collab collective

Your $9M Workplace Problem:

New research reveals that a single organization can lose up to $9M a year to workplace friction. See the Workplace Friction Index benchmark and find out where your office stands.

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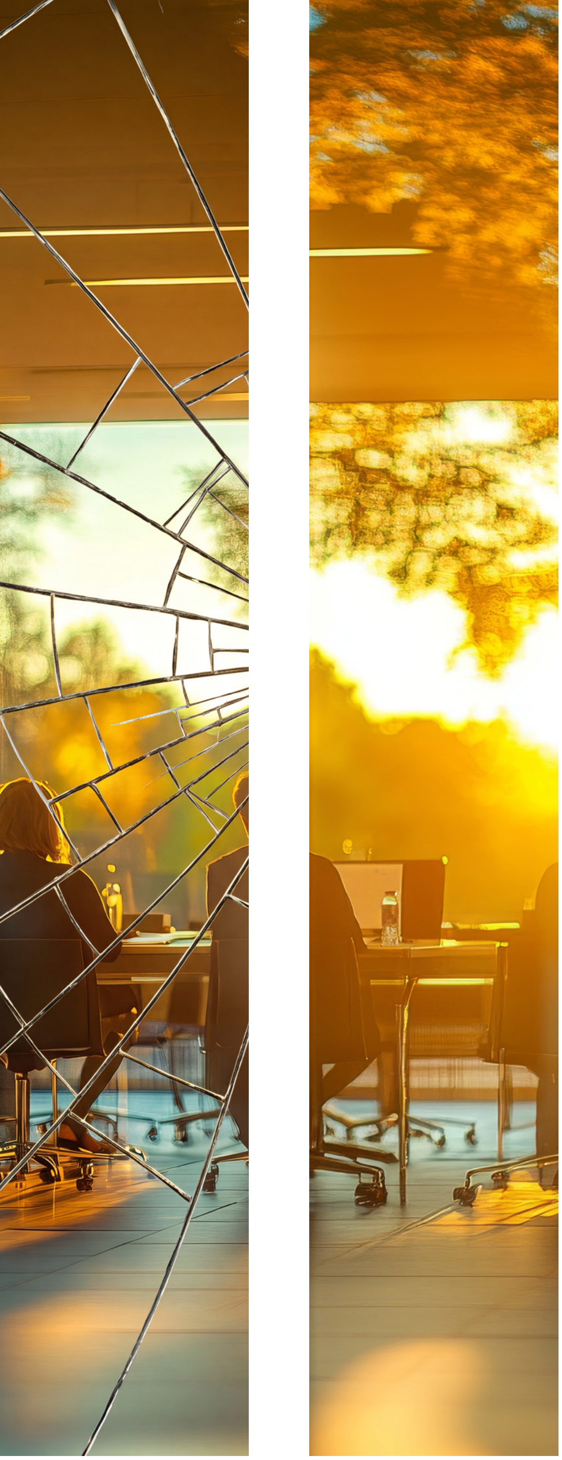


The Office Has a Coordination Tax

Friction is getting worse, and it is costing real time and money.

When room booking fails on a Tuesday morning, Workplace Operations gets the message. When the desk reservation system runs out of capacity an hour into the day, Workplace Operations gets the calls. When friction in the office shows up in the engagement survey, Workplace Operations gets the question from leadership about why.

60%

Six in ten Workplace Operations professionals say workplace friction has worsened over the past year.

Only one in six see any improvement. That net gap of +48 percentage points is the largest single signal in this research, and it comes from the population closest to the problem.

The friction is more than a feeling. It carries a price tag, one that becomes visible and accountable when the view moves from points on a scale to hours, and from hours to dollars.

Hours come first. End users report losing about two hours per week to coordination work. Workplace Operations estimates the real number is closer to four hours per week per employee. Both come from the same set of activities: finding rooms, finding desks, finding colleagues, coordinating schedules, working across platforms that do not talk to each other.

Dollars next. Applied against US Bureau of Labor Statistics compensation rates, those hours translate into dollar impact per employee and organizational impact at scale.

By the end-user count, workplace coordination friction costs $4,453 per employee per year using the most conservative BLS figure.[1] By Workplace Operations estimates, the figure is more than double. A 1,000-employee organization is looking at $4.5 million per year on the conservative end, and $9 million per year on the Workplace Operations end. Apply the BLS knowledge-worker rate, and the figure reaches $14 million per year.

$4.5M to $9M PER YEAR

The annual coordination tax for a 1,000-employee organization, depending on which estimate you take and which compensation rate you apply.

Where the estimates are sensitive. Two cautions on the figures. The hours estimate ranges from two (end users) to four (Workplace Operations) per employee per week, and in my read of the data, the true number per organization sits somewhere in that range. The dollar impact scales with your organization's actual compensation rate. Substitute your own rate to make the answer concrete for your context. Even at the low end, the cost is material.

"The biggest frustration is how much time gets wasted trying to coordinate space."

Workplace Operations professional, technology, mid-market

The Coordination Tax at Two Scales

What workplace friction costs depending on headcount and compensation profile. Conservative range uses the BLS baseline rate. Knowledge-worker rate extends the upper bound. (n = 514)

Per Employee Per Year

$4,453
END-USER COUNT

$9,000
WORKPLACE OPS COUNT
↗ $14,000 at BLS knowledge-worker rate

Per 1,000-Employee Organization

$4.5M
END-USER COUNT

$9M
WORKPLACE OPS COUNT
↗ $14M at BLS knowledge-worker

CALCULATE YOUR OWN

Substitute your organization's actual hourly rate to make the figures concrete for your context.

Headcount x hourly rate x hours per week x 48 weeks

Workplace Operations Sees the Operating Load

The early warning system, closest to the systems, the escalations, and the repeated issues.

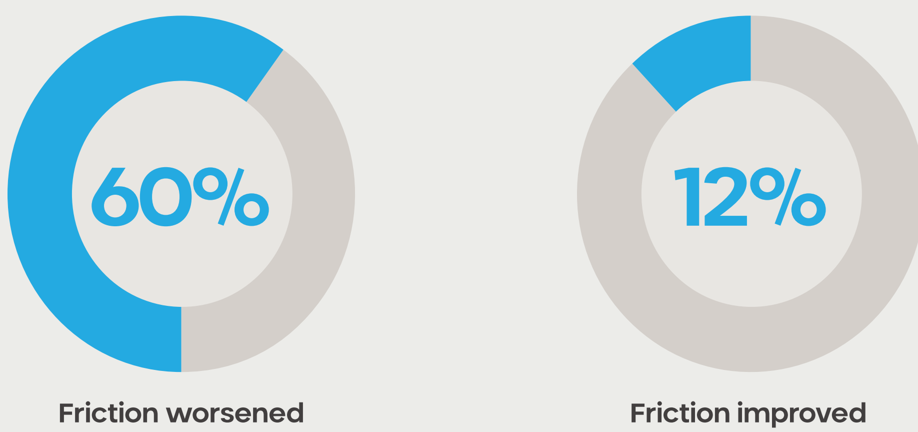
Workplace Operations professionals are closest to the systems that produce friction. In my conversations with workplace leaders across mid-market and enterprise organizations, that proximity is what makes them the first to feel friction, and the first to recognize it changing.

Where Workplace Operations is watching friction worsen, the picture underneath is consistent. The platforms in those organizations are cobbled-together point solutions: room booking in one tool, desk reservations in another, services in a third, visitor management in a fourth. The friction is visible, but the signal stays scattered across systems that do not talk to each other.

> **"The biggest frustration is finding available meeting rooms that actually have working AV equipment."**
>
> Workplace Operations professional, technology, mid-market

Workplace Operations Sees Friction Worsening

Year-over-year change in workplace friction, reported by Workplace Operations professionals. (n = 205)



+48

NET POINTS

The largest single signal in the research, from the population closest to the problem.

Employees Feel the Reliability Gap

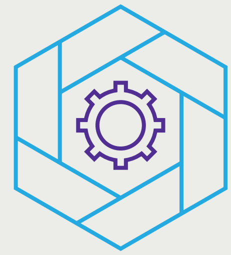
They may not count every event, but they feel whether the office works.

The research surveyed a second population in parallel: end users from comparable organizations, answering the same 20 questions from the receiving end. End users may not track friction as a pattern the way Workplace Operations does. What they feel is whether the office works when they need it to.

When the two groups answered the same questions, Workplace Operations professionals rated workplace friction nearly 13 points higher than employees. This wasn't a small statistical difference, it represents a large gap in how each group experiences the workplace.[2]

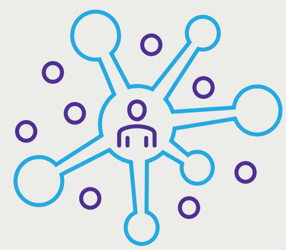
The fair question is whether end users are not really feeling the friction, or are simply more accepting of it. We had to test that hypothesis before drawing any conclusion. The results are below.

Bottom line: End users feel friction when they hit it. The pattern is clearest at the two ends of the workplace friction scale this research developed, a scale we define fully later in this ebook. At one end sit the most disconnected, **Reactive** workplaces, where coordination happens in the moment rather than by design. At the other sit the most integrated, **Unified** workplaces, where the systems work together. In the most Reactive organizations, 63 percent of end users say workplace friction is a noticeable drag on their productivity. In the most Unified organizations, only 14 percent say the same. That is 4.5 times the rate. End users respond proportionally to what they encounter.



What Workplace Operations sees

A coherent organizational problem. Friction as one pattern across rooms, desks, AV, coordination, and policy. The job is systemic.



What end users feel

A frustrating moment in a frustrating day. Each friction event registers as itself. The pattern across events stays invisible from where end users sit.

"Workplace Operations sees a coherent organizational problem. End users feel a series of frustrating moments. Both are right. Each calls for a different kind of help. That is what makes this gap structural, and why no point solution closes it."

Craig M. Durr, Chief Analyst, The Collab Collective

> **"It's hard to distinguish who is in the office on specific days. Sometimes you think people are on site but they are virtual, and other days it's the opposite."**
>
> End user, professional services, mid-market

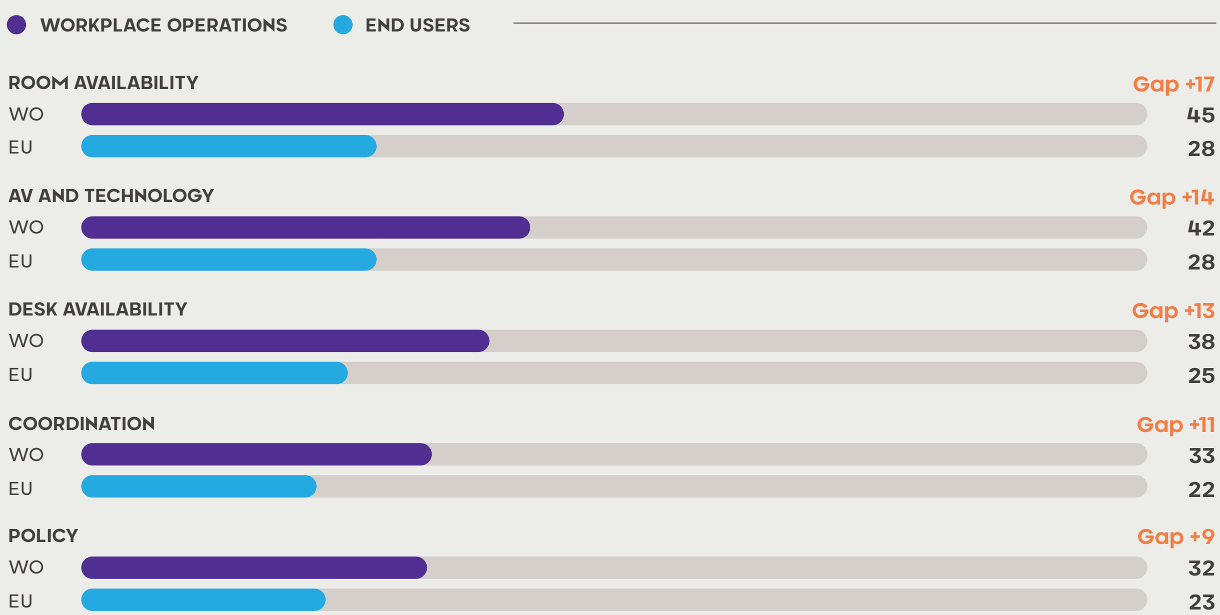
The deeper finding is structural. The same 20 questions that hold together as one coherent problem for Workplace Operations break apart when end users answer them. Statistically, the reliability coefficient drops from 0.898 to 0.591. *In plain terms, the questions still register individual friction experiences for end users, but they no longer add up to a single underlying construct.*

What end users feel is a frustrating moment in a frustrating day. Each friction event registers as itself. The pattern across events stays invisible from where end users sit.

The gap persists because today's workplace data is fragmented across many tools, not connected in one. End users feel that fragmentation as friction in the moment. Workplace Operations sees it as a missing view of the whole. Same broken data, two failed experiences.

The Perception Gap, Dimension by Dimension

How Workplace Operations and end users score their workplaces across five friction dimensions, sorted by gap size. Higher score indicates more friction. (WO n = 205, EU n = 309)



+12.66

COMPOSITE GAP

Workplace Operations scores 12.66 points higher than end users on the Workplace Friction Index overall.

Statistically significant ($p < .001$) · Large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.92$)

Workarounds Quietly Erode the Value of In-Person Work

Meetings move virtual, people hunt for space, and workplace teams absorb the scramble

The workarounds are where it gets expensive. When the office does not work the way it should, people route around it. Those workarounds are where the cost of friction turns into lost value, and most of it goes unmeasured.

The pattern is the same one Workplace Operations sees from the other side. End users reach for the nearest fix in the moment. Workplace teams absorb the scramble, rebooking spaces, fielding the complaints, and trying to keep the office usable. Neither side is measuring what the office gives up each time this happens

This Workplace Operations professional names the problem in their own words: a disconnect between digital scheduling and physical presence. The phrase **ghost meetings** names the symptom directly. The workarounds are not the failure. They are the visible evidence of a workplace that cannot see itself.

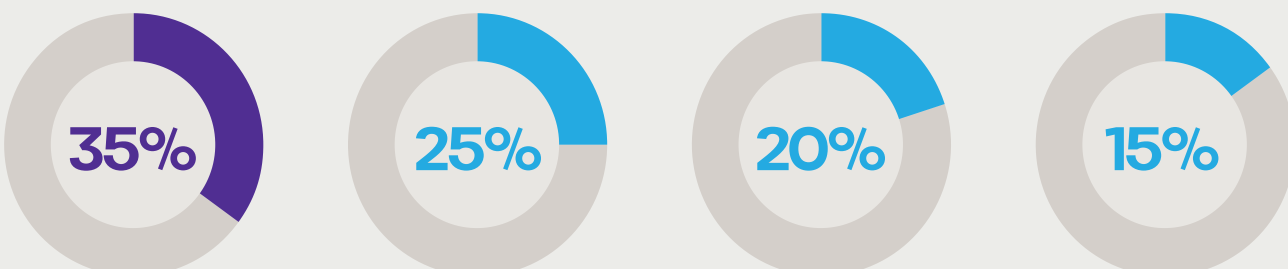
Workarounds that defeat the office

When room booking fails, three of the four most common employee workarounds defeat the purpose of having an office at all. Meetings get moved to worse spaces, pulled to virtual-only, or postponed altogether. The workplace leaks value through workarounds that nobody is measuring.

When Booking Fails, the Office Loses

The most common employee workarounds when room booking or availability breaks down. Three of the four most common defeat the purpose of being in the office.

PRESERVES OFFICE VALUE
DEFEATS OFFICE VALUE



Find an alternative space
(huddle room, open area, cafeteria)

Just make it work in a non-ideal space

Move the meeting to virtual-only

Postpone or reschedule

3 of 4

MOST COMMON WORKAROUNDS

Three of the four most common workarounds defeat the purpose of having an office. The workplace leaks value through workarounds that nobody is measuring.

Source: The Collab Collective · Robin Workplace Frictio11 Research · 2026

Ghost Meetings

"The single biggest source of friction is the lack of real-time visibility and coordination for a hybrid workforce. With 1,000+ employees coming in on different schedules, people often arrive at the office only to find their key collaborators are working remotely or that all suitable meeting rooms are pre-booked but left empty (ghost meetings).

This disconnect between digital scheduling and physical presence leads to wasted time searching for workspaces and missed opportunities for spontaneous, in-person innovation, which is the primary reason we want them in the office."

— Workplace Operations professional, technology, mid-market

The Workplace Friction Index Gives Leaders a Benchmark

A validated instrument for measuring workplace friction. The benchmark Workplace Operations now own.

Until now, the people responsible for managing workplace friction have not had a validated way to name and measure what they have been seeing. The Workplace Friction Index gives them that instrument. It is also the lens this ebook uses from here forward, to size the problem, locate it, and point toward what resolves it.

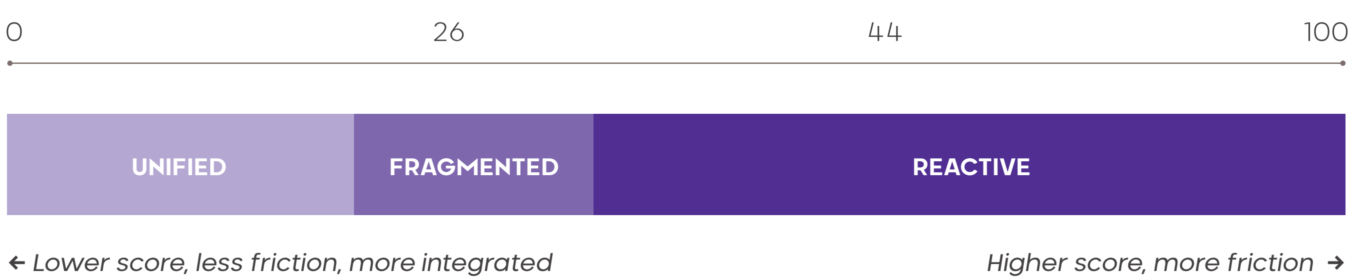
The Workplace Friction Index is a 0-to-100 score we developed for this research, derived from 20 questions across five dimensions of workplace experience.

The five dimensions cover the friction surfaces of the modern office: **Room Availability** (finding meeting rooms), **AV and Technology** (gear that works), **Desk Availability** (finding workspace), **Coordination** (knowing who is in the office and when), and **Policy** (clarity on what employees can do and where). Each dimension is measured through four questions, asked the same way of both Workplace Operations and end users.

The Workplace Friction Index gives workplace leaders a shared language for a problem many have been managing without a clear benchmark.

The Workplace Friction Index Scale

Where organizations land on the 0-100 Workplace Friction Index, sorted into three operating states. Based on the Workplace Operations sample. (n = 205)



UNIFIED	FRAGMENTED	REACTIVE
Below 26 Bottom 25%	**26 to 44** Middle 50%	**Above 44** Top 25%

So how does it work?

The mean Workplace Friction Index score among Workplace Operations respondents is 36.8. Most organizations sit between 26 and 44. The best-performing 10 percent score below 18. The most challenged 10 percent score above 61.

Knowing where most organizations land lets a reader place their own workplace in rough territory, even before they take the assessment themselves. To make that placement concrete, the distribution sorts into three operating states. A lower score means less friction and a more integrated workplace, so the tiers run from Unified at the low end to Reactive at the high end. Two of them, Reactive and Unified, appeared earlier when end-user friction split so sharply between them. Here is the full framework, with the middle state named and all three given numbers.[3]

THE QUESTION:

What tier does your organization fall into?

Tier	Workplace Friction Index score	What it describes
Unified	**Below 26** (bottom quartile)	Office workflows are integrated. Room and desk reservations, AV and catering, visitor coordination, and scheduling work together as one system.
Fragmented	**26 to 44** (middle 50%)	Office workflows are managed in silos. Room booking, visitor management, and meeting services live in disconnected systems. Most organizations sit here.
Reactive	**Above 44** (top quartile)	Office workflows are managed ad hoc across disconnected systems and manual processes. Most coordination happens in the moment rather than by design.

The Path Forward Is Operational Clarity

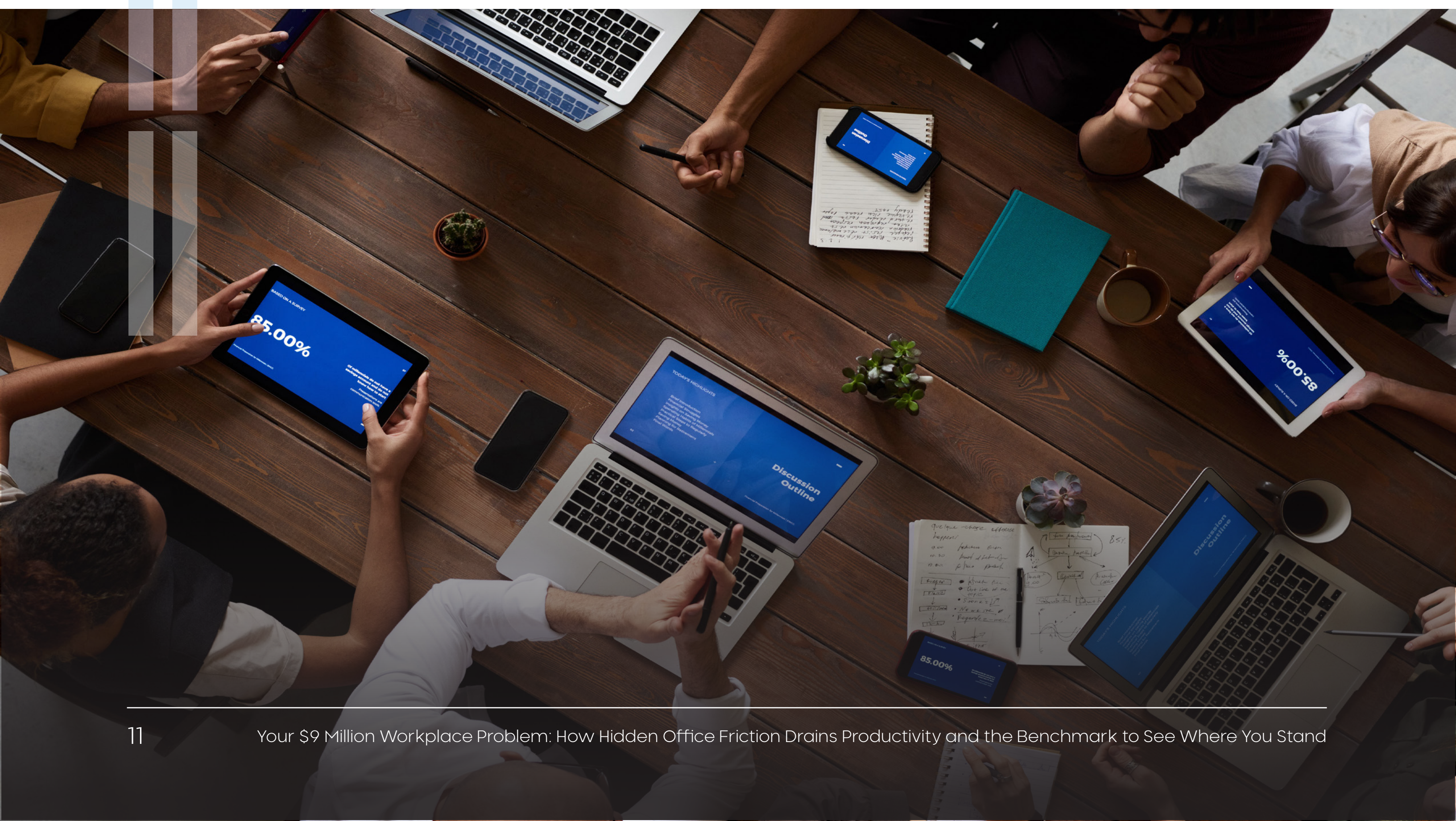
Leaders need connected data, employee-facing ease, and workplace operations visibility.

The category of solution this research arrives at is ***a unified workplace platform***. From my vantage point covering this category, that conclusion follows from the structure of the gap itself. A solution that addresses one population without the other does not close the gap. It just relocates the friction.

One platform serves both vantage points because both run on the same shared data layer. End users escape friction when individual moments work, while Workplace Operations gets a systemic view that becomes manageable. Each population sees a role-appropriate experience drawn from the same underlying source, so the gap closes instead of relocating.

For end users, the platform resolves individual moments of friction as they happen: finding a room, finding a desk, finding a colleague, and knowing what is happening in the building today.

For Workplace Operations, the same platform surfaces complete visibility into the workplace: where friction concentrates, which behaviors signal the office is leaking value, and where to invest next.



Robin Is the Example of That Connected Platform Approach

How a unified platform maps to the gap this research describes.

Robin positions itself as the world's first unified, intelligent platform for workplace operations.[4] That means one platform, running on one shared set of workplace data, organized around three things every workplace has to do: plan the space, manage the operation, and let people use it. Set that structure against this research and the two line up directly. The friction this ebook describes comes from rooms, desks, visitors, services, and coordination living in separate systems that do not share data. A platform built to bring exactly those functions onto one shared data layer is, by definition, the thing that closes the gap.

Robin AI

PLAN

Smart space configuration, maintenance, and insights

scenario plans • analytics
move management • neighborhoods
live map editor • presence

MANAGE

Single source of truth for workplace operations

schedule management
services • deliveries • visitors
issues announcement • surveys

USE

Agent powered experience to optimize collaboration

desks • spaces • parking • lockers • wayfinding • team planning
Slack • Teams • Outlook • Chrome • iOS • Android

Plan: long-term planning and efficient operations, grounded in real workplace data. Plan answers the systemic-visibility need from the operating-load section. Six in ten Workplace Operations professionals are watching friction get worse without a validated way to measure it. Robin gives them a complete view of how the workplace is actually used, the view that disparate point solutions fragment today. Rich data is what moves a Reactive or Fragmented organization toward Unified, because leaders can plan against the whole workplace instead of guessing at it.

Manage: one place to run workplace operations. Manage consolidates the workflows that produce friction in today's office: meeting rooms and the AV inside them, desks, visitors, deliveries, services, and the communications that have to reach the right people. This research found those workflows scattered across separate systems in most organizations. Robin brings them into one operational center, which replaces the daily firefighting that defines Fragmented and Reactive organizations with something closer to control.

Use: easy access to the right resources, where employees already work. Use delivers the frictionless moments end users need, in the places they already work rather than in another system to learn. The friction events end users feel most acutely, the 4.5x rate of productivity drag in Reactive versus Unified organizations, get resolved at the moment they happen: finding a room, finding a desk, finding a colleague, knowing what is happening in the building today.

The math lines up. Robin's headline value proposition is to "double the effectiveness of the office in half the time." That tracks the math of this research. A 1,000-employee organization halving its coordination friction recovers $2.25 to $4.5 million per year by the conservative end-user count, and substantially more by the Workplace Operations estimate. Robin also names the same enemy this research diagnoses, calling out "fragmented and manual processes scattered across IT, facilities, and workplace roles" and "cobbled-together point solutions" as the old way. The research validates that diagnosis from outside the company.

Where to Start

A practical path forward for the workplace operations leader.

You have read the diagnosis, the cost, and the category of solution. The next move is yours. The five steps below are the order we would recommend taking them, starting with where your organization sits today.

1. **Place yourself on the scale.** Use the Workplace Friction Index tier framework. Are you Unified, Fragmented, or Reactive? If you sit in the Fragmented or Reactive tier, the friction picture in your organization is likely worse than the research's headline averages, and the figures in the next step adjust accordingly.

2. **Quantify the tax.** Apply the BLS baseline rates, or substitute your organization's hourly rate, against the hours-lost finding. The two-hour end-user and four-hour Workplace Operations baselines are sample averages. Organizations above the median Workplace Friction Index score likely lose more hours. Organizations below it likely lose fewer. Calculate the coordination tax for your actual employee count.

3. **Audit your platforms.** Map your current platform layer. Where does data live? Where is it fragmented? Which population is by what they have today? An honest audit usually surfaces three to five tools doing overlapping work.

4. **Evaluate the category.** Assess whether a unified workplace platform approach is the right next step. Use Robin as a reference example for the category. In my analysis, they fit the platform-approach pattern this research arrives at.

   Look for Plan, Manage, and Use alignment between platform capabilities and the gaps your audit surfaced.

5. **Build the case.** Translate the calculated coordination tax into a business case. Leadership and finance respond to the price tag.

A quick self-check before you act

- [ ] I can identify whether my organization is Unified, Fragmented, or Reactive on the Workplace Friction Index scale.
- [ ] I have an estimate of the hours my employees lose per week to workplace coordination.
- [ ] I can quantify the dollar cost of those hours at my organization's hourly rate.
- [ ] I know which workplace platforms in our environment hold which data, and where the gaps are.
- [ ] I have a business case framework for evaluating a unified workplace platform investment.

If you can check four or more, you are ready to move from reading this ebook to acting on it.

Final Thought

What this research describes likely tracks what you have been seeing in your own office. After surveying more than 500 people across the modern workplace, 205 of the workplace operations professionals like you and 309 the employees you serve, my conclusion is clear. Workplace friction is now a durable constant of hybrid work, the consequence of running modern offices on platforms built for a different era.

The trend points in one direction. Friction is getting worse. Workplace Operations is seeing it first. The cost is real, behavioral, and compounding.

The organizations that close the gap will move from a fragmented platform layer to a unified one, where shared data delivers role-appropriate experiences to every population. That is the move from Reactive or Fragmented to Unified. It is what this research has been describing all along, and what the platform category points toward.

"The data has shown us where the problem is. The next move belongs to the workplace leaders reading this."

Craig M. Durr,
Chief Analyst, The Collab Collective

How the instrument was validated. Our team at The Collab Collective validated the instrument with 205 Workplace Operations professionals. The items hold together as one coherent organizational construct for that population, with a reliability coefficient of 0.898.

That is excellent reliability for a research instrument,[3] and it is what gives the Workplace Friction Index its credibility as a benchmark. The instrument was built on the Workplace Operations sample. Workplace Operations and end-user respondents were sampled independently from comparable organizations, so the perception gap reported in this ebook is an aggregate comparison between two populations rather than a within-company comparison.

[1] Both hourly compensation rates come from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employer Costs for Employee Compensation (ECEC) release for the December 2025 reference period. The conservative rate of $46.15 per hour is the national average across all private-industry workers. The knowledge-worker rate of $70.00 per hour comes from the BLS Management, Professional, and Related occupational group, which more closely matches the office-based mid-market and enterprise population surveyed in this research. Both rates are fully loaded. Annual figures use 48 working weeks per year.

[2] Workplace Operations scores 12.66 points higher than end users on the workplace friction measure. The gap is statistically significant ($p < .001$) and large in effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.92$).

[3] Statistical thresholds in this research follow standard conventions. Cronbach's alpha values of 0.70 or higher are typically considered acceptable for research instruments; values above 0.80 are good and above 0.90 are excellent (Nunnally and Bernstein). Cohen's d effect-size benchmarks follow Cohen's conventions: 0.20 small, 0.50 medium, 0.80 large (Cohen).

[4] Direct quotations from Robin in this section come from publicly available Robin marketing materials.

About Us

Craig Durr is the Chief Analyst and Founder of The Collab Collective, an industry analyst firm focused on workplace collaboration and communication. Through his work as an analyst, researcher, and keynote speaker, Craig has developed deep insight into the services, technologies, and devices that empower seamless connections between businesses, employees, and customers.

Beyond technology, Craig also researches the intricate human dimensions of work, categorizing his findings into the workforce, the workplace, and the workflows of the modern work experience. By unraveling these components, he helps to unveil the intricate interplay between technology, productivity, and business strategies essential to the future of work.

cdurr@collab-collective.com craigdurr @craigdurr

collab collective

Offers deep insights into the evolving landscape of workplace communication and collaboration, combining data-driven analysis with a nuanced understanding of the workforce, workplace, and workflows shaping today's hybrid environments. Our analysts are experts in workplace collaboration, customer experience, and employee experience technologies, as well as enterprise applications for creativity and workflow management—providing a comprehensive understanding of how these solutions drive real-world business outcomes.

www.collab-collective.com

Robin

Modern offices are powered by Robin. Our One Workplace Platform makes productive, friction-free workplaces a reality by providing a single platform to manage office operations. With actionable office analytics and planning tools, we help our customers optimize space investments while keeping employee experience at the forefront of their mission. Robin enables workplace ops to double the effectiveness of the office in half the time.

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