ROOMZ
INTELLIGENT OFFICES

CASE STUDY
SUNDERLAND CITY HALL



New building, new work approach

Now that the pandemic is over, it is clear that it has changed the way we live, how we socialize and especially the way we work. While already a growing trend, the pandemic made agile working the indispensable tool we know today. Forced to send staff home, organizations sought ways to keep things going, while keeping people safe. According to Ian Crosby, Premises and Security Manager, for the Sunderland City Council in England: "With the pandemic, ROOMZ has proven to be the right product, at the right time."

Sunderland City Council manages 1,600 buildings located throughout the city. In charge of the city's vast portfolio of properties, the scale and impact of the pandemic presented a real challenge to Ian Crosby and his team. Adding to the complexity, it coincided with the construction and launching of a new city hall building to replace the antiquated Civic Centre. It officially opened on 17 March 2022.

ROOMZ BY DESIGN

Offices at the new City Hall were purposely built to accommodate the shift towards agile working. ROOMZ displays were mounted outside meeting rooms and ROOMZ sensors installed at desks and other workspaces. With a workforce of several thousand and only 700 desks, ROOMZ became an essential element to ensure that meeting rooms and desks are available when needed.

LOCATION
Sunderland, England

SECTOR
Local public administration

STAFF WITH ROOMZ ACCESS
1,770

ROOMZ DISPLAYS INSTALLED
50

ROOMZ SENSORS INSTALLED
349

City Hall is an open, democratic space, the headquarters of Sunderland City Council but also an accessible meeting place for local groups and organisations.

The stylish 191,000 sq ft building was completed in November 2021.

OLD SCHOOL TO NEW WORKING

Ian Crosby described his experience: "We had not previously used a desk built-in product. This innovation came with the move to a new office along with a shift to new working practices – a lot of change all at once. We had a traditional working environment where everyone had their own desk. While we recognized a need for change, the pandemic compelled us all to embrace agile working very quickly. The building was built during the pandemic period when everyone worked from home, so when we came back into the office, there were no longer enough seats for everyone by design. That's where ROOMZ comes in. Our offices are now designed for all different sorts of working, primarily collaborative work. Meeting rooms can be reserved for staff who need

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to come into the office to work together face to face, while individual workstations can also be reserved. ROOMZ gave us the tools we needed to manage the new way of working."

TANDEM APPROACH TO BOOKING MEETING ROOMS

Outlook was long in use in Sunderland's headquarters before the new building was opened and they chose to stick with the familiar system. Meeting rooms booked in Outlook are transferred to the linked ROOMZ display outside the respective space, where staff can also reserve it or make changes to bookings, with that information in turn synched with Outlook. This tandem approach enabled them to hold onto something familiar when nearly everything else in their work world was changing.

CUSTOMISED BOOKING OF DESKS

The previous system no longer worked in the new building with its more limited number of workspaces. It only offered the choice between hot desks and bookable desks. Should an architect need to come into the office to work, specialized infrastructure is required, such as CAD software, in a fixed location, an allocated desk. ROOMZ offers a hybrid choice between hot desks, bookable desks and allocated desks. The adaptability of ROOMZ to specific customer needs is one of its greatest strengths. The myROOMZ app, now also mobile, lets users see where their colleagues are sitting and book a desk for as long as they need.

FACE-TO-FACE TIME ASSURED

Ian Crosby only comes into the office twice a week. Perhaps 20 – 30% come in Monday to Friday, while some teams maintain a presence on a rota basis. Even as the pandemic has eased, staff have not shifted back to old ways of office-based working, and predominantly work agilely now. Ian Crosby is understandably impressed. "The pandemic has proven to be catalyst, forcing staff to work at home and still be effective. Now we have a system in place that allows us to come in and work as a team when needed, enhancing functionality."

INSIGHT THROUGH ANALYTICS

Sunderland`s chief operating group wanted to know how the new building was working in terms of occupancy levels, and how the agile working approach was being adopted by staff. ROOMZ has launched an advanced analytical platform providing more detail information at a granular level and essential insight into how a desk is actually being used. This helps strike the right balance between staff quality of life and the cost effectiveness of the building.

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Ian Crosby, Sunderland City Hall

SMOOTH TRANSITION

"What distinguishes ROOMZ is that while the technology behind it might be quite complex, for the user it is actually quite simple. This simplicity combined with the information you can gather from it are the unique selling points. It is easily implemented, easily managed and it provides me with invaluable information on how a building is being used".

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