Nine ways to maximise agile refresh success

KAREN SKILLINGS explains how you can achieve a level of agility while refreshing your existing premises.

Regardless of the driver for going agile in the workplace, embarking on an agile refresh project has distinct selling points for all staff – for one it won't affect your team members from a work and lifestyle perspective should your office be moving location as well.

Such benefits as not having to change transportation, childcare arrangements or end-of-trip facilities means your refresh team can focus on the other challenges such as getting the communications right and out at the optimal times and untethering your staff from 'fixed work points' to agility.

WHAT'S AN 'AGILE REFRESH'?

This occurs when an organisation undertakes a change project to address the way the business uses the workplace and may come about for one of two reasons. You may be renegotiating to stay in the same location at the end of your current lease, or you may want to make changes to create a more collaborative and flexible workspace. Either way, an agile refresh has many of the same challenges that any large-scale organisational change may encounter.

It's important that the journey for staff begins the same day that the announcement that an agile refresh is being conducted is made and there are several key focus areas for staff that the project team must deliver on.

One of the fastest ways for organisations doing an agile refresh without changing premises may be in setting up a display suite rather than a full prototype space, although the latter would be most beneficial for staff to trial and understand how their working day will look. The next issue of *FM* will look at setting up a prototype space.

THE START OF CHANGE

How do you help your staff make the many changes required, move towards new ways of working, and introduce and adopt the new process, technology and changes ahead? It's helpful to have a checklist of issues to be addressed, including:
- less paper
- less storage
- provision of lockers that suit the workforce
- etiquettes to be developed
- hygiene guidelines in the workplace
- supporting technology
- clean desk policy
- ownership of space, and
- changes in terminology.

ISSUE 1 – LESS PAPER

Start by looking at processes and policies that generate paper such as reducing printing. Some of the best initiatives start small, but accelerate quickly when asking your staff to think of ways to contribute – a good example is determining how many paper statements come into your business.

Recently, a change champion raised the issue of corporate credit card statements that generate a couple of reams of paper a year. That may not sound much, but multiply this office by office, year by year and you have a lot to store.

ISSUE 2 – FILE AUDIT AND STORAGE

Complete a file audit to pinpoint the teams that truly have functional requirements for storage. This doesn't mean that there won't be storage for team use, but the point is to reduce your staff's reliance on paper copies of files that are available electronically.

A well-structured storage reduction campaign can be undertaken once the file audit is completed and will help wrestle those paper products sitting on worktops and shelves.

ISSUE 3 – LOCKERS

Lockers are pivotal to supporting agility as they enable staff to have a home base throughout the day. Locker size is possibly one of the most contentious issues when refreshing your space.
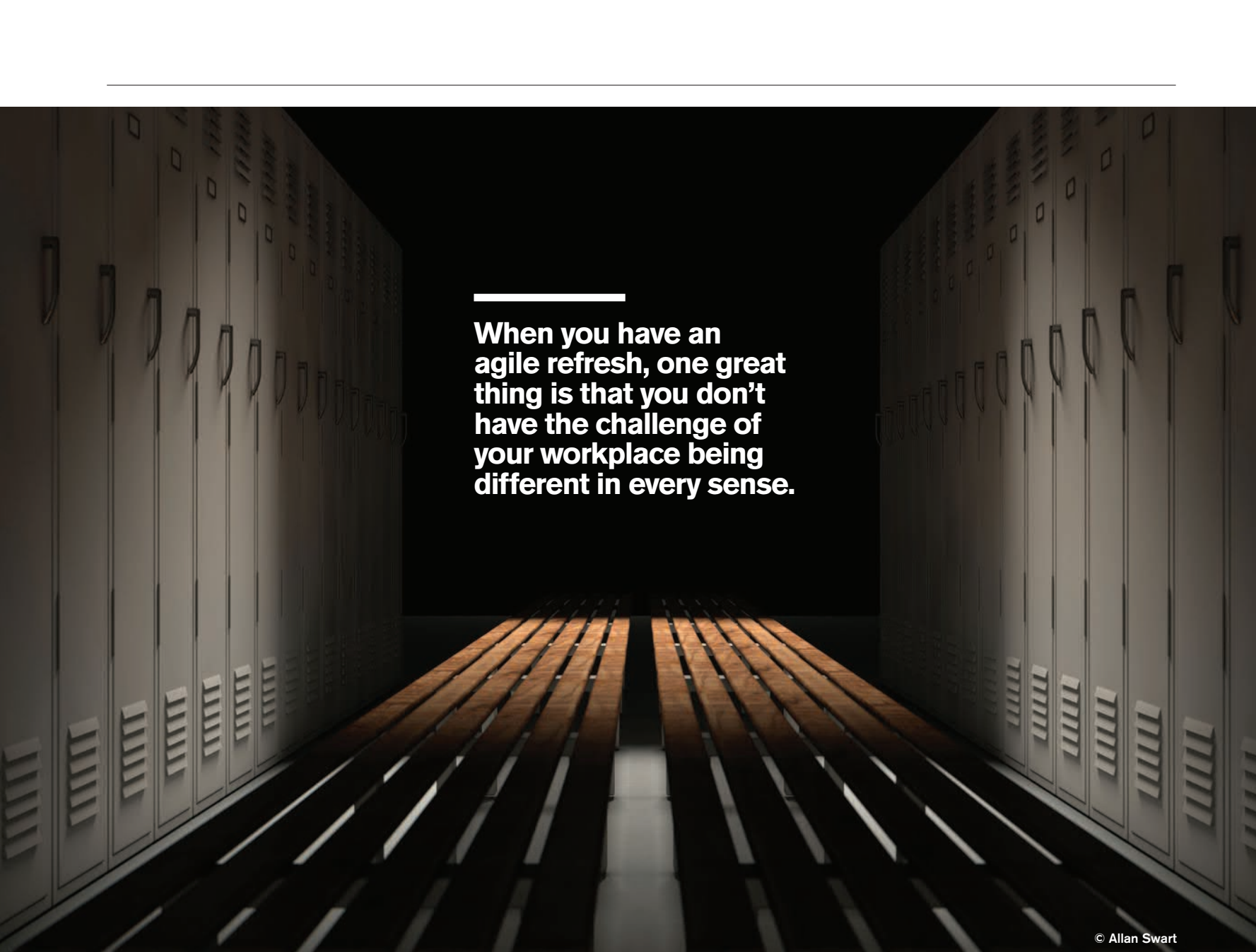
If you currently have lockers used by staff, both at end-of-trip and on-floor, do a survey so you understand the frequency of usage and what is being stored in these facilities. Lockers in an agile refresh will be used for personal belongings and technology items like laptops and smartphones. End-of-trip lockers should be made available according to your staff's use patterns. Having said that, there is no real obligation to provide end-of-trip lockers, but with one of the main selling points of agility being health and well-being, supporting staff use of end-of-trip facilities resulting from exercise or commute via cycling makes sense.

ISSUE 4 – ETIQUETTES TO BE DEVELOPED

The new etiquettes can be tough to land on. How far do you go with no eating at work settings? Are healthy snacks allowed?

What are the new etiquettes for collaborating, working around high focus areas, taking or making calls, and leaving the office for extended periods of time?

These sorts of questions will come early from your staff, as they will want to know how they will be impacted. Get a user group together to help map out the

When you have an agile refresh, one great thing is that you don't have the challenge of your workplace being different in every sense.

new etiquettes and address these first with Human Resources (HR) to gain endorsement of the process.

ISSUE 5 – HYGIENE GUIDELINES IN THE WORKPLACE

Hygiene protocols (or lack thereof) and the perception that germs and other communicable diseases will be spread around can become a focus and cause for fear with staff. Asking your people to move from one work setting to another without knowing how hygiene will be managed can create roadblocks for your refresh.

Ensure that you have explored computer wipes, hand sanitisers and tissue box options for the fitout. Perhaps a communication piece on awareness through the health and wellness focus of your agile refresh can address this important issue.

ISSUE 6 – SUPPORTING TECHNOLOGY

Technology may well be below par in your existing space, so ensure you communicate the message that the new, refreshed office will have improved IT – enabling your staff to work anywhere.

If improved IT is a progressive project during the stages of the fitout, make sure you have blue cables to the network as a backup for any teams where agility is being trialled or phased in. It is reasonable that the technology will be the last thing available to land on due to the amount of work your IT team is likely to have with possible provider transformation or other refresh to updated software. The possible introduction of digital toolkits and working with early adopters during any agile trials also needs to be factored in. Even if you don't have all the answers, provide information on the big ticket items that will help your staff the most.

There is also a good deal of work for IT during this time to find special users who may need super-charged PCs or other technology to do their work. These are staff who may be exceptions to the whole business in terms of practising full agility; however, don't make assumptions. Some level of validation is required to ensure that they qualify to have a designated work point.

ISSUE 7 – CLEAN DESK POLICY

In an agile refresh, a clean desk policy must be introduced. Agility is not possible without work settings being clear and ready for occupation by the next staff member.

The clean desk can be supported by a complete storage program that takes the workspace from cluttered to uncluttered and provides a place for the staff member's organisational records and team files.

This policy should be developed in line with the etiquettes (as previously mentioned) and decisions should be made as to how staff are going to be handled in the event of regular breaches of the clean desk policy at the end of the day. Do you get cleaners to pick up working documents, coffee cups, laptops and other belongings at the end of each working day? Would the staff involved have to do the walk of shame to the boss' office to collect their things?

A clever FM manager I know always says you catch more flies with honey, so perhaps a customer-centric approach of holding things at reception without recrimination may work better? Either way, a storage program with a process map to show how the staff will go from clutter to uncluttered, the right policy for clean desks, followed by agreement and endorsement should occur months before the fitout is complete.

ISSUE 8 – OWNERSHIP OF SPACE

Among the challenges with an agile refresh can be the use of meeting rooms and other spaces by one or more teams.

What are the new etiquettes for collaborating, working around high focus areas, taking or making calls, and leaving the office for extended periods of time?

Depending on whether you are going to have a mix of bookable and non-bookable meeting rooms, make sure you get input from the business on how the spaces are used, so that rooms can be built to support the work being completed.

Do you need a mix of rooms with walls and doors, film or even soundproofing? Do you need other meeting spaces to support town halls or agile scrums, and foster high levels of collaboration, spaces encouraging bump-ins, collisions or hack days?

What is the technology in these rooms? Do you have Wi-Fi presenting, Skype for business, polycoms? Do other rooms have more collaborative support, such as floor-to-ceiling whiteboards? If there is going to be a mix of use for meeting rooms, make the goal that all rooms are used accurately to reflect the work being done in them.

ISSUE 9 – CHANGES IN TERMINOLOGY

Think about what you are going to call the new workspaces. Refer to them as work settings rather than desks or workstations. Talk about team storage, personal lockers for laptop and working documents, and spaces for high-collaborative, low-collaborative, high-focus and low-focus work.

Talk about clean desk guidelines, new etiquettes and the flexibility to do your work anywhere. Use these words often and help drive the focus that will assist you in your agile refresh journey.
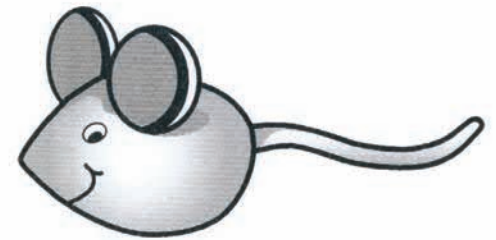
© PaylessImages

When you have an agile refresh, one great thing is that you don't have the challenge of your workplace being different in every sense. The second great aspect of this is that your project team can start making changes earlier than you would in an environment that is, say, 12 months out from a complete build.

What stays the same between a large transformation project with relocation, or an agile refresh, is how your project team encourages innovation and inclusion – enabling staff to share in the decisions about their new workspace and etiquettes. This doesn't necessarily mean they will be able to influence the level of agility, but they will be happier in being able to provide input. ●

→ *Karen Skillings is the principal of Skillings Education and an expert in information management, change management and relocations. An accomplished author, she has several publications to her name and has developed nationally recognised training programs.*