

WHITE PAPER

# RETHINKING THE OFFICE SPACE: CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR WORKPLACE TRANSFORMATION



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, IDG surveyed a group of global decision-makers across various industries on the topic of workplace transformation. They answered questions about the process, goals, responsibilities, and outcomes of current and upcoming projects. Given the disruption of COVID-19, IDG repeated the survey to understand the impact of the pandemic and how organizations are rethinking their workplace strategies.

Using the 2019 survey as a benchmark, we saw that some data points remained similar while others were significantly different. In 2019, 90% of organizations were planning or in progress with one or more workplace transformation projects. These projects retained similar popularity in 2021, but the priorities behind the transformation changed.

Securely and effectively supporting those who work outside of the physical office space is now top of mind, and as a result, the way leaders look at real estate strategy has shifted. In 2019, workplace transformation efforts were much more synonymous with workplace expansion. When asked then how they planned to accomplish workplace transformation strategies,

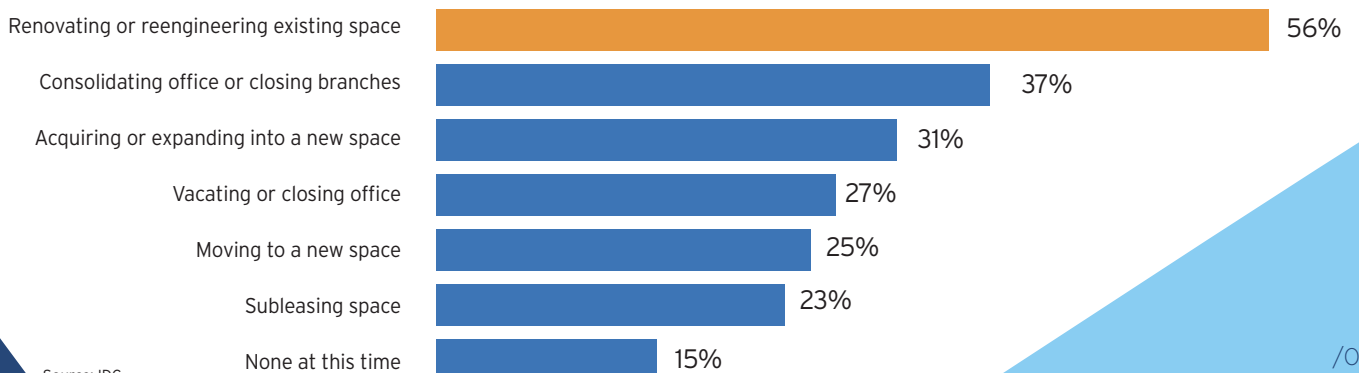


the majority said they would acquire new space, with wish lists that included an increased variety of meeting spaces and dedicated areas for collaboration.

In the 2021 survey, the majority of leaders said they are instead examining existing space, and re-engineering footprints with a mind to how they can best support remote work, expand and enhance data security, and better support flexible, hybrid work options. The acquisition of new space has fallen to a distant third, behind office consolidation and closure.

As they re-examine their current spaces, leaders are planning to take more measures to ensure safety within the organization's four walls and security when information needs to be shared outside of those walls. C-levels and senior leaders surveyed are placing the highest priorities on protecting private and personal information during a move or transition, along with configuring space to keep people safe and meet compliance requirements, and digitizing files to eliminate paper.

## RE-EXAMINING SPACE



# WHERE ARE WE NOW AND WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES?

Remote work will continue for many organizations in some fashion once pandemic restrictions are lifted. Respondents expect roughly 20% fewer employees to return to the office than left it in 2020, but predict 37% of employees will opt for a hybrid environment (up from 21% pre-pandemic).

As a result, workplace transformation strategies that may have been nice-to-haves in 2019 have become necessities. Half of the survey participants in 2019 were actively pursuing workplace transformation projects. Everyone in the 2021 survey was either considering it or actively pursuing it, with more than half pursuing multiple projects and 90% pursuing at least one.

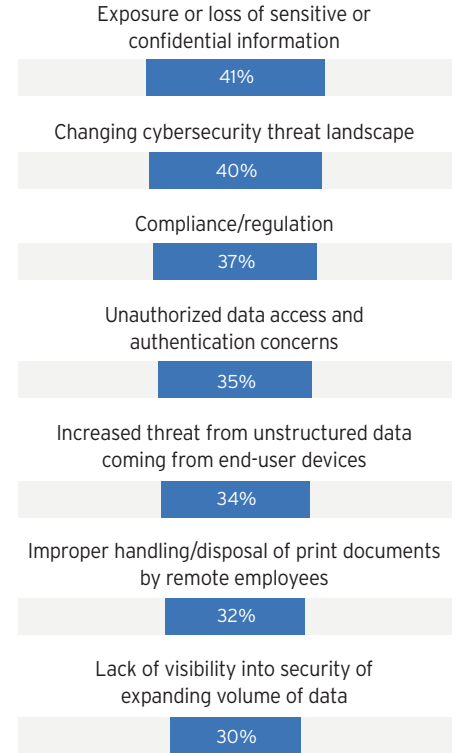
In these projects, leaders are prioritizing ways to better support remote teams, ensure secure processes, and re-engineer hybrid work environments that promote safety and compliance. This is evidenced by the fact that more than a third of the IDG survey respondents plan to transform office space to meet post-COVID expectations.

“As more companies support the back-to-the-office movement, they’re going to need to have a flexible workplace that can support remote, hybrid and in-person employees,” said Doug Wick, Clean Start Program Manager with Iron Mountain.

But hybrid work environments present obvious concerns when considering how to deal with processes and workflow that largely occur on-site.

## SENIOR LEADERS PRIORITIZE DATA PRIVACY AND SECURITY, EMPLOYEE SAFETY

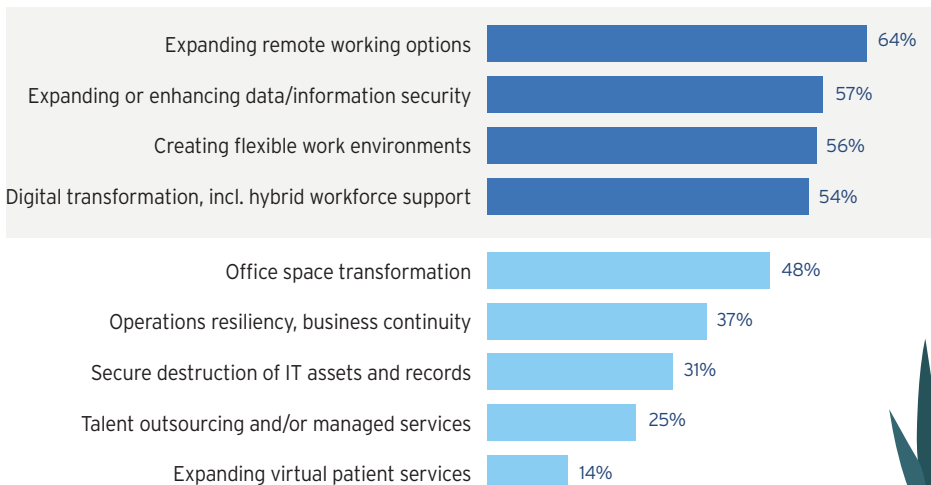
As they shift to hybrid workforce strategies, organizations are predictably concerned about information security. Exposure or loss of sensitive and confidential information is a top concern for 41% of respondents, and the changing cybersecurity threat landscape is a major concern for 40%.



Source: IDG

It’s not surprising then that those surveyed named their most critical priority when planning a workplace transformation project as protecting private and confidential information during a move or transition. Other essentials include configuring space to keep employees and customers or patients safe and up to compliance standards (71%), digitizing files and records to eliminate paper (66%), and setting up data backup and recovery systems (69%).

## PROJECT PRIORITIES



Source: IDG



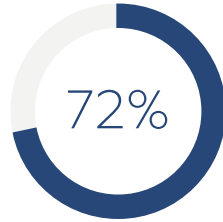
"INFORMATION SECURITY AND ACCEPTABLE USE IN HANDLING DATA SHOULD BE EVALUATED IN TERMS OF POLICY, TO MAKE SURE THAT WE COVER ALL THE ANGLES FOR COMPLIANT AND SECURE ACCESS AND USE." **Arlette Walls**, Global Records and Information Manager, Iron Mountain

### TOP CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING A WORKSPACE TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

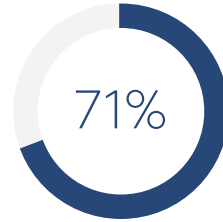
Respondents who stated considerations as critical or high priority



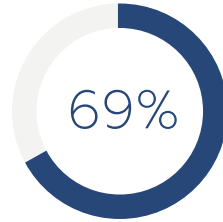
Protect private and confidential information during a move or other transition



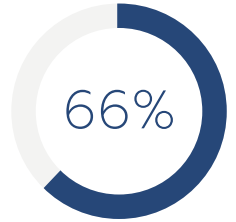
Configure space to keep employees/customers safe while also meeting compliance standards



Set up data backup and recovery systems



Digitize files and records in order to eliminate paper



Source: IDG

## HOW ARE LEADERS EXECUTING WORKPLACE TRANSFORMATION?

In preparing for the future, organizations are taking lessons from the environment COVID-19 swiftly ushered in. When asked what would have enabled them to be better prepared for sudden changes in workplace and employee needs, respondents named digitizing documents as their top choice. Leaders said that more than one-third of their information is still paper-based, and in the next year, they are undertaking digitization efforts to reduce that to one-fourth.

Increased digitization of paper documents is nearly inseparable from workplace transformation strategies for survey respondents. The importance of achieving a paper-lite environment

as part of a workplace transformation initiative was rated as highly important or critical by 83% of the leaders surveyed.

"Employees need to have access to information on a regular basis, and they need to have access quickly," says Arlette Walls, Global Records and

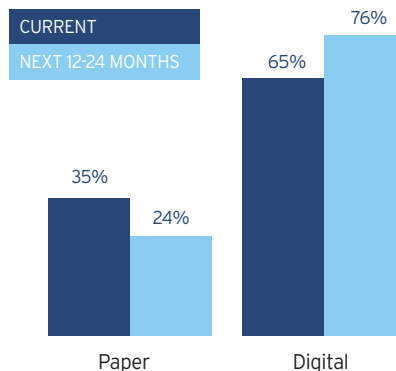
Information Manager at Iron Mountain. "Decisions must be made around what information employees need at their fingertips."

Organizations plan to take the following steps to make the shift away from paper-based processes:

- 53% Digitize physical files and documents
- 41% Deploy technology that enables electronic capture of data and information
- 35% Inventory physical files and documents to determine destruction eligibility
- 33% Securely destroy or shred physical records and files
- 32% Securely store physical records and files offsite until eligible for destruction

### CURRENT AND PLANNED FORMAT OF INFORMATION

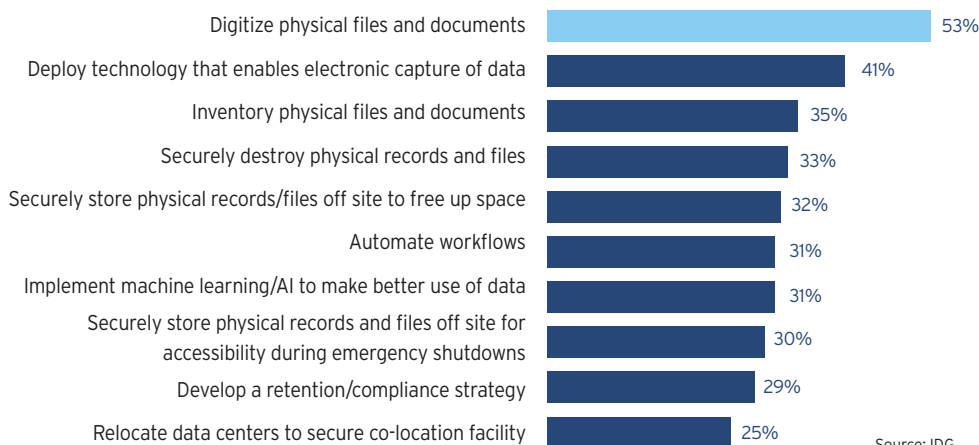
Mean summary



Source: IDG

In addition to digitizing paper to enable secure and automated workflows, organizations are also looking to develop what they say would have been helpful to have pre-pandemic: a crisis playbook to provide consistent guidelines. "You want to ensure it incorporates all the changes that you may have made because of the crisis, around managing records, information security, privacy and protecting sensitive data," Walls said.

## MOVING TO A PAPER LITE MODEL



Source: IDG

## CONCLUSION

To jumpstart these workplace transformation projects, respondents said that it would be helpful to have a detailed assessment, by location, to help eliminate unproductive space, including strategies for disposition of assets and information, and to determine the state of records and information compliance. Some 82% said they will likely turn to an information management company for help.

Through our **Clean Start® Program**, Iron Mountain helps you rethink your real estate by performing a complete assessment of your space. We design a plan to optimize the use of your space by securely destroying documents, IT assets and equipment that you no longer need to retain and securely store the rest, either on a temporary basis or permanently. Documents can be digitized and workflows automated to provide anytime, anywhere access for remote employees.

Visit [IronMountain.com/cleanstart](https://IronMountain.com/cleanstart) to get started.

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

The IDG survey was developed and fielded between January 15 and February 1, 2021, to understand current and planned workplace initiatives, goals and priorities—both pre-and post-pandemic. Respondents included 200 influential and knowledgeable professionals in multiple industries across 5 countries: US, Canada, UK, Germany, and France.

