



# Adapt To Survive: The Coworking Revolution

## An industry report

Insights, research and analysis into the current reality for building owners

# Accessia

[www.accessia.com](http://www.accessia.com)

# Introduction

Workplaces are having to adapt to survive. Companies now expect more from their workplaces, including greater flexibility from their landlords to accommodate changes to their business due to market fluctuations, harsh economic realities, and hard-to-predict growth. On top of this, employees’ needs for their spaces are evolving quickly.

Inevitably, with such varying demands and rapid change, some landlords are struggling to keep up. But the longer landlords fail to meet tenants’ needs, the more pressure they face. Tenant churn, low occupancy rates, rising costs, falling revenue, and sustainability targets are all daunting challenges.

The rise of the coworking model has compounded this issue, making the fight for tenants more competitive than ever before. Many landlords are being forced to adopt a flexible approach themselves just to compete, but the concept is still in its infancy and the path from struggling traditional

office building to profitable coworking style space is not well trodden.

How acutely are landlords feeling these challenges? What are their plans to tackle them? How will workplaces change in the coming years? These were the questions we set out to answer when we surveyed 200 US building owners at companies of various sizes, across the entire country.

As a workplace access, experience and analytics platform that helps landlords attract and retain customers by understanding and optimizing their coworking spaces, Accessia is uniquely placed in the market. We have direct insight into

how the most successful companies in the industry are making decisions. Comparing this with the findings of this research is fascinating, and we believe this report will be valuable to anyone across the office and commercial building sector, from those considering transitioning from a traditional mixed use model to coworking, to those with an established coworking space offering.

**Mark Loney**  
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## Methodology

The research was conducted in February 2024 via a Censuswide survey of 200 US building owners in commercial property companies of varying sizes.

### Profile of companies interviewed

#### Employees

10-49 employees.....	13.5%
50-99 employees.....	14.5%
100-249 employees.....	43%
250-500 employees.....	23%
More than 500 employees.....	7%

#### Location\*

Austin.....	11%
Boston.....	10%
Charlotte.....	26%
Chicago.....	8%
Columbus.....	3%
Dallas.....	14%
Denver.....	10%
Houston.....	6%
Indianapolis.....	2%
Jacksonville.....	10%
Memphis.....	2%
New York.....	3%
Philadelphia.....	1%
Phoenix.....	8%
San Antonio.....	3%
San Francisco.....	1%
San Jose.....	1%



\* Some respondents have operations in multiple locations

Percentage totals throughout this report may not equal 100% due to rounding to the nearest whole number





# Executive summary

The traditional 9-to-5 office landscape for the most part no longer exists. This has had a significant effect on the nation's 970,000 office properties with 70% of building owners agreeing it's harder to make money from commercial buildings post-pandemic.

One in five are now struggling to predict their revenue streams and 18% are grappling to maintain occupancy rates in their buildings, while 28% don't understand what tenants want.

A key driver for such a drastic market change, according to landlords, is the reality facing SMBs which is preventing them from committing to traditional leased office spaces and means they are looking for flexible space solutions instead. 41% of landlords say that organizations are finding it difficult to gauge when and how often their employees want to be in the office. 34% are juggling office-based, hybrid, and remote working

employees. And over a third are investing in smaller satellite offices instead of one headquarters.

To address these issues and appeal to the SMB market, many landlords are adapting their portfolios to include coworking workspace offerings. Done right, this holds the key to operator success.

However, despite 40% seeing transitioning to a coworking model as an opportunity for commercialization, only 26% are analyzing how their communal spaces are being used. The key to unlocking this insight and making a success of the coworking model is the intelligent use of data.

Collecting and analyzing

accurate people-attributed data on building or space usage is essential for optimizing spaces to attract and retain tenants, boosting revenue, reducing costs, and improving security. But the majority are still operating in the dark when it comes to this. Time consuming solutions still proliferate. One in five still rely on swipe cards, keys are favored by 14%, and 28% still use manual sign-in books to monitor people in their buildings.

With such limited data capture methods, it's not surprising that even the 20% who review their building data weekly report challenges. For instance, on the security front, half of respondents admit

there are people who no longer have official access to their buildings but who still possess key cards or other means of entry. This is a problem which can be exacerbated with the coworking model, where a greater number of smaller tenants or paying individuals have access to a building.

But while adapting to a coworking offering has several benefits, from greater tenant satisfaction to an increased number of revenue streams, there are also challenges. First and foremost are the high upfront costs of design and fit-out which concerns 18%. Plus, there is a combination of ongoing costs to factor in. Tenants expect a much

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higher standard of ongoing services and there is more upkeep to contend with, which are challenges for

23% and 19% of building owners respectively.

There is also an environmental agenda to consider. This can be a big draw for tenants who expect their building to assist in their own race to net zero. As such, 19% of the market is actively working to make their buildings more environmentally sound. But this adds further cost pressure.

Such challenges need to be overcome to be successful in the new world of work. Companies need to rethink not only their business models, offering, and target markets, but also their approach to data collection and analysis if they are to successfully navigate the coworking revolution.



# The current landscape

## Modern working

According to the US Energy Information Administration, there are 970,000 office properties across the United States. These buildings once served the business community on a traditional working basis, Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm. But that landscape is drastically different today.

Indeed, 70% of the 200 building owners in property companies studied for this report agree it's harder to make money from commercial buildings post-pandemic. Meanwhile, one in five say they are struggling to predict their revenue streams, 28% are struggling to understand what tenants want, and 18% are battling to maintain occupancy rates.

## Landlord priorities

A closer look at the main

One in five say they are struggling to predict their revenue streams and 28% are struggling to understand what tenants want

priorities of landlords reinforces the many commercial challenges they face.

### 1. Savings

With companies struggling to make money from their buildings, cost cutting is high on the agenda. 19% are trying to reduce running costs, 18% are focused on minimizing energy costs, and 28% are looking for other efficiencies to reduce overheads.

### 2. Occupancy

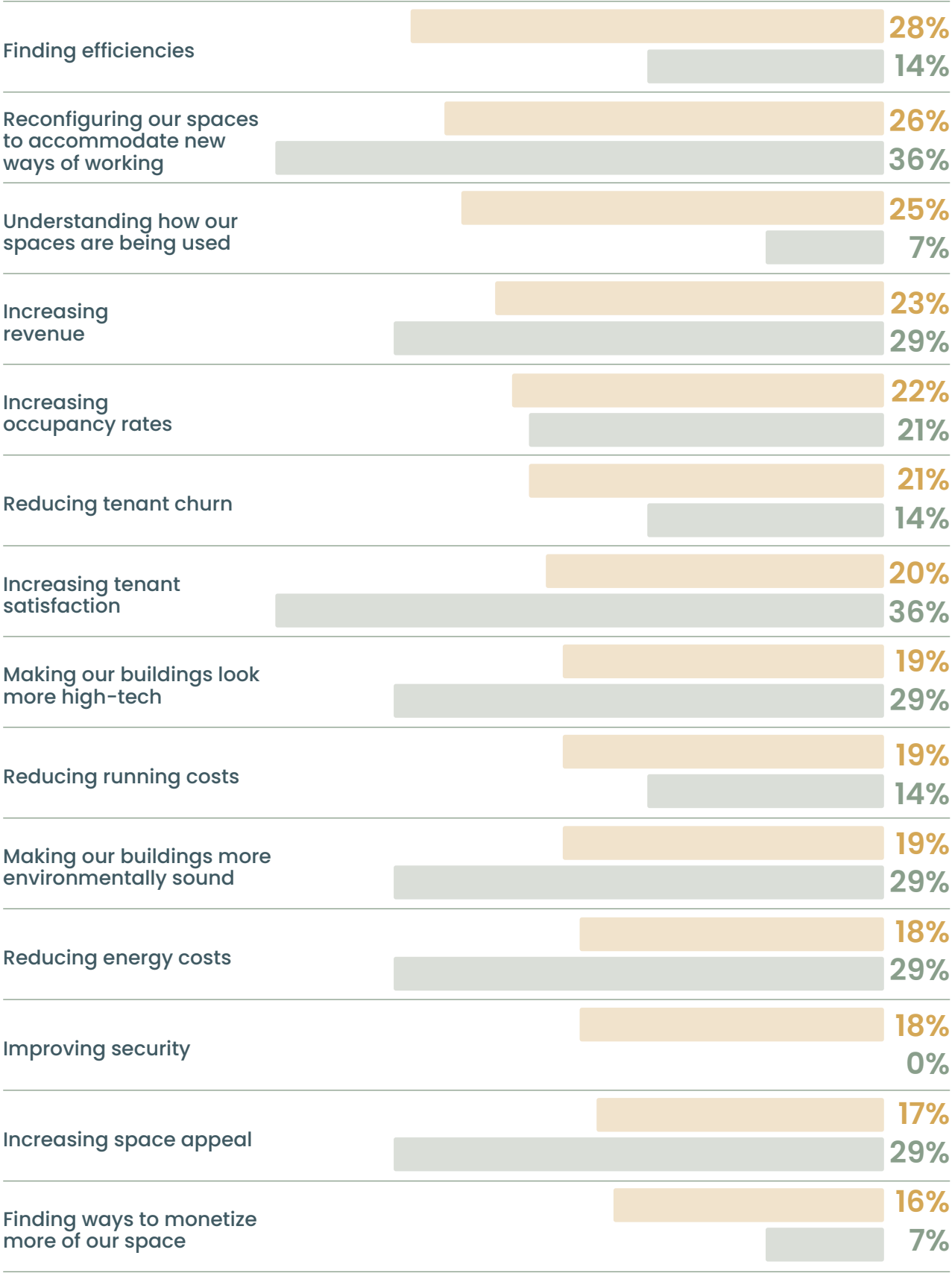
18% are focused on what

you might call the sector's foundational issue, increasing occupancy rates. Unsurprisingly then, improving space appeal and making buildings look more high-tech are priorities for 17% and 19% respectively, both of which could be interpreted as tactics to increase occupancy. One in five are worried about low satisfaction among the people that use their building, coupled with a further 21% that are troubled by the uncertainty brought by their rate of churn.

### 3. Space optimization

To provide the right facilities to boost tenant satisfaction, landlords need to understand how their buildings are currently being used, but a quarter have identified this as a significant and high-priority problem, according to

## Top priorities for landlords Pressures felt by the larger companies studied





our research. This lack of insight will be hindering the 16% trying to find ways to monetize more of their space. It also won't help the 26% trying to successfully reconfigure their buildings to accommodate new ways of working.

#### 4. Sustainability

Adding a layer of pressure to an already difficult situation, tenants and regulators are increasingly expecting building owners to be investing in reducing their building's impact on the environment. This is especially relevant for corporate tenants with ESG (environmental, social, governance) targets. These tenants expect their entire supply chain, including their landlords, to support their commitment to achieving net zero emissions and, with the growing focus on retrofitting the US's

building stock, 19% of those we surveyed said that making their buildings more environmentally sound is a priority.

#### The lease gap

The data suggests that US landlords have adapted well to the coworking space business model, with landlords saying that average lease lengths of 3.8 years best suit them. This is much shorter than what was previously considered 'normal' where lease lengths could range upwards of 10 years.

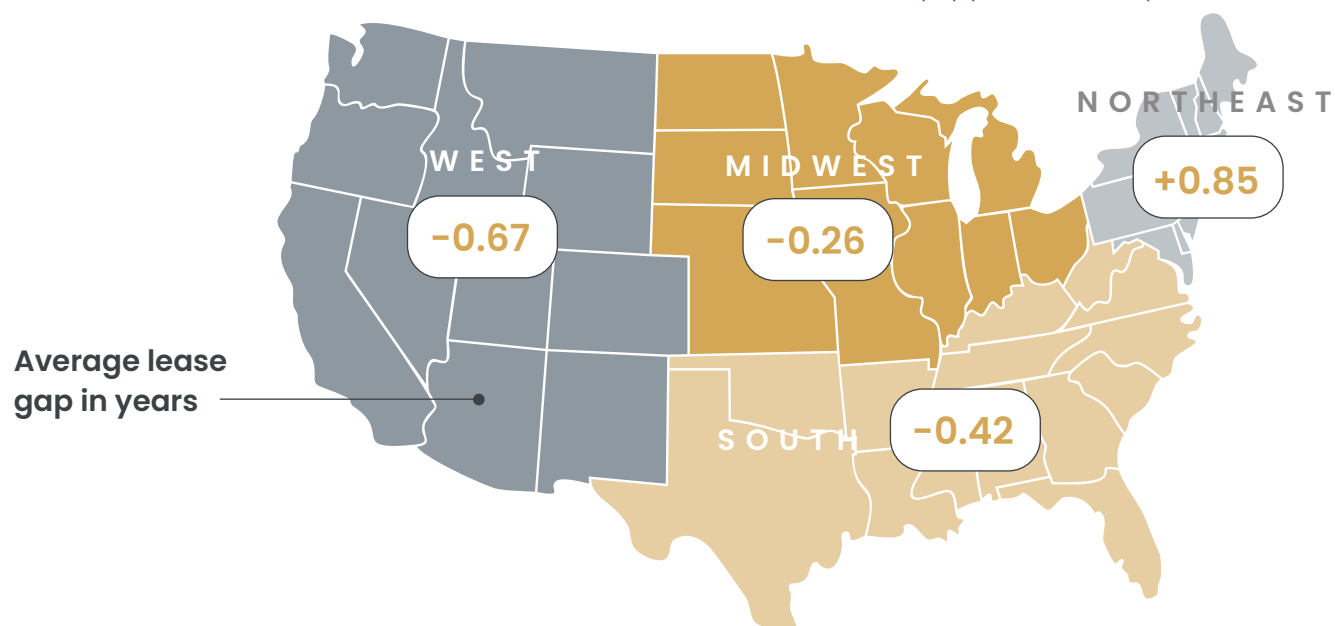
Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, tenants would prefer a marginally longer tenancy agreement averaging 4.3 years. This is true in almost every region of the US.

Building landlords therefore appear to be more or less in step with the market. In

#### Tenants and regulators are increasingly expecting building owners to be investing in reducing their building's impact on the environment

contrast, in the UK, tenants want much shorter leases than landlords are prepared to offer. This has led to a much more reactive shift to a flex or coworking space model than in the US where this change appears proactive.

Assuming that the direction of travel is broadly the same, US landlords could be ahead of the game thanks to a substantially different corporate culture, where they are better equipped to anticipate



tenants' changing needs. Alternatively, the numbers could simply reflect the greater number of large corporates in the US in comparison to the UK, who would naturally prefer longer leases.

#### Landlords appear to be more or less in step with the market. In contrast, in the UK, tenants want much shorter leases than landlords are prepared to offer

Regardless, as we will see throughout this report, this journey toward coworking space is not being driven by either landlords or tenants, but rather employees. And it's clear that many US corporations don't understand what their employees want,

#### Tenant uncertainty

- 42%** say tenants are investing in smaller offices in multiple locations to attract and benefit from pockets of talent across the US
- 41%** say tenants are struggling to gauge how many of their employees want to be in the office, and when
- 34%** say tenants are juggling office-based, hybrid, and remote working with a workforce that want a nice office to go to but don't want to be there all the time
- 35%** **This is also true for large corporations:** say that even large corporate tenants want a mix of smaller spaces at their disposal for their dispersed workforce to work from when needed

particularly when it comes to returning to the office.

#### Tenant uncertainty

Part of the reason landlords don't understand what their tenants want is because tenants themselves are facing uncertain times. So, they themselves don't know

what commercial space they need now and in the future. They are still trying to work out how the hybrid working revolution will finally play out in their organizations and are continuing to experiment with different approaches.

# Redesigning the offering

In adapting to the changing needs of tenants, a coworking space revolution appears to be well underway.

But the flex or coworking offering itself is still in flux. Indeed, 28% of landlords agree it's hard to know what spaces or services tenants want. As such, not

all landlords are taking the same approach. As the coworking space concept continues to evolve, each operator is considering different facilities and

features to invest in which is fueling fierce competition for tenants and members. But without knowing for sure, any investment in services and facilities is a risk.

From a myriad of possibilities, landlords offer everything from:



Phone or video booths  
38%



Social events for tenants  
34%



Membership with some member perks  
34%



Communal meeting rooms for hire  
32%



Solo workspaces  
28%



Communal kitchen areas  
27%



Lockers  
21%



In-building gym  
18%



Showers  
18%



An in-house café  
13%

## Does this solve the problem?

No matter what mix of spaces and services companies offer, there are some common benefits from the coworking space model which tenants value.

### They have no headaches setting up their space.

In coworking spaces, the building is ready for tenants to move into from day one and, according to 24%, this is the biggest advantage to tenants.

### The space looks high-end without the investment.

Companies can move into a contemporary space with a design that is finished to a high standard without having to spend time

and energy on their own fit-out. 21% agree this is a significant benefit to tenants.

### Easier to attract talent.

This design, along with the amenities you might expect to find in a coworking space, makes attracting workers easier, which is noted by 25%.

### Positive impact on tenant brand and reputation.

A beautiful workspace helps tenants project an image that marries with how they want to be perceived, say 20% of landlords.

**The space can scale as required.** With a flexible lease or membership term, companies can expand their space as they

**A beautiful workspace helps tenants project an image that marries with how they want to be perceived, say 20% of landlords**

grow, or shrink as their workforce changes. 19% of landlords acknowledge this as a key benefit for tenants, especially for SMBs where circumstances can change quickly.

**It's low risk.** It's a low-risk option for tenants and 17% agree this is what they value most about being in a coworking space.



The benefits for landlords

It's not just tenants who have a lot to gain from the coworking space model, all 200 building owners interviewed identified several commercial advantages.

**Increase revenue.** With a coworking space, there are more opportunities to generate revenue from the square footage. Firstly, tenants are paying a

Communal spaces can be rented for functions or events during the working day or after hours

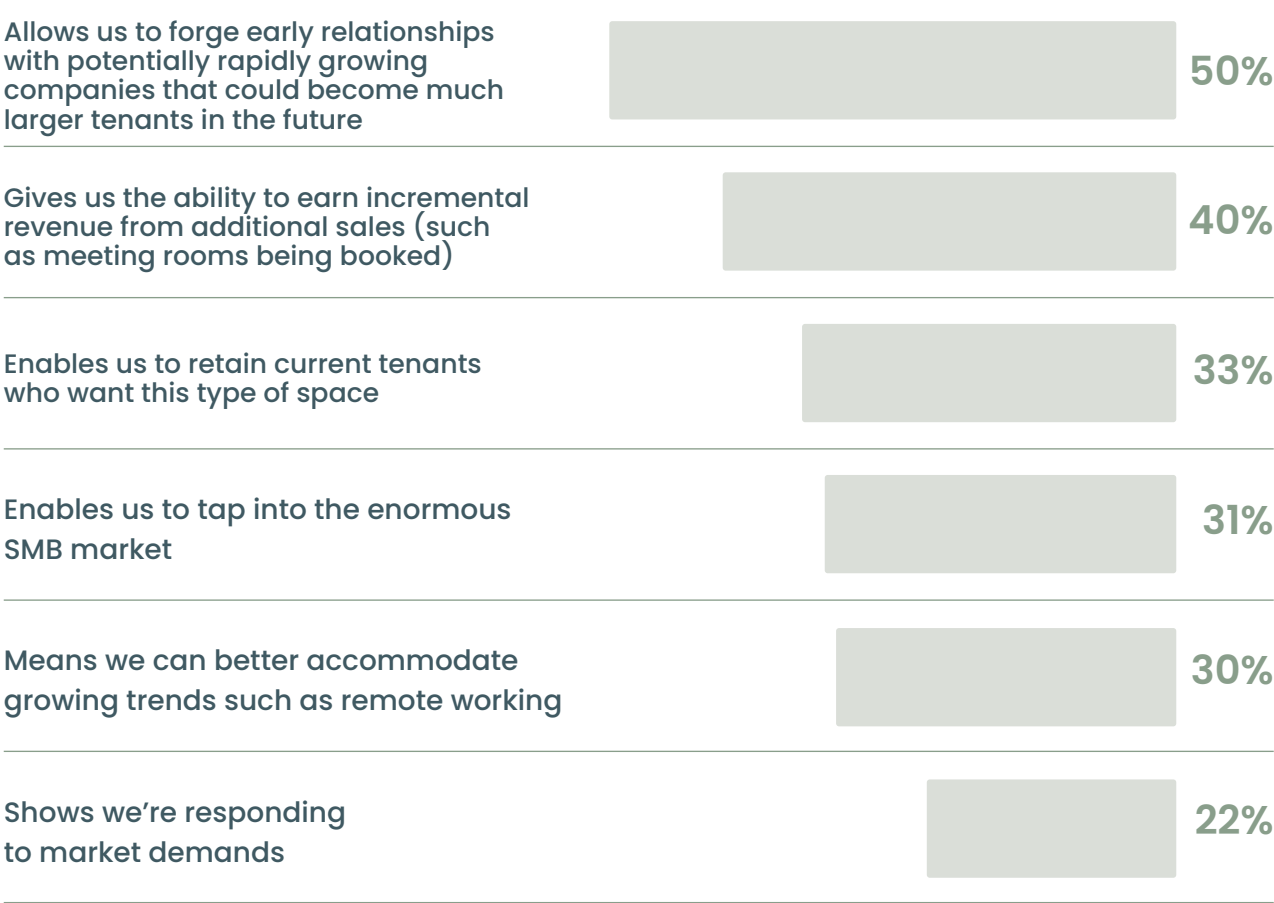
premium for the benefit of everything being done for them.

Plus, 40% of landlords agree there are options for additional revenue streams such as meeting

rooms. Not only can tenants rent these, but they can also be offered to external organizations that require a professional setting to host clients or meetings. Similarly, communal spaces can be rented for functions or events during the working day or after hours.

**Retain tenants.** With the move away from employees reporting to the office five days a week, many organizations are

Opportunities for coworking spaces



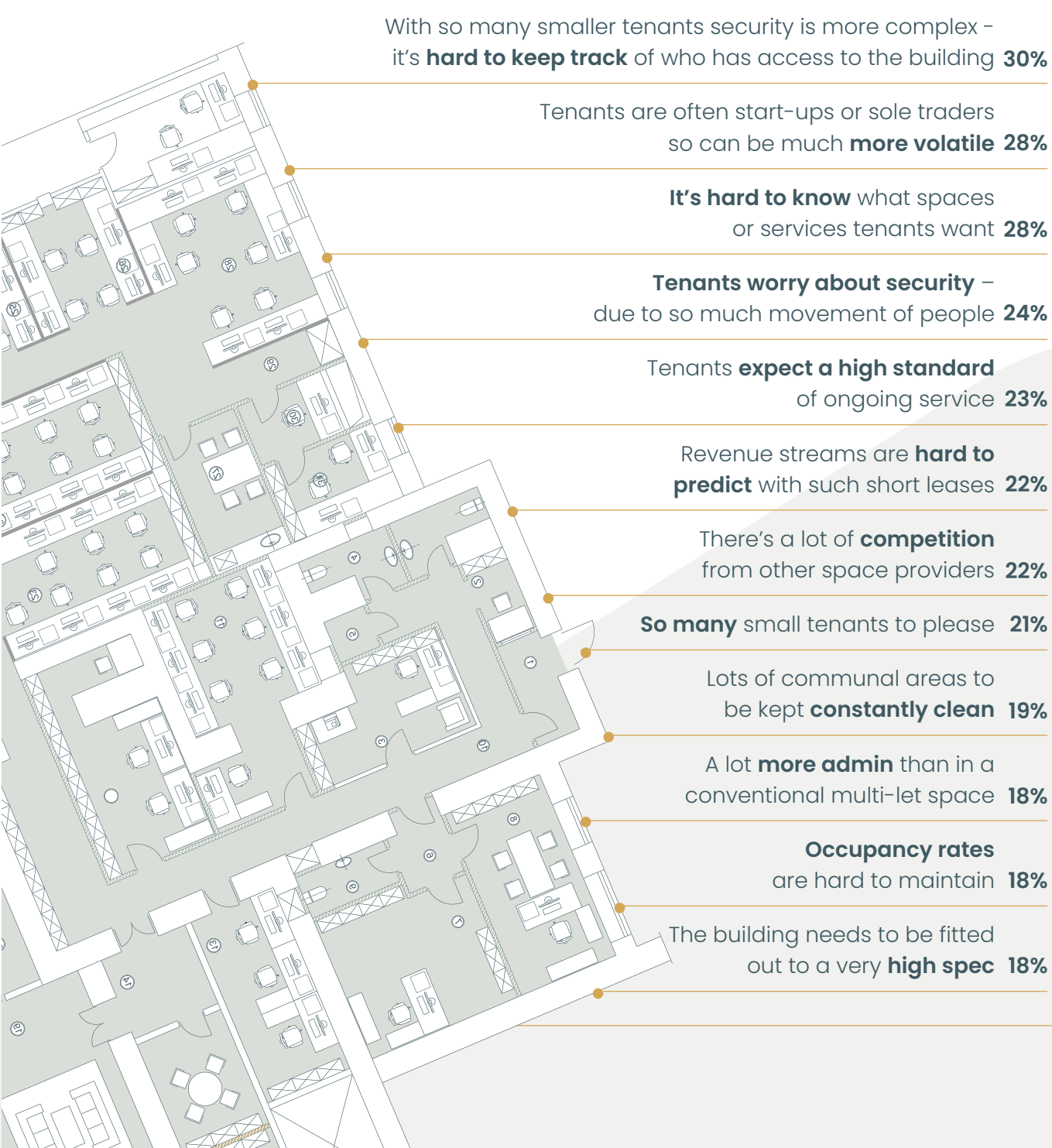
giving up their big office spaces. However, a third of landlords agree there is an opportunity to retain them in some capacity by adapting their building's offering to be a flex or coworking space. They will likely take a smaller space but pay a premium to rent it as an A+ or B class finish.

**Forge relationships with SMBs.** Flexible leases are more appealing to SMBs who can grow or shrink rapidly. Half of landlords agree that taking a flexible approach means they can tap into these smaller companies more easily. While the largest property companies studied feel the

same challenges as smaller landlords, they agree they will benefit most from a coworking space model. Over a third (36%) feel positive about their ability to better monetize space such as meeting rooms, and more than half (57%) are excited by the prospect of forging early relationships with SMBs.

# Coworking competition now and in the future

All in all, adopting a coworking space approach seems like a sensible commercial decision. But it still comes with its own set of challenges for landlords to navigate.



### There's lots of competition.

As we have discussed already, 78% of landlords are offering some kind of flex or coworking space, so there's a lot of competition. Presently, only 22% of landlords are concerned by the level of competition. They need to offer something different from the rest to stand out, but 28% don't understand what tenants want. All this data reflects a market in its infancy with a wide interpretation of the flex space offering, from shorter leases to coworking, and it could well be that landlords are underestimating the fierce competition on the horizon.

### High upfront cost.

Tenants want spaces that look great and are fitted to a high specification so that they don't have to spend time setting up the space, especially when they don't have dedicated facilities management teams, but this can't be achieved with a traditional budget. It's no wonder then that 18% of landlords are concerned about the

### Tenants want spaces that look great and are fitted to a high specification so that they don't have to spend time setting up the space, especially when they don't have dedicated facilities management teams

upfront investment required to meet the expectations of modern tenants.

### Tenants expect a high level of ongoing hospitality.

Being in a coworking space building means tenants benefit from having dedicated admin and facilities staff on hand to help with any issues. This is ringing alarm bells for 23% of landlords for whom this is likely a step up in terms of the service they currently offer.


It can be difficult to attract and retain great front-of-house and maintenance staff who can nurture relationships with all tenants at a consistent level,

especially in a competitive market. Relationships are crucial in coworking spaces, having a high staff churn in these roles will be unacceptable to tenants and risks them leaving in favor of a competitor.

### Building upkeep is a challenge.

Tenants expect their spaces to always be clean and in good condition. In a coworking space environment, there are multiple communal spaces, including kitchens and meeting areas, often across several floors. Landlords need to have a plan in place for cleaning these various areas which can require a larger budget than in a traditional building. For a community where almost one in five is already grappling with expensive challenges such as improving environmental performance and 19% are trying to reduce running costs, the pressures of running a coworking space feel acute. 18% worry about the admin required and 19% are concerned about the amount of communal areas that have to be kept clean.





**It's hard to know what mix of spaces to offer.** There are many interpretations of the flex or coworking space model. Knowing the right combination of services and spaces to offer, including meeting rooms, private offices, hot desks, communal kitchens, and member events is essential to attracting and retaining tenants but appears to be a real challenge for more than a quarter.

**Occupancy rates are still low.** On-site office hours have shifted from the traditional Monday-Friday, leading to many corporates giving up their large office spaces. Now, 18% of building landlords are dealing with low tenancy rates, leading

to 22% being concerned with the volatility in their revenue streams. With the competition in mind, some may be wondering if there are enough organizations out there in a position to fill all those spaces.

### Security

**Security is another major challenge.** Half of landlords admit that there are instances of people who no longer have official access to their buildings, but who still possess key cards or other means of entry. And a further 15% don't know whether this could be a problem in their buildings. It's no wonder then that almost a third (30%) of landlords are primarily

**Half of landlords admit that there are instances of people who no longer have official access to their buildings, but who still possess key cards or other means of entry**

concerned with security issues.

In broad terms, the coworking space business model results in having lots of smaller tenants, rather than a few larger ones. This means more people coming and going from the building from a wider spread of companies, which adds layers of complexity.

Not knowing who is in the building is a concern for several reasons, not least in the instance of a fire or other emergencies requiring building evacuation. Plus, many tenants – especially those in the tech, legal, or financial sectors – will have precious intellectual property and client data to protect. For the quarter of tenants primarily concerned with security, they will require assurance that a coworking space can deliver a secure base for their business before signing any lease agreement.

A poor security posture can create as many problems as no security posture, just in different ways. Almost a third (32%) of landlords offer communal meeting rooms.

Securing those rooms with lock and key creates an admin task for front-of-house staff, and 18% are deeply concerned with reducing admin. Leaving them unlocked creates a free-for-all approach that goes unchecked and, most importantly, means they are uncharged and so is a missed opportunity for generating revenue.

The survey also shows that the vast majority of landlords use clunky and outdated measures of security including swipe cards (20%), keypads (20%), and keys (14%), which doesn't present a high-tech experience. What's more,

19% of landlords say they still rely on staffed reception desks as their front-of-house security. But these can be easily bypassed.

Not only does this present a concern from a security perspective, but it hinders the very experience tenants expect and that landlords rely on to attract tenants.





# The role of data

Given the challenges, including fierce competition for tenants, the cost of getting the coworking space offering right, and the need to minimize operating costs and balance security, landlords need to be smart with how they make decisions.

Insights and data will be vital to demonstrate how buildings are being used and highlight areas for improvement that could make all the difference in a highly competitive market.

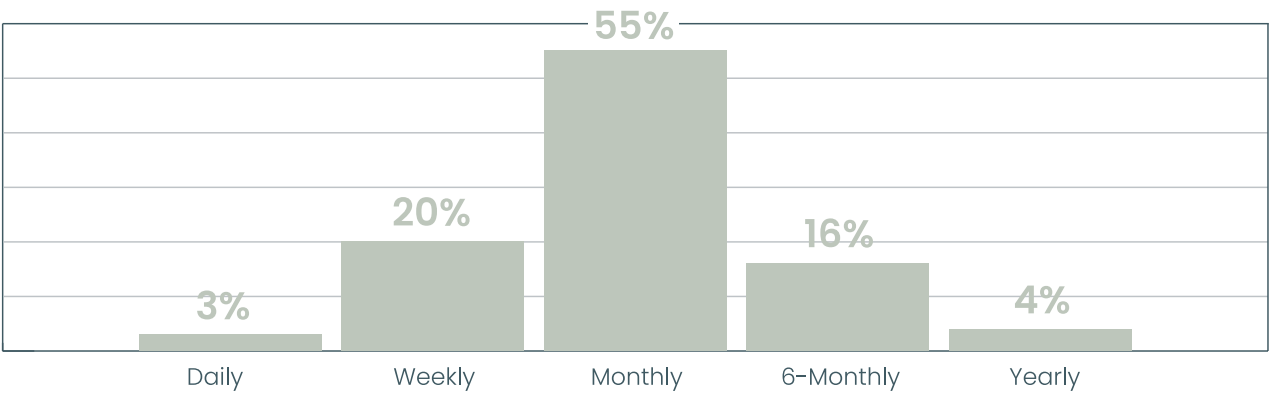
### Gathering data

Given the importance of data, it's interesting to see that the majority of landlords are reliant on manual means of data

collection including sign-in books, tenant surveys, and floorwalkers. Manually collected data is far harder to analyze in any meaningful way. Even those who are relying on technology by using PIR or people counting sensors aren't getting a complete picture. That's because these methods don't collect people-specific data, and the data can be inaccurate

and unreliable, making it difficult to make clear conclusions about who, and/or which teams or tenants, are using the space. Despite the commercial pressures building landlords are facing, many are missing a trick in terms of understanding how their space is being used, who's coming and going or showing signs of potential

### How often landlords review their building data



churn, what areas of their building are underutilized, and what's being needlessly heated. In short, they are missing opportunities to understand how their space is being used which will help to retain tenants and to have an offering that appeals to prospects.

### Using the data

Our research amongst 200 building landlords shows that the majority (76%) don't review their data frequently enough. Reviewing data less than weekly means landlords can't act with agility to identify potential issues before they arise, which risks tenant dissatisfaction and a loss of revenue.

### Data shortcomings

But even the 24% who say they review their building data weekly or more still

have serious concerns over tenant satisfaction, occupancy rates, how their space is being used, revenue streams, and security. This raises three questions:

#### 1. Do they have the right data?

Not all data is created equal.

Accuracy can be a challenge if data isn't being collected in a meaningful way. For example, 28% of buildings use manual sign-in books but it's easy to bypass these, meaning building data could be wildly inaccurate. Sign-in books also fail to tell the whole story as they only capture entry and exit times without any context to which spaces an individual has used. Similarly, access control data doesn't show if someone follows another

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person into the building, nor does it show when someone leaves or their movement throughout the building. Conversely, data that is attributed to people provides granularity as to what happens within a space, opening up a world of insights to landlords.

#### 2. Are they analyzing the data in a sensible way?

Having the right data is step one. But step two is analyzing it.

Our research shows that despite a third of landlords offering communal

### How landlords gather data

- Video analytics / **29%**
- Manual sign-in books / **28%**
- WiFi monitoring / **27%**
- Analyzing meeting room booking data / **26%**
- Tenant surveys / **24%**
- Desk booking data / **23%**
- Current access control data / **22%**
- Floorwalkers / **22%**
- People counting sensors / **22%**
- Desk occupancy sensors / **21%**
- PIR sensors / **19%**



meeting rooms, only 26% are capturing and reviewing data related to the rooms' use, which highlights a significant missed opportunity in understanding how spaces are used and whether they offer the right space configuration and sizing.

Without holistically and regularly analyzing building data, landlords can't understand which days of the week are busiest and plan resources accordingly,

which areas are used most frequently and so will need more cleaning, and which are underused in their building. So, it's impossible to ensure they are offering everything their tenants need and expect, which is the only way to guarantee tenant satisfaction and retention.

### 3. How long does the data take to analyze?

Time is precious.

In an industry that is already fighting many battles, there

is often little time to spend hours or days analyzing building data. But without doing so, landlords risk missing valuable insights that would potentially help them improve their offering, their occupancy rate, and tenant satisfaction.

Therefore, data and reports need to be delivered quickly and in an easily digestible format that allows for quick analysis and decision making.



## How data can help #1

### Optimize spaces and understand members

Understanding which kinds of spaces different member-types prefer is essential for getting the balance right so that members love the space. For example, it's easy to assume that freelancers and individual members are the most likely to use the open coworking spaces such as benches, sofa areas, and individual desks over members with teams working in private office spaces. However, accurate, people-attributed data may reveal instead that individual workers or freelancers almost exclusively book meeting rooms, perhaps to host clients, but rarely use the sofa areas.

On a similar note, data can help landlords understand what extras are worth investing in. For example, if a building offers a gym, but the data shows that few members are using it, landlords can know they either need to encourage more use of the space or repurpose it into something that members value more. People-attributed data can

also provide an overview of which events are well attended and how engaged members are, making it easier to identify who might be at risk of churning and allowing the landlord to take preventative steps.

Understanding space usage will help landlords make decisions on getting the mix of spaces right.

It will also help with space optimization.

In this example, imagine there are five meeting rooms on one floor.

Building data can offer insights into how often these spaces are being used. It might be that all of the meeting rooms are oversubscribed which is causing frustration amongst members who find it difficult to make a booking.

By understanding the data, coworking space landlords can make informed decisions to make their space work harder for their customers which is a concern for 26% of landlords. In this case, they could discover that the meeting rooms are too big and, although booked,

remain under capacity. These five meeting rooms could then be reworked to create eight meeting rooms instead or smaller phone booths could be installed to facilitate quiet working or 1-1 calls. This will relieve frustrations with tenants and increase revenue.

Sharing current space occupancy with tenants can further help alleviate frustrations as they can easily see what spaces are available in the building. For example, if they need a meeting room at the last minute, they can easily see if one is available or not rather than walking around the building to find that they are all in use.

Together, this approach means that landlords will have a deeper understanding of their tenants to allow them to analyze and predict trends in occupancy rates. Having this understanding will allow landlords to act with agility and remove the fear of a volatile market, leading to more predictable revenue based on more accurate tenant churn and occupancy forecasts.



## How data can help #2

### Save costs

For 19%, reducing running costs is their number one priority. For them and everyone else working to make savings, building data can help. Insights can help landlords map the usage of different areas of the building. This can be used to help housekeeping teams devise an effective

cleaning schedule to ensure frequently used spaces are checked and cleaned more regularly, and less time is wasted in unused areas. Similarly, data can show which days of the week are busier than others and additional cleans can be included if necessary. This ensures efficiency, streamlines

costs, and increases tenant satisfaction. Using similar data can help plan heating and air conditioning throughout a building, ensuring that spaces aren't using unnecessary energy. Not only will this reduce bills, but it serves a sustainability purpose too.

## How data can help #3

### Provide security reassurance

For 24% of tenants, security is a critical issue. Yet half of landlords say they have a problem with people who shouldn't

have access being able to get into a building. A good combination of hardware and software that integrates with an existing CRM will let people get on with what they need to, without adding

unnecessary friction. This is while protecting against revenue loss and reputational damage by keeping spaces secure and alerting building staff of any issues in real-time.

Together, this approach helps landlords not only understand how their spaces are currently being used, but also how they can make more of their buildings. They can unlock new revenue streams by

diversifying their offerings or adjusting the type of amenities, services, and spaces already offered. And ultimately, they can increase tenant satisfaction, retention, and attraction to get ahead of the

competition. Those who best collect and analyze data without adversely impacting the tenant experience will be best placed to successfully navigate the coworking revolution.

## About Accessia

Accessia is the workplace access, experience and analytics platform that helps coworking space landlords understand and optimize their spaces while delivering an exceptional experience for members.

Using smart location services to harness people-powered data and deliver the insights that matter, Accessia is the key to success in your spaces and can be used standalone or integrated into your existing apps.

Accessia was founded by a group of problem-solving innovators who believe in building better - better data and better experiences for better workplaces. With over a century working in tech between us, your space is in safe hands.

To find out more, visit [www.accessia.com](http://www.accessia.com)

 Read our UK report 'Adapt To Survive: The Flex Space Revolution'







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