MillerKnoll

Launching Successful Pilots

Considerations for Testing New Workplace Solutions
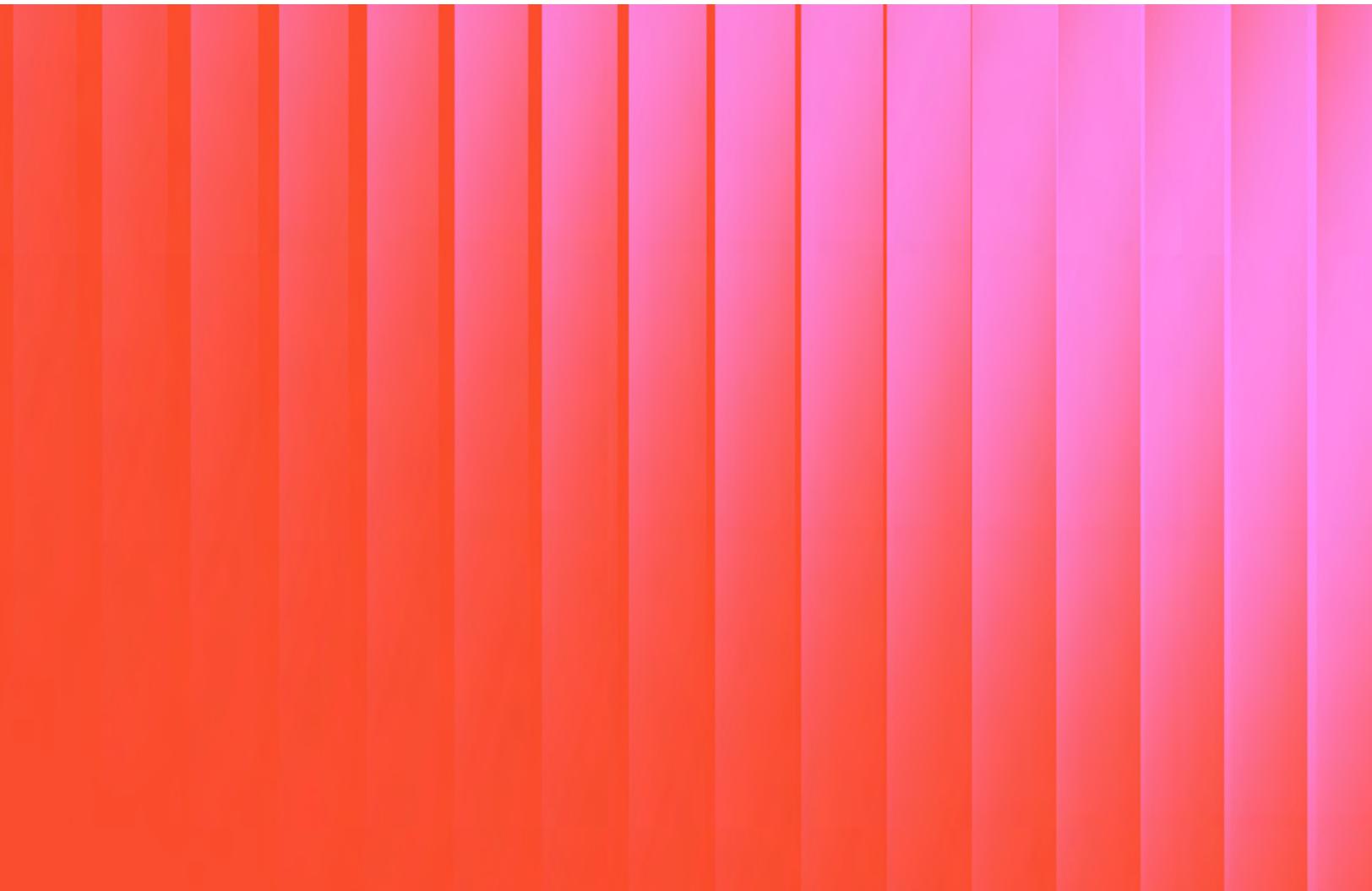
WHY PILOT?

As the pandemic disrupted the physical workplace, it created significant opportunities for organizations to reimagine how and where they work. Lingering uncertainty has held many firms back from introducing new concepts as they struggle to answer the challenging question "What is the role of the office today?"

Running a pilot is a low-risk approach that allows organizations to take the first step toward a new workplace solution. It provides an opportunity to introduce the hybrid workplace and new ways of working in the workplace ecosystem within a sustainable financial model.

Companies are exploring how to leverage space to create a destination that will draw workers from their remote work environments back to the office. Pilots can help organizations learn what their employees really want and create that magnetic space.

Testing in small bites can be a way to introduce more progressive spaces in a climate of uncertainty. Pilots can generate data and insights for multiple constituencies to drive plans to scale and inform future space types within the larger real estate portfolio.

As an inherently iterative practice, piloting allows firms to test models and revise them based on hard data and user feedback. Giving users a voice in the process helps build consensus and buy-in for new furniture standards and space design.

Pilot settings are typically redeployed within the workplace, establishing a more sustainable model than the mockup review process.

CLARIFYING PILOT GOALS

Clarifying why you should run a pilot is the first step in your journey. It will guide the decision-making as the program is developed, built, rolled out and evaluated. For example, are you seeking to:

- Change the fundamental way you work?
- Make decisions about your real estate portfolio (e.g. whether to add or shed space)?
- Attract and capture top talent?
- Explore new planning approaches?
- Test settings that may stimulate different behaviors?
- Create unique experiences that primarily exist within the workplace?

Defining objectives will drive development of the appropriate pilot strategy and plan to address your unique challenge.

SPACE

Consider what you are seeking to accomplish with your space. Do you simply want to explore some new options? Or maybe you want to update other aspects of your workspace to align with a renewed corporate strategy and drive new behaviors. Some examples of space goals might be:

- Improve functionality, comfort and/or mobility
- Support health and well-being
- Become more nimble
- Recalibrate density
- Boost buzz and energy
- Evaluate circulation and wayfinding
- Introduce new work modes

INFRASTRUCTURE

Consider what elements of your infrastructure you want to update or explore. Smart pilots are testing multiple variables including new technologies and equitable hybrid meeting settings. Some other solutions pilots test are:

- Reduce wire-based working
- Improve ergonomics, visibility
- Streamline access to equipment

Pilots are an ideal opportunity to beta test technology to help you measure space demand, utilization and activity.

PEOPLE / PROTOCOL / PROCESS

Space, when combined with change management efforts and a deep understanding of corporate culture,

can catalyze workstyle shifts, support new policies and drive change.

Consider what new workstyles, policies and behaviors you want to drive via space. Well-planned designs can:

- Stimulate innovation
- Boost collaboration
- Reinforce company culture
- Celebrate brand
- Increase morale
- Alter workplace rhythm

ESTABLISHING CRITERIA

Once your goals are clarified across all categories, you can begin to look at what "levers" to pull to get the answers you seek. Determine how long you will pilot and measure success. Studies can run from 6 weeks to 12 months. Identify what metrics will be most relevant to your decision-making and the KPIs that will best guide you.

SPACE

The pilot should reflect the future state of the company workplace and be a visible departure from the current setting.

Start with evaluating what space/s within your existing portfolio make sense for the pilot area and whether their locations are suitable.

If you plan to roll out the pilot on a broader basis across the company, pay heed to where it's situated within a building and its visibility to others. Casual observations of the in-progress model by passersby (who could conceivably be future pilot participants) might pique interest in adopting a similar plan in their team's space.

Assess what spaces have the capacity for a suitable pilot.

- At the minimum, spaces should accommodate designated teams and their associated resources.
- As an easy benchmark, your space should reflect that of a neighborhood in size and locale.
- Factor in the appropriate level of team flexibility needed.

- Determine how much space will be devoted to collaboration and individual use. Ratios utilized in the past are likely irrelevant in a reimagined hybrid workplace.

Design should inspire users, so provide settings that are unique and distinctive from their work-from-home environment. Other decisions to consider when setting the design criteria are:

- Will this workpoint be assigned or unassigned?
- What levels of privacy (acoustic and visual) will be required?
- How much and what type (owned or shared) of storage is needed?
- Do you need to provide elements of personalization?
- What level of agility are you seeking?
- What adjacencies are required for users?
- What are your requirements for circulation and wayfinding?

Pilots are by nature a work in progress, so be sure to deploy an inherently agile model conducive to periodic tweaks and changes.

Finally, establish your budget and what furniture and furnishings will be purchased and what will be integrated from existing inventory. Depending on your goal with the pilot, it may make sense to start anew and introduce not only a new workstyle, but also a fresh aesthetic that will amplify impact.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Pilots can be an ideal method to test new technology solutions with a manageably sized user base.

Determine the technology requirements for the pilot.

- What are the wire management needs?
- Will user technology be BYOD, enterprise-provided or a combination?
- Will technology and power be integrated with furniture? Options include devices that measure utilization and encourage activity.
- Do you need to support added mobility to work untethered? Outdoors?

Similar to planning furniture expense, determine your technology budget and whether that includes leveraging existing infrastructure, testing new solutions or a combination while exploring a more sustainable power and technology infrastructure.

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PEOPLE / PROTOCOL / PROCESS

Be strategic in selecting user groups, partners and internal champions, as well as how you communicate and work with them.

- Work with leadership to identify appropriate teams and/or departments to consider for the pilot design.
- Consider users whose work modes are similar to others in the organization who may be subjects of a future roll out.
- Evaluate user team size, type, workstyle and onsite schedule.
- Identify stakeholders who need to be part of the planning and design process. Typically this might include management of the user team, corporate leadership, representatives from IT, HR and/or real estate.
- Select your partners, both internal and external. This might include furniture, technology, audio/video, design and space utilization measurement.
- Plan how you will communicate with each constituency and how often.
- Show gratitude and appreciation to users for their participation with catered lunches, team-building events or similar.
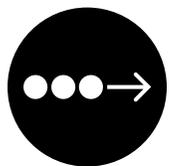
IMPLEMENTING YOUR STUDY

Each phase of a pilot study is critical to its success.

PRE-PILOT

The pre-pilot phase formalizes the decisions considered in the Establishing Criteria process. It typically encompasses:

- Identify specific project opportunity/ies.
- Document existing conditions, constraints, functionality and considerations.
- Conduct inventory of furniture, equipment and technology.
- Qualify user group.
- Determine change management processes to be employed and who will champion efforts.
- Establish design requirements.

- Develop measurement methodology. Determine what metrics are relevant, what data is needed and how it will be captured. Examples could be observation, survey, focus group, technology tools such as seat sensors, apps, key card, lasers.
- Establish your timeframe. When will you measure? Iterate?
- Determine how fees/materials will be structured. Typical options are:
  - Design service fee
  - Furniture manufacturers and dealers pay
  - Customer pays

DURING THE PILOT PHASE

Once the pilot is in place, consider the nature and cadence of changes you will make to furniture, design and/or infrastructure. Communicate frequently with the user group. If introducing new furniture and/or technology, will onsite training be required? If so, how will you implement?

POST-PILOT

Summarize and document learnings from pilot. Share with appropriate stakeholders. Determine how to apply learnings to inform additional pilots and/or more permanent workplace solutions. Depending on the outcome and future plans for scaling, consider how you may redeploy furnishings used in the pilot elsewhere within your organization.

TOOLS + RESOURCES

Live Platform

Meeting Spaces to Support Hybrid Work