.

People now have the choice of whether they come in. We also have data from when we surveyed them before Covid. But ultimately, when we're looking at what is a successful return to office, and what is successful long term, we will be surveying our larger sites when they are *actually* about to return to the office. What I'm going to look at after people return to the

office is *are they coming more frequently than they estimated?* And if they are coming more frequently, then I feel like as real estate professionals, we've done our job to make the environment more compelling than they even envisioned it would be so that they can do their best work in the office, not just at home.



If they are coming more frequently, then I feel like as real estate professionals, we've done our job to make the environment more compelling than they even envisioned

### **What are some of your initiatives put in place trying to make the office a compelling option for the employees to come to?**

A lot of it is making sure things are just frictionless. It's mainly a pain point for people who are used to an assigned desk. Now they have to come in and have to book a desk. So, we've done as much front-end explaining as we can.

Another thing is that if only 20% of the people are on the site, then it's going to feel super empty and not energetic. And people will wonder why they even bother to show up. Therefore, we're creating this environment where people are seeing other people. They're having 'collisions'. Obviously respecting a social distance, but at the break room for instance they run into someone, they share an idea. Then they go off, and they innovate, or they're able to go to a whiteboard and in person have that conversation.

The next part of it is making sure that when people come in, it doesn't take them long to set up, get going, right. And giving them the tools to do that, like lockers and good technology setups.

We're also incorporating ways to surprise and delight them. So, when you come back to the office, we're having a welcome. We're trying to think of our snack program differently. We'll continue to have sort of the free snacks that as a technology company is kind of the standard, as is good coffee. But we are also trying to think of ways to surprise and delight with other things, like randomly walking around and passing out ice cream on a Wednesday afternoon, or on a Thursday morning, having bagels for \$1.

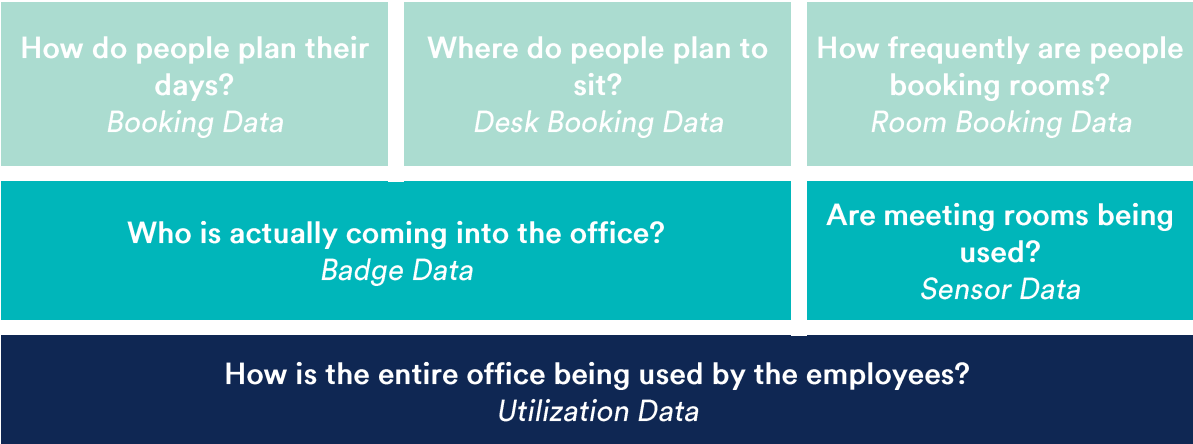
We're trying to look at ways that reward people for coming to the office in a way they get something different that they don't get at home. Because the other challenge is to make sure that the capacities and demand is as flat lined as possible. So, you're not just building for Wednesday afternoon demand, but you're having people use the buildings on Mondays and Fridays as well.

**What are the success metrics that you're going to look at for the new workplace environments and the things you're offering? What's going to tell you that users are picking up on it, and that they like what is offered?**

I think the biggest one is going to be to compare their intended behavior; how frequently they said they'd attend on our surveys when it was an abstract concept versus how often they actually come into the office when they have a real choice. And are they actually modeling their behavior? Because I think that will be a ramp up.

A large percent of our employees said they wanted to stay remote. Then the ones that wanted to be hybrid were heavily weighted on one to two days a week, for example. I'm hopeful that they'll start out with that, and schedule one or two days a week in the office. But I think they'll realize that they missed that lunch that their colleagues went on. Or they weren't part of that brainstorming ad hoc session that just happened on the fly. Or that their team isn't ramping up as quickly with their new staff as another team. All because they're missing that in-person connection.

So, I think what we'll see is a trend over time. What are the badging statistics for how many people come on campus? What resources are they using? And what kinds of seats are they using? These things will tell us if it is compelling enough for people to come more frequently than they initially thought? We can't really measure against what they did pre-pandemic. Before, they had less choice and flexibility on a hybrid kind of scale, and we even defined hybrid differently before. Hybrid was "I'm going to take one day a week off, I'm going to work from home on Fridays. That's what it looked like before and was a much more limited scope of choices. And so now when there's more choice, you have to be more compelling to be one of the choices.



## Darren Murph's Top Tips for Remote Work



We spoke to Darren Murph in an episode of our podcast [\*The Workplace Leader\*](#). Darren is the Head of Remote at GitLab. As we talked about how to effectively build remote or hybrid work, he shared his top tips with us.

### 1. Document Everything

Document everything that matters and make sure everyone carves out the time to actually write things down, so you create a company-wide repository. The reason for this is it's the only effective way to scale knowledge.

As your team grows, they become more distributed, they're in more time zones, and you'll never know when someone is online or offline. Writing things down, keeping it in a central repository and keeping it fresh and updated is the only way to ensure that people have access to the most up-to-date information.

### 2. Purposefully Use In-Person Meetings

Make sure that you are intentional about executing a strategy of when people get together and why. While you may be inclined to spend the budget to get people together and then fill that time with work or strategy sessions – resist that urge.

The highest ROI of in-person, synchronous time is bonding, culture building, rapport building and breaking bread with people as it is more difficult, if not impossible to do virtually.



### **3. Be Explicit About Company Values**

Company culture is the barometer of how well your values are lived out and reinforced. And if your values are not written down, if they're all implicit and not explicit, then you'll never really know if they're being lived out. And if they're being reinforced.

You cannot take culture for granted. So, you need to explicitly say how everyone should live those values and how people are expected to collaborate. You have to write it down and be much more intentional about it. A great way to start is a values audit, making sure that you actually have that in place.

### **4. Give Clear Direction**

If you're going down the hybrid route, it has to be done with extreme intentionality. You need some permissions to play and some basic guardrails where people can know where to find information and how certain workflows happen. Some sort of cohesion and discipline that goes along with it.

If you don't provide that guidance there is going to be all sorts of friction and chaos and dysfunction, especially when you look at who gets praised, who gets promoted, who has access to certain levels of information.

## Tips and Tricks for The Great Return

### Creating a safe, healthy, and compliant environment for your workforce

While governments hunkered down and enforced stringent guidelines and curfews to protect citizens and residents, businesses also stepped up to promote the safety and wellbeing of their employees, as data from the previous section demonstrates. Responsibilities did not end as businesses and communities came together to “flatten the curve”, and they will not end when people return to the office. Many have accepted that society will enter a new normalcy, and organizations will not be off the hook from looking out for their workers.

Managing office utilization in a way that members of your organization stay healthy is no simple task. Having the right information and data on how employees use your offices is a great first step in making better decisions when it comes to planning your workspace post-pandemic.

### 3 ways to apply your utilization data

Whether or not you are using Locatee within your organization, the tips below aim to provide you with an idea of the measures and metrics that will help you manage a successful, safe, and low-risk return to the office. This will demonstrate the different features that companies can use to ensure safety compliance, implement smart-cleaning, and identify under- and over-utilization in their portfolios.

#### 1. Ensure safety compliance

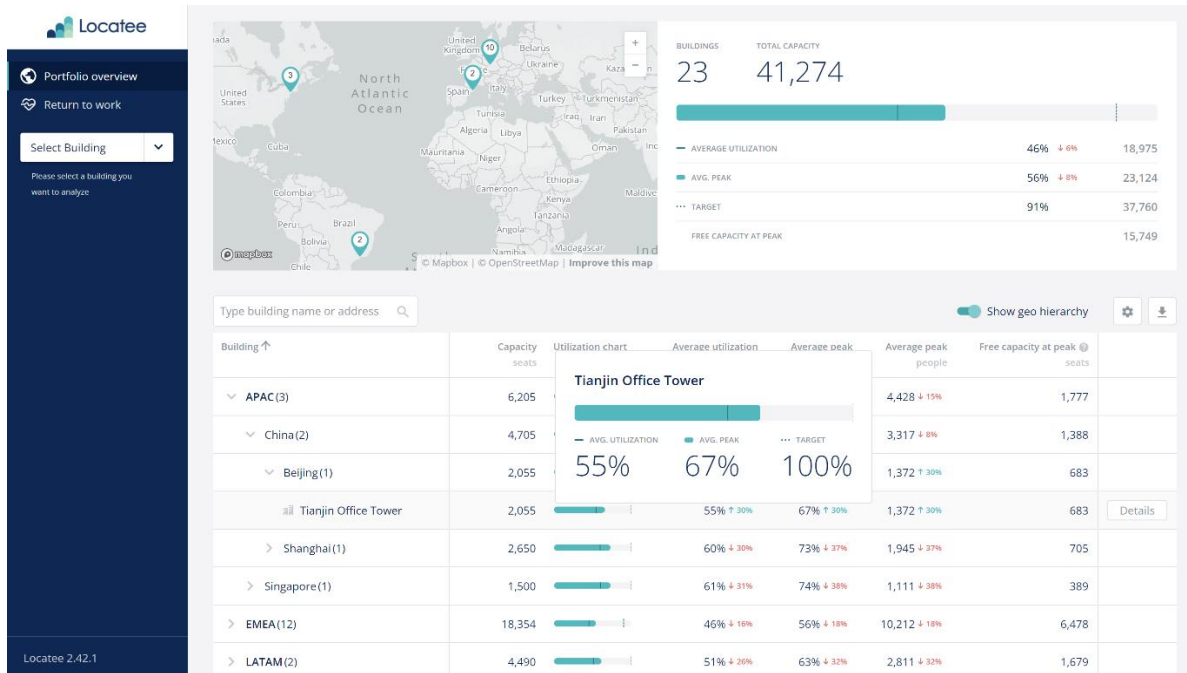
The Covid-19 pandemic shut down the offices around the world overnight. Since then, companies needed to navigate carefully between health and safety guidelines at each location, and their own objectives in terms of bringing back people to the office.

Keeping employees safe, complying with local regulations, and bringing back office presence have been critical objectives since Q1 2020, with little to no tools available to enable and monitor them.

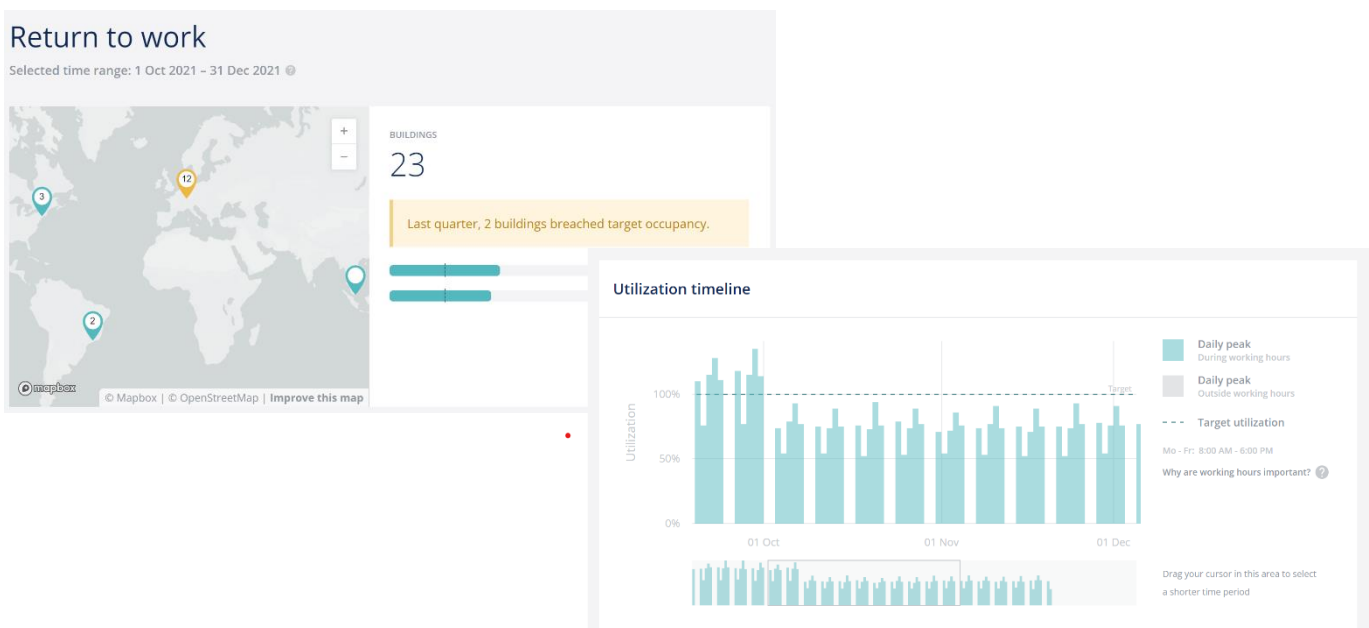
Booking software quickly became “all the rage” as these were seen as the go-to solution to avoid overcrowding and threshold breaches. However, booking software doesn’t prevent overcrowding, and doesn’t allow monitoring and reporting on breaches when they happen. This is because it only measures intended behavior, and not actual usage.

## Do it with Locatee

1. Plan and monitor your workforce's return to the office:
  - a. Set occupancy targets across your buildings portfolio
  - b. Filter office occupancy and utilization by region, country, city, or building



- c. Analyze which buildings have had breaches and where distancing guidelines are not being met
- d. Identify occupancy patterns and investigate density peaks



## 2. Smart cleaning

Cleaning is a standard practice for building maintenance, managed by facilities and site managers, and receives rising attention in the new normal, post-Covid environment. Providing clean, healthy, and safe office spaces is a key part of creating a positive employee experience in the office.

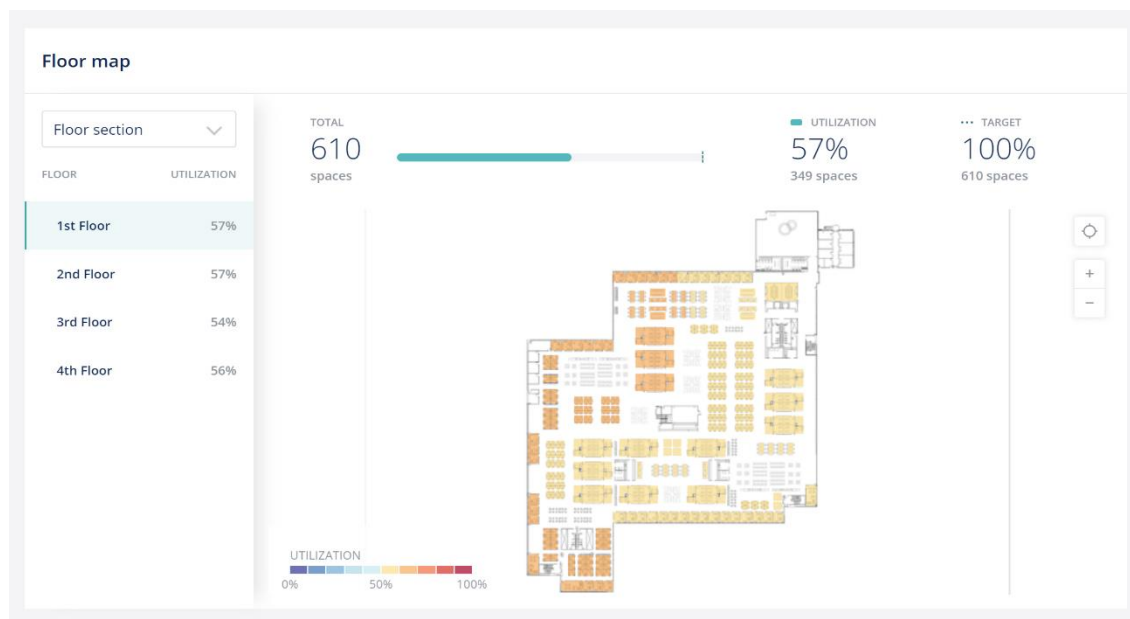
Meanwhile, excess cleaning tours in the office environment potentially lead to disruptions of the employee experience, and may as well result in an overuse of resources. Optimizing cleaning services thus can lead to a number of positive outcomes: better employee experience in the office (clean, safe, and undisrupted working environment), no waste of resources (thus representing an interest for sustainability managers), and financial savings.

### Do it with Locatee

There are two different ways of informing cleaning services optimization:

1. Using real-time data for cleaning tours execution

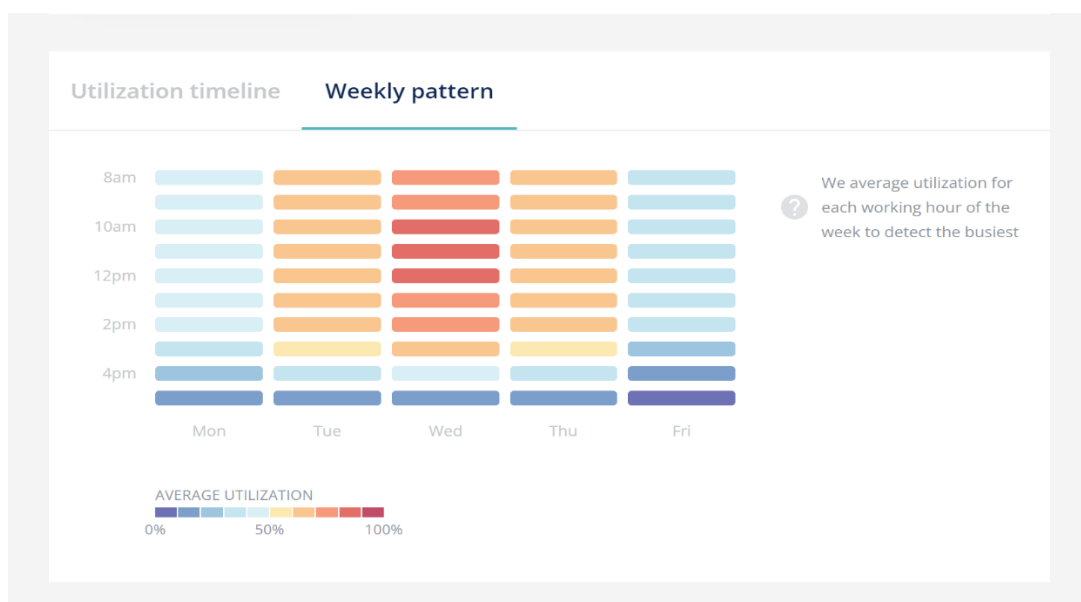
By reporting live office area utilization numbers and assigning desired service levels to different utilization ranges (i.e. 0 to 10 is “low”, 10 to 50 is “medium”, 50 to 100 is “high”), it is possible to adapt the cleaning tours according to the actual utilization of the area on a daily basis.



## 2. Using continuous data for cleaning tours planning

By analyzing weekly patterns over a longer period of time (i.e. the last quarter), the cleaning tours can be planned more efficiently. As shown in the illustration below, Wednesday mornings and early afternoons are the times with the most intense utilization of this particular floor and therefore require a higher level of cleaning. On the other hand, Mondays and Fridays are the least utilized and require less intensive cleaning tours.

Using low-medium-high service levels, weekly cleaning schedules match these patterns to minimize waste and disruptions. That data-based cleaning plan can then be adapted on a daily basis, using actual daily utilization numbers.



## 3. Identify under- and over-utilization

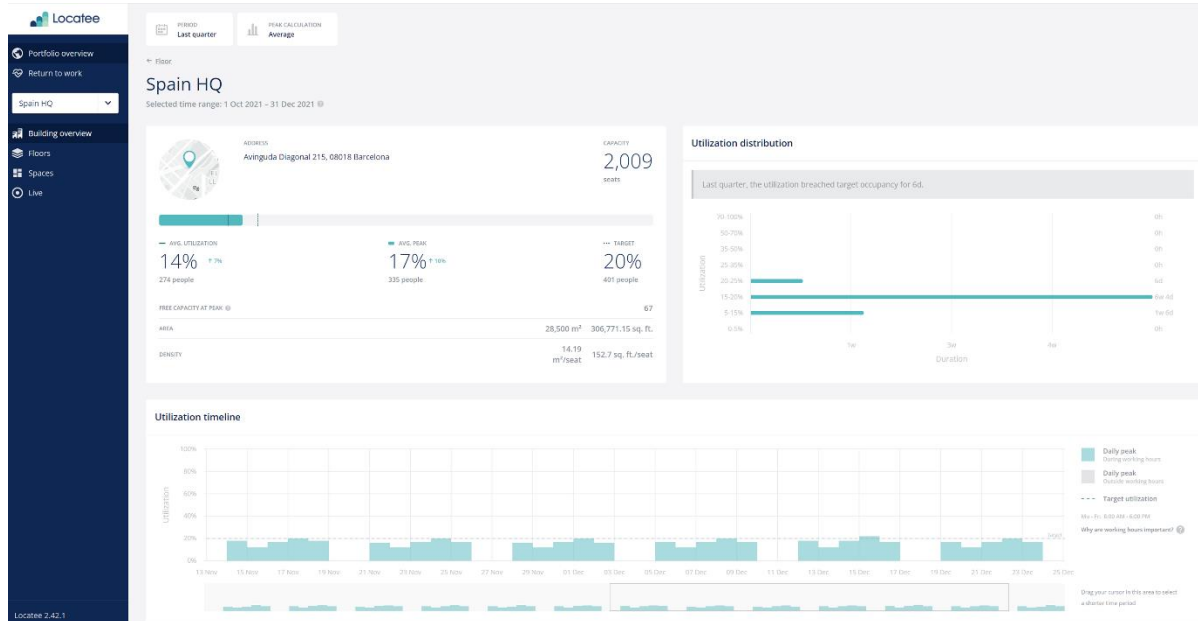
With hybrid working patterns, employees value the office for different reasons, and also use the office in various ways. Previously, design decisions have been backed by benchmarking or based on employee feedback. But to inform more agile space planning and configuration, space planners, site managers, and workplace strategists need to consider the truly relevant success measurements for different space types.

Floor and space type utilization data can be transformed into insights around employee and team preferences, informing workplace planning to cater user demand. With space planning based on real demand instead of only using either benchmarks or perceived demand,

employee experience is increased with positive influence on productivity, retention, and recruitment.

## Do it with Locatee

1. To understand whether a site is over- or underutilized and to assess future space demand, a first look at the building overview is key.



- a. Compare average peak utilization to the target utilization over time
- b. Assess how regularly high and low utilization levels occur by looking at either timeline view or utilization distribution
- c. Combine these insights with the assumptions regarding either headcount growth or rising office population with increased target thresholds. Required space is estimated with a sharing ratio based on the usage of space and current headcount numbers.

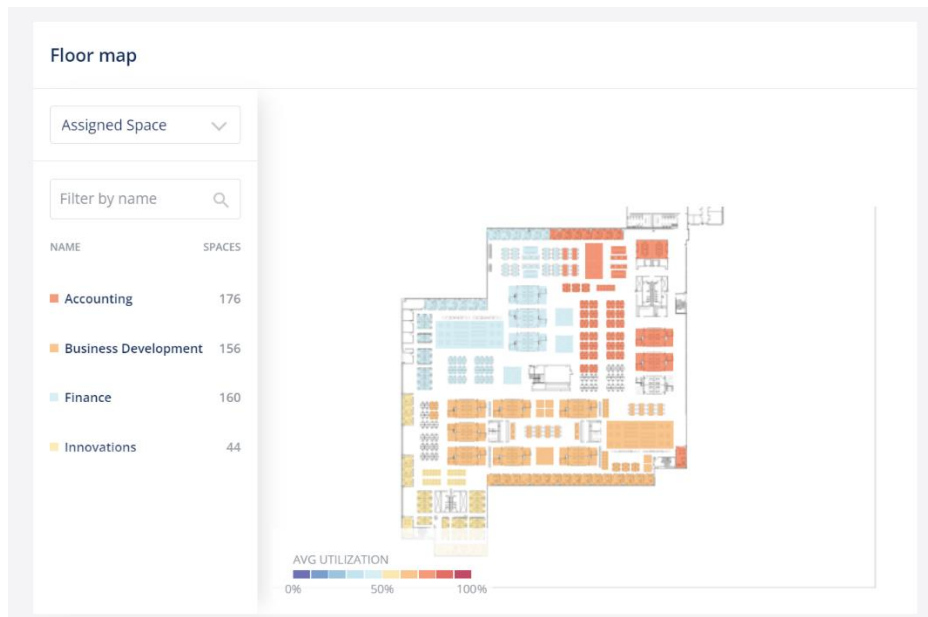
2. To compare performance of different floors (and possibly adoption of flexible work by different teams) the floor level utilization helps.

Spain HQ: Floors  
Selected time range: 1 Oct 2021 – 31 Dec 2021 ©

Floors Utilization by Space Category

Level ↑	Floor name	# Spaces	Utilization chart	Average utilization %	Average peak %	Average peak spaces	Free at peak @ spaces	
1	1st Floor	624		4%	8%	51	73	Details
2	2nd Floor	624		8%	16%	98	26	Details
3	3rd Floor	624		0%	1%	6	118	Details
4	4th Floor	624		0%	1%	6	118	Details

- a. After identifying floors with a particularly high or low average peak utilization, go to the floor details to see which areas have been most and least popular



- b. Based on that you can understand which workplace types or floor areas are in demand and accordingly change the workplace design

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To learn more about how Locatee's workplace analytics can help you better monitor and assess your organization's real estate portfolio and workplace occupancy, [see our product overview](#) or [get in touch with us](#).

## How Zurich Relied on Locatee During Covid-19

Zurich Insurance developed its own strategy to face the challenges presented by Covid-19. Here's a peek into how the company uses Locatee to monitor its global office utilization.

While many offices all over the world were shuttered due to Covid-19, corporate real estate and facilities managers found themselves facing a myriad of new obstacles. From how to maintain an unused office space to monitoring the number of people still working from the office, they worked through a series of new challenges. Zurich Insurance developed its own strategy to master this situation by using data gathered by Locatee.

### Daily utilization reporting

At their headquarters, people in charge of business-critical tasks or events were the only employees working from the office. Everyone else was asked to work from home. To be able to comply with government policy and protect their employees, the management team at Zurich Insurance prioritized daily reports on office usage. They observed key data points and indicators such as the overall peak utilization of a building as well as the usage of different work zones. Patrick Preisendanz, CAFM Specialist at Zurich Insurance Switzerland at this time, was in charge of preparing these reports and monitoring all relevant data.

### About Zurich Insurance

The insurance company rolled out Locatee in multiple buildings throughout Switzerland under the Workplace Operations Plan.

While Locatee was originally used to monitor the office building utilization for strategic and operational real estate decisions, it took on a new significance for Zurich during Covid-19.

### At a glance

- During the Covid-19 pandemic, Locatee's data was used to monitor the daily peak utilization
- Daily reports were created for management to verify the maximum number of people located in the office
- Measures were taken to reduce occupancy in zones with too much utilization
- For management, having reliable workplace insights during the crisis became a business-critical need



## A system to visualize space occupancy

With workplace utilization data provided by Locatee, Patrick had insight into all the buildings of his real estate portfolio. By looking at the utilization timeline, he could track all floor and work zone activity, monitor usage peaks, and have an overview of when these peaks occurred. A color system visualized which areas were safe-to-use, in need of investigation, or overutilized. As Patrick had designated home bases for each of his company's departments within Locatee, he could see exactly which departments had high occupancy rates and speak to them about their office utilization. At the height of the pandemic, Zurich's peak utilization sat at a stable 4%, well within the guidelines laid out by the Swiss federal government.

Since Zurich Insurance reached its target office utilization, Patrick was able to focus on his next big task: improving operation efficiency during Covid—using data to select areas where office resources could be reduced and identifying unused devices such as coffee machines to shut down.

## Planning for a new reality

Prior to 2020, Patrick had mainly relied on average utilization to make strategic decisions at Zurich, but Covid-19 surfaced the importance of paying close attention to peak utilization as well. Zurich Insurance is anticipating the return of their employees to the office, and plans to use Locatee and its color-coded visualizations to monitor The Great Return.

Throughout the waves of the pandemic, the company looked to take a staggered approach, whereby employees returned to their desks group by group, department by department. Moreover, office hours were more spread out in order to facilitate a safe return to “business as usual”. As the pandemic progressed, Zurich Insurance, like many companies, [explored hybrid as a long-term option](#).



**Locatee data took on a lot of importance during the last few weeks and was needed in order to implement the necessary measures taken by the management team.**

— Patrick Preisendanz, Former CAFM Specialist, Corporate Real Estate & Workplace Services, Zurich Insurance

## Using Data to Make Sense of the New Normal

How does the future look post-Covid-19?

In light of the extraordinary situation brought on by Covid-19, keeping an eye on office occupancy and utilization reached a new stratosphere of significance. Whereas corporate real estate, workplace, and facilities' leaders previously looked to workplace utilization data to measure efficiency and identify optimization opportunities, 2020 shifted a lot of the energy toward creating a safe, healthy, and low-risk environment. Managing workplace occupancy became a business-critical need.

Through the many waves of Covid-19, companies began to understand and adapt more actively to the changing situation. They leaned on different types of data that was already available to help them pivot faster in 2021. While data coming from badge entries, QR codes, desk reservation systems, and even manual counts, did help companies accommodate change during a rapidly evolving year, it will not be enough to help usher back the workforce into a new normal.

As 2022 begins and countries around the world pull back on restrictions, there is renewed hope that we may be nearing the end of this turbulent period. But that doesn't mean that things will go back to the way they were in 2019. Many countries were already on a slow path to a more flexible work model, and the pandemic simply fast-tracked the change.

Now that many employees have experienced both ways of working, they'll be more aware of what's best for them, and they'll use this information to make decisions about where they work. If workers don't feel that their needs are being met by their company, a lot of people won't be afraid to seek out a business that aligns better with them. In fact, we're already seeing that this is the case with the "great resignation", as some have coined the movement.

Organizations that are serious about creating environments that are compelling for their workers will recognize the need for better data. By using a tool like [Locatee Workplace Analytics](#), that offers both real-time and historic data at different levels of granularity, workplace leaders will have clear and accurate data on what the true utilization of their portfolio is. This will allow them to make continuous, informed, and impactful decisions about their workplaces, so that they can build an optimized portfolio while creating offices in which their employees love to work.

It's Locatee's mission to enable workplaces that employees love by providing the workplace insights you need to make confident decisions in line with your company's goals and employee needs.

[Contact us to learn more.](#)

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