Law Firm Workplace Trends 2025

Seating, Collaboration, Technology, and the Future of Flexibility

Maptician

I. Executive Overview: The Legal Workplace in 2025

The legal workplace is undergoing a slow but significant transformation. Five years after the onset of the pandemic, the office is no longer a presumed destination but a tool – one that firms must actively design, manage, and justify. Utilization remains a key challenge. In early 2025, average law firm occupancy across major U.S. cities is hovering between 55% and 60%, depending on the day of the week, with Tuesdays peaking and Fridays hitting historic lows. This represents a significant decline from pre-pandemic levels, which reached 90% or higher in February 2020 before the rapid pivot to remote work began[1].

In this new reality, law firm leaders are seeking balance. They aim to reduce unused space, improve collaboration, and support attorney autonomy, all while protecting culture and mentorship. Real estate strategies reflect this shift: while some firms continue to reduce space per attorney, others are reinvesting in **Class A buildings and enhanced amenities** that reflect a "flight to quality." At the same time, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals are shaping real estate decisions, as firms attempt to reduce energy use and office waste.

Return-to-office policies are also evolving. The early compliance issues that plagued 2021–2022 have given way to more defined expectations. Some firms now require attorneys to be in the office four days per week; others offer structured flexibility tied to team-based collaboration. Regardless of the approach, most firms are moving toward **intentional workplace planning**, supported by data, policy, and technology.

II. Maptician's 2025 Survey: A Strategic Lens on Change

In this environment of experimentation and recalibration, Maptician surveyed 26 law firms to better understand how workplace trends are taking shape on the ground. The findings reveal not only how firms are adjusting, but also what challenges remain.

A central shift lies in the structure of seating itself. Over **58% of surveyed firms report increasing flexible seating**, such as hoteling, while less than 20% added more assigned seating. At the same time, nearly **half (46%) of firms reduced their ratio of seats to total professionals**, indicating continued pressure to rationalize space. These changes reflect a recognition that fixed seating models are no longer practical – or preferred – in environments with fluctuating attendance.

However, the data also reveal a paradox: even as firms embrace flexibility, they are also **expanding collaboration space**, with respondents indicating an average **6.6% increase** in square footage dedicated to meetings and group work. This investment is being driven by a combination of factors: increased peak-day attendance, a rise in cross-functional team structures, and a growing reliance on face-to-face interactions for mentorship and business development. The office is no longer a place for quiet, solo work – it is a **collaboration hub** that must be purpose-built for dynamic use.

Technology is another differentiator. In 2023, most firms had not yet adopted workplace management tools to support hybrid work. Today, over **50% of firms report using at least one dedicated system**, and nearly **27% have adopted new platforms within the past two years**. This marks a shift toward operational maturity– especially for firms using tools that integrate seat booking, visitor coordination, and space analytics into a single platform.

Even more revealing is what drives attendance. The survey shows that firms continue to rely on **incentive-based strategies**, such as in-office events and team-driven schedules, rather than punitive mandates. This supports broader market observations: firms that link presence to purpose – through mentoring, client interaction, or shared rituals – are more successful in sustaining in-office momentum.

Taken together, the 2025 survey illustrates a legal workplace that is more agile, more technology-enabled, and increasingly tailored to human behavior. But it also highlights a persistent gap: flexibility without structure can lead to underutilization, inefficiency, and confusion. That's where data – and platforms like Maptician – play a defining role.

III. What's Changed Since 2023?

The transformation becomes even clearer when we compare 2025 to the 2023 Maptician Attorney Engagement Report. In 2023, the industry was still in a state of limbo: many firms had implemented hybrid policies, but few had invested in the tools or processes needed to support them.

In 2023, just **51.9% of seats were hoteling**, and **46.1% were permanent or assigned**. Utilization rates told a stark story: firms with permanent seating saw average occupancy rates of **57.8%**, while hoteling-based offices averaged only **23.7%.** Technology adoption was limited, with **60% of firms reporting no new workplace tech**, and Microsoft Outlook being the most commonly cited tool for managing workplace coordination.

1 Kastle Back to Work Barometer; CBRE Law Firm Benchmarking Report 2020

By contrast, 2025 reveals a more structured, strategic environment. Firms have increased flexible seating, expanded collaboration zones, and embraced workplace management tools. While utilization rates have not been formally measured across the full 2025 survey cohort, anecdotal and national trend data suggest that **law firm occupancy rates have risen but still fall short of pre-pandemic levels** – with averages clustering in the **55–60%** range, and peaking mid-week[2].

This slow progression underscores a fundamental reality: cultural change takes time. But it also highlights the opportunity: firms that invest in presence-driven design, dynamic seating models, and real-time space analytics are better positioned to realize the full value of their offices.

IV. Strategic Implications for Law Firms in 2025 and Beyond

The legal workplace is becoming more flexible – but also more complex. Space is no longer a static asset. It is dynamic, multi-use, and highly sensitive to behavior and culture. Law firms that treat it as such will be the ones that lead the next phase of transformation.

To move forward, firms must first **rethink space as a strategic tool**. This means not just reducing square footage, but recalibrating it to support the way attorneys actually work. Collaboration space must be intentionally designed. Hoteling systems must be intuitive. Visitor coordination must be seamless. Offices must feel like places people want to go – not relics of a pre-2020 model.

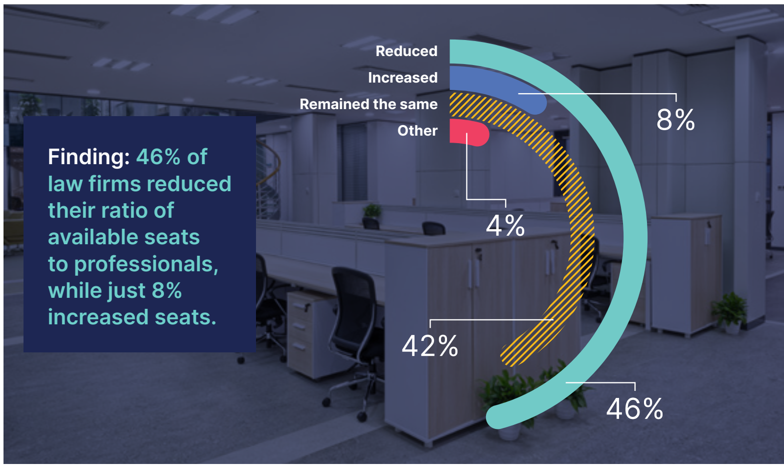
Second, firms must recognize that **technology is now essential infrastructure**. A fragmented set of tools – one for room booking, one for visitor check-in, another for seating – is no longer sufficient. Firms need unified platforms that can deliver real-time data, automate logistics, and provide actionable insights for planning and strategy.

Third, law firm leaders must remember that **flexibility is only effective when paired with purpose**. Offering attorneys the option to work remotely is important – but without cultural rituals, peer alignment, and incentives to engage in person, flexibility can devolve into disengagement.

And finally, data must become a management discipline. Static headcounts or badge swipe data are no longer enough. Firms need ongoing visibility into who is using what space, when, and why. Only then can they align real estate, technology, and culture in ways that support long-term growth.

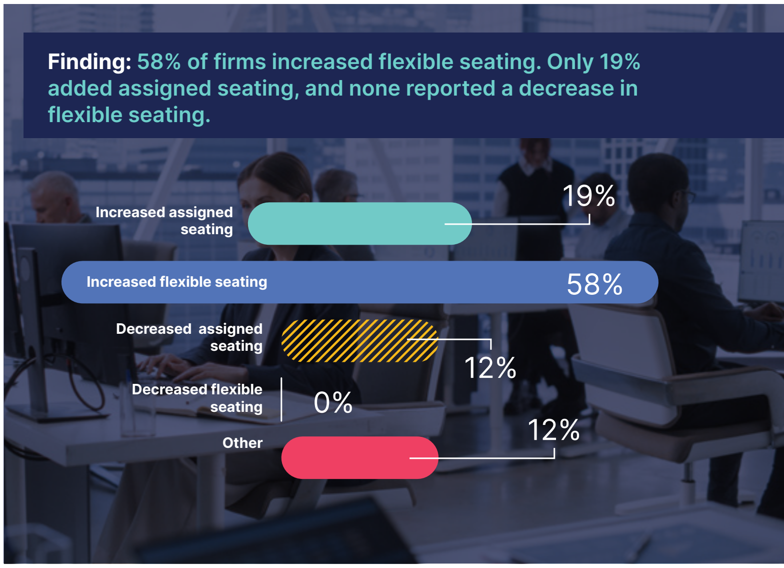
The Survey Results

Seat Ratio Changes



Law firms are not simply maintaining legacy layouts; they are actively shrinking the number of seats per employee. This aligns with post-pandemic cost-control measures and reflects a growing confidence in hybrid work as a permanent fixture. However, the fact that 42% kept ratios the same suggests a split market – some firms are still assessing long-term needs before committing to changes.

Flexible vs. Assigned Seating



Firms are scaling up hoteling and reverse-hotel setups to accommodate varying attendance patterns and maximize space utility. The lack of any reduction in flexible seating across all respondents signals a near-universal shift toward more agile workplace models. Yet the continued (if minority) use of assigned seating may still play a role in supporting executive or high-utilization attorneys.

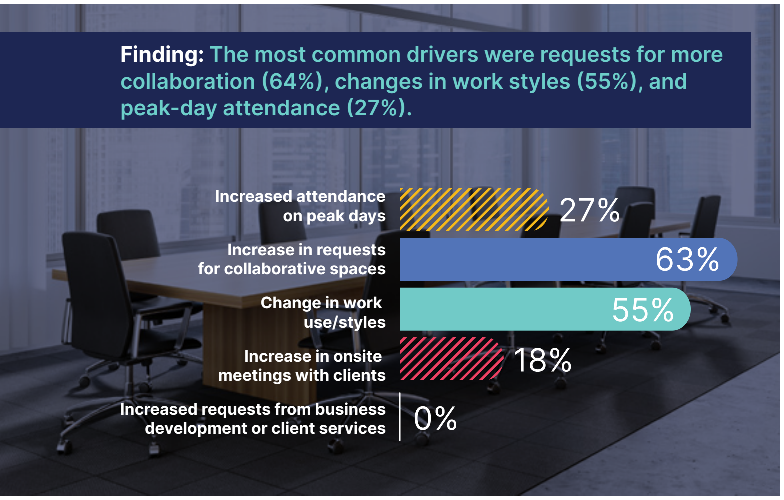
2 Thomson Reuters 2025 State of the U.S. Legal Market Report; Kastle Systems weekly occupancy data

Collaboration Space as a Share of Total Square Footage

Expressed as a percentage of square footage, can you approximate how much more meeting/collaboration space your firm has added or reduced in the past 12 months?

This is one of the clearest indicators that the office is being reimagined not as a solo workstation hub, but as a collaborative arena. With many firms mandating structured in-office days (e.g., Tuesdays–Thursdays), collaboration zones are becoming the gravitational centers of law firm real estate. The increase also reflects internal demand – teams need physical space to work together effectively, especially in client-facing roles or mentorship-driven practices.

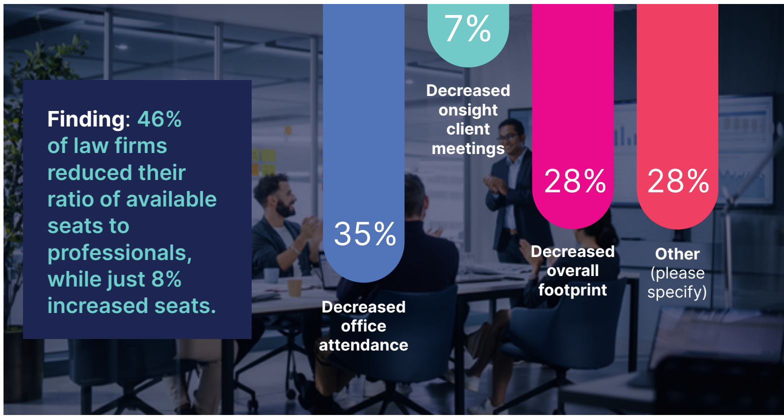
Why Firms Increased Meeting Space



Space demand is no longer static – it's behavioral. The most frequent reason cited for increased meeting room needs was internal: attorneys want to collaborate more effectively. As the hybrid model matures, firms are identifying that days of peak attendance – Tuesdays and Wednesdays – create bottlenecks in available group space. Firms are responding by reallocating square footage from private offices to multi-purpose collaboration areas.

Why Firms Decreased Meeting Space

Among firms that reduced collaboration space, the top reasons were lower overall attendance and footprint reduction (both ~36%).



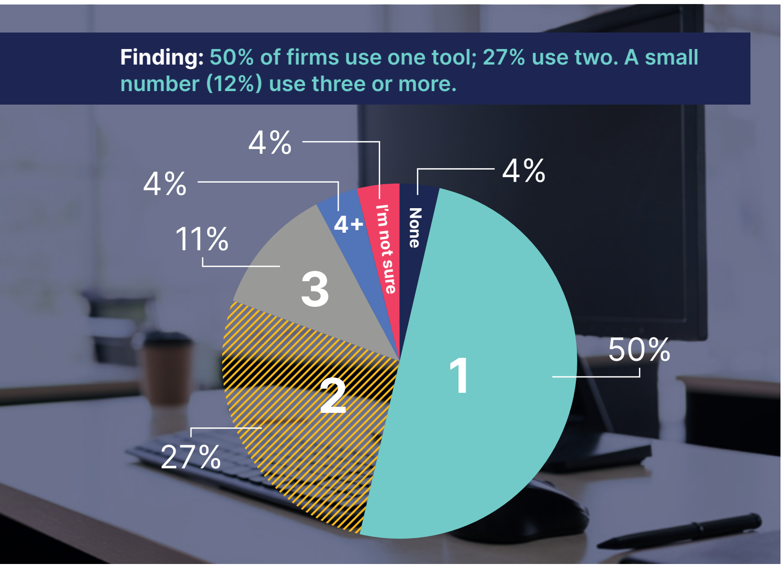
For a subset of firms, shrinking real estate remains the dominant strategy. These are likely organizations where hybrid attendance is sparse or sporadic, and where collaboration may happen virtually. Still, it's notable that only 14% cited fewer client meetings as a driver. The data suggests this is more about operational size than a decline in collaboration needs.

Collaboration is king. Conference rooms and huddle spaces are now the anchors of the hybrid office, driven by team-based work, client meetings, and partner collaboration. Meanwhile, the decline in demand for corner offices and other traditionally status-driven spaces shows how firms are prioritizing utility over prestige. Even dedicated offices are now being reserved on demand, signaling a departure from the "my office, my desk" era of law firm life. These shifts illustrate how legal workplaces are evolving from permanent to **programmable** spaces—used differently, by different people, at different times.

Workplace Technology Adoption

Adoption is accelerating, but fragmentation remains. While it's promising that over half the firms now use at least one workplace management solution, nearly a quarter still depend exclusively on Microsoft Outlook and Excel. These tools, while familiar, were never designed for dynamic seat booking, collaboration tracking, or space planning. Firms still on legacy platforms are at a strategic disadvantage when it comes to managing hybrid complexity.

Number of Workplace Tech Tools in Use



Most firms are in the early or transitional stages of workplace tech maturity. Using a single solution may simplify onboarding but risks creating blind spots if the tool does not address all needs (e.g., seat booking, visitor coordination, meeting room scheduling). The firms using multiple tools may be trying to fill these gaps – but at the cost of integration and usability. This points to a growing opportunity for unified platforms that centralize workplace data.

Return-to-Office Incentives

Incentive models remain experience-based, not punitive. Firms are using positive reinforcement – team lunches, "anchor days," cultural rituals – to encourage in-office presence. This reflects a shift away from rigid mandates and toward peer-aligned, human-centric scheduling. However, the low use of financial incentives suggests most firms still hesitate to formally operationalize attendance. Whether this changes in 2026 may depend on firm culture, generational dynamics, and competitive pressure.

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