

The community Manager ?

savills

In search of meaning
for the office





Where do you live?

Anyone asked this question replies with the name of their town or district and talks about their house or flat. No-one, or hardly anyone, will refer to their office, factory, shop or depot. The workplace is not readily seen as a living space even though we spend a considerable amount of time there.

This fact is a sign of failings in the perception of and the identification with the workplace that urgently need to be addressed: the workplace, especially the office, finds itself at the confluence of many – not to say all – mutations, social, economic, cultural and technological. For a company, an owner or an employee, to “make a success of” one’s office is to succeed in adapting to these revolutions in progress.

The solution is to give offices a real sense, a real spirit. This is the task of a newly arrived profession in the services landscape: that of the office building Community Manager.

1/ The office, a living space to be reinvented

The office is Lyra Belacqua and Will Parry. Readers of the fantasy trilogy “His Dark Materials” (Philip Pullman) follow these two adolescents through a rite of passage into adulthood. Through the challenges they have to face, the dangers they have to overcome, the desires and feelings they have to tame, Lyra and Will forge their personalities and fate.

The same could be said of the office, which needs to reinvent itself as a living space. This need is being forced upon it by all those who frequent it, have an influence on it and interact with it: the companies, the investing owners and the employees.

Users facing evolving working practices

This is the first volume of the trilogy: the one where the office finds itself confronted with the expectations, desires and needs of the companies it serves. Coming up with a response places it in a real adaptation contest.

It has to be said that the companies themselves have, for a few years now, been confronted with an accelerating series of major crises that forced rapid change and imposed sometimes contradictory demands. In this tempest, they sought to turn the office into an ally, a support and an instrument to assist them in their adaptation, growth and sometimes survival:

- Ensuring social distancing and health safety at the same time, as well as allowing for remote working during the period of the Covid 19 pandemic;
- Attracting and pooling talented employees during the post-viral euphoria, when many people were feeling the need and a yearning to “reinvent” their lives;
- Building team spirit, promoting efficiency, encouraging collective creativity and generation when the triggering of the war in Ukraine led to an inflationary crisis and the sudden harshening of the economic environment...

So it was that, one after the other, new words and concepts entered the services sector

property lexicon, such as remote working, flexibility, productivity, attractiveness and talent retention.

And it's not over: it is highly probable that companies won't escape the consequences of the redefinition of world geopolitical power balances and the resulting instability for the European nations and in our lives. The office will be there and, once war is no longer an invention of science fiction, companies will require it to be conducive to security, confidence, a sense of belonging and attachment to a territory, company or community.

The office is faced with the challenge of adapting. Property must evolve and it needs to live up to the motto of Jules Verne's Nautilus: “mobilis in mobile” (moving in a moving thing). Easier said than done, especially when one sees that the architectural form of the office has changed little since the revolutions brought about by William L.B. Jenney and Frank Lloyd Wright (see our “Office Buildings Timeline” below).

There have certainly been considerable changes over the last few decades and years but they can be attributed above all to the construction standards applied, the technologies used, the equipment, fittings and furniture provided and the services proposed, as well as to the space planning adopted.

All these changes represented the bringing together of what were considered as prerequisites to the idyll of a happy and efficient office life, as much for the employees as for their employer.

But employees and employers are then often left alone to face this situation, which is far from a light affair. It is down to them to take it on, at the risk of misuse, misunderstandings or inappropriate adaptations, which merely end up with the sometimes “policing” intervention of a unanimously decried Office Manager. Or, sometimes, with the disagreeable feeling of being weighed down by gadgets: this is the football-table syndrome, which comes back like a boomerang to hit the artificially cool boss full in the face. Hell is sometimes paved with good intentions...

There is a lack of animation, motivation, adaptation and regulation of office life, which cannot and must not be based only on hierarchical relationships or pages and pages of workplace policy. It is this absence that the Community Manager seeks to rectify, acting at once as facilitator, mediator and practitioner of maieutics – a need that more and more users are becoming aware of.

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EXCHANGING VIEWS

regarding the Place de Seine office building, in Levallois-Perret



From left to right

Muriel Malpeau
General Services Manager
Atradius

Florence Fifi
Community & Services Manager
Savills

Arnaud Avonde
Site Manager
Alliance Automotive Group

Florence Fifi

How do your employees perceive the Community offer developed by Savills on your site? What have their feelings and feedback been?

Muriel Malpeau : After the ten years we've been renting at Place de Seine, the range of services has totally changed. First of all, the inter-company restaurant's menu has improved considerably and all our employees are fully satisfied. The team is great! Getting off the ground took a while but now we are extremely pleased. The introduction of the concierge service proved highly satisfactory and the same goes for the the room-booking service, the breakfasts, the smile at reception, the sports room that had been requested for some time and the bicycle park! Today, Atradius are delighted to have renewed their Place de Seine rental agreement with the owner and we are totally satisfied.

Arnaud Avonde : We came from a site where there were no services and we ordered our meals on the Internet. Today, all the employees have their lunch on the premises, like the COMEX which regularly at the inter-company restaurant,

making a break in the day. And the meals are of very good quality! We look forward to seeing the new recipes arrive. The sports room is greatly appreciated; those who use it are happy with it. The dry-cleaning service has proved popular and the car-wash, while a little expensive, is still very useful. The meeting rooms are cosy and our teams feel good in them. The service team is always smiling. Everything is perfect!

Florence Fifi

Muriel Malpeau, your company has been on the site for a long time: have you noticed any developments in the life on site with this new service?

Muriel Malpeau : We are delighted with Savills' Community management in setting up new services on the Place de Seine premises. Above all, it has become a real bonus for attracting young people and keeping good employees. Applicants attending for a job interview see all the services they can have access to and clearly that weighs in the balance. Where the organised events are concerned, employees are very enthusiastic but we need to find a way of improving communications to reach all the employees.

Florence Fifi

Arnaud Avonde, you came to the site more recently: have you noticed any changes among your employees since moving into the Place de Seine building?

Arnaud Avonde : The employees enjoy the events enormously. The sports and well-being facilities are also much appreciated. The service offered by the osteopath is excellent: we have received very good feedback from the employees who have benefited from it. Other events work well. Among these, the showing of football, rugby and tennis matches brings everyone together and creates a bond. The sales are also very popular. In fact the Saint Valentine's event came to my rescue because I was able to buy a bunch of flowers before going home! There is still a slight lack of festive spirit, but you have done the groundwork: just two or three more developments and it will be incredible! Congratulations, too, on the design. The work areas are beautiful: elegantly simple and warm. The choice of materials has been a great success!

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Investors facing a market in turmoil

They are not alone. With another approach, specific to their preoccupations and logic, office-building-owning investors are also giving thought to the evolution in offices and their appropriation by their user-clients. This is the second volume of “His Dark Materials”, our trilogy revisited.

The figures for the lettings markets in France and the rest of the world have made them anxious, even febrile. This is particularly evident in the slow-down in property sales in connection with the inflationary shock that followed the invasion of Ukraine. The weakened financial situation of companies has led them to scrutinise their expenditure. Their property divisions have turned their attention to the question of offices – one of the top items of expenditure for companies

– and have reduced the surfaces rented, assuming a proportion of remote working in their organisations, an intention to increase their occupation rates and, in some cases, reductions in their growth and recruitment projections.

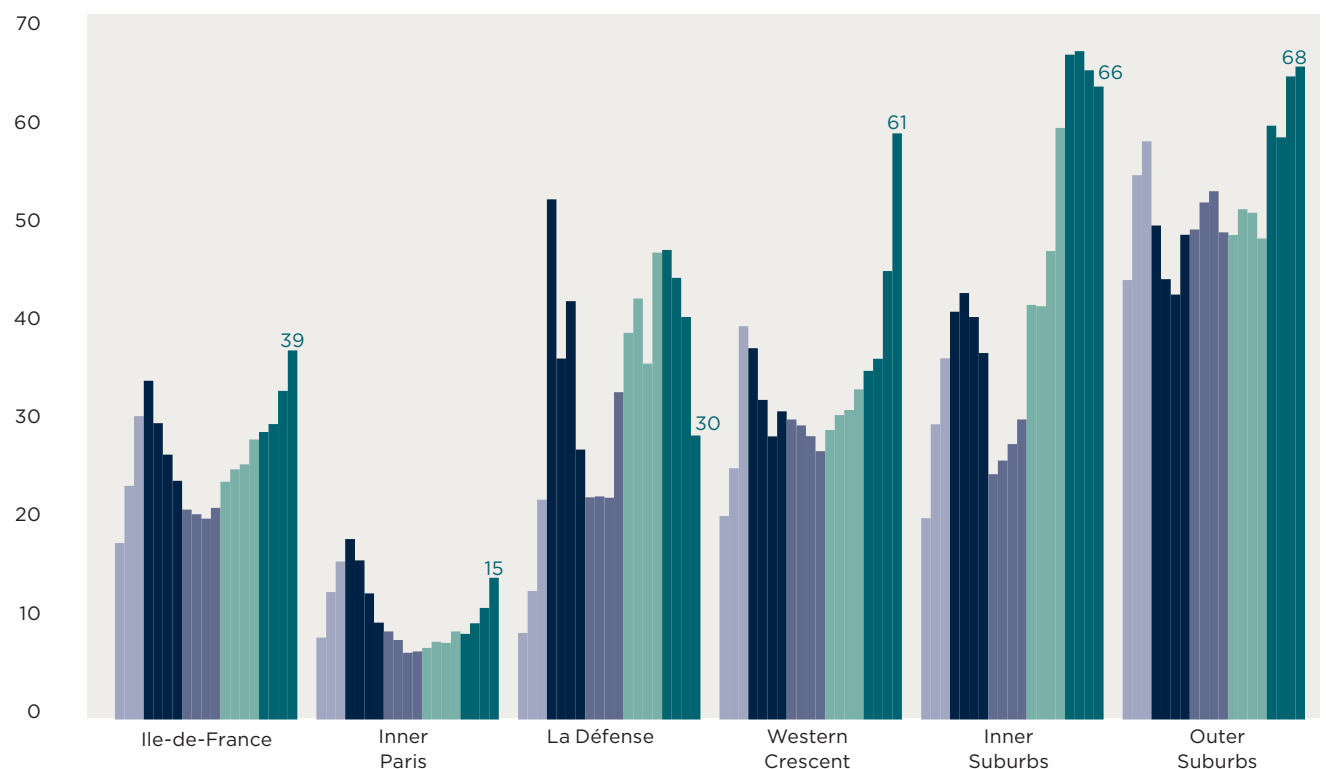
In Ile-de-France for example, office take-up in 2024 was down by nearly 20% on the ten-year average. This decline seems to have been structural since the pandemic crisis, which led to the generalisation of remote working and flex-office. While the take-up in Ile-de-France stood at an annual average of 2,461,000 m² over the five years that preceded the pandemic, it has dropped to 1,874,000 m² since. At the same time, immediate availability has never been so high, vacant office space having now surpassed the 5.6 million m² mark

(+40% in ten years) in an overall market that is considerable (55.5 million m²) but has only increased by 6% in ten years. Today, it would take 39 months on average to reabsorb the immediately available offices in Ile-de-France. Before Covid, this figure stood at less than 20 months.

If there are significant disparities between the various sectors in Ile-de-France (with vacancy rates that can exceed 25% in certain markets in the Paris suburbs), the competition for keeping renting companies and, even more importantly, for attracting new ones is getting tougher and tougher. The attractiveness of office buildings and, by a knock-on effect, the profitability of these assets have been eroded these upheavals.

FloRa* : Evolution in the absorption capacity of the lettings market offer (in months)

■ 2020 ■ 2021 ■ 2022 ■ 2023 ■ 2024



*: Flow Ratio (FloRa)

Source: Savills France

Investors therefore set about adapting to this new environment and ensuring that their buildings would appeal to users.

Very often, this involved a refurbishment phase, structured around three major pillars, which govern location choices (alongside centrality of location and the quality of its services):

- Hybridisation and flexibility of areas;
- Environmental performance and adherence to ESG;
- Site layout, focusing on people.

In spite of heavy investments, the ultimate objective was not always achieved. One statistic suffices as a convincing illustration: half of the surfaces delivered (through constructions or restructurings) in Ile-de-France in 2024 still haven't found lessees.

The fact is: the building must be appealing, beyond its location, facilities, layout and services proposed. There has to be a little something extra that can turn it into a place of life and fulfilment, a place of identification

and belonging. The building must succeed in bringing people together and become a perfect setting to house a community.

The Community Manager serves for just that and is thus beginning to draw the attention of owners, especially in the case of multi-let buildings

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OPEN EXCHANGE



Marc-Philippe Hamamciyan
Head of Asset Management
Commerz Real

Géraldine Ménard
Business Development Director
Property Management
Savills

Géraldine Ménard :

How did you discover Savills' Community & Services Management offer?

Marc-Philippe Hamamciyan : We have a property portfolio composed of very prestigious buildings, beautifully laid out and well provided in terms of services. The idea was to be able to have quality advice and support, with reflection pertinent to our case regarding services. So, five years ago, we issued a call for tenders for Property Management in order to have a rigorous management approach relating to services. Savills' proposal stood out as coming from a premium player in this segment. We particularly appreciated your approach, the quality of our exchanges and the bespoke structuring of the teams to manage our type of assets. The Community range of services that you presented to us struck us as the most credible, and that was what determined our choice. In fact, the proactive approach of your Community Management proposal, with its real intention to structure this service, is what made the difference compared with your competitors.

Géraldine Ménard :

What benefits does this outstanding proposal offer for your assets?

Marc-Philippe Hamamciyan : The Community proposal serves to establish

a connection with the lessees, creating much more than the basic lessor-lessee relationship. With a people-based approach, we seek to create a bond, an ecosystem encompassing the building and its services. Of course there has to be a coordinator, who could be the lessor or, in your case, Property Management via their Community Manager and service team, who will breathe life into the building... which requires organisation! To go into more detail, we should stipulate that a lot of things were structured conjointly. The selection of Savills was made at a time when we were in a period of transition where services are concerned.

Then came COVID, which shook up practices. We were able to adopt new providers for some services, and the choice of these providers was made in consultation, with constant reflection, with those who worked on fitting out the offices and made it possible to provide benchmarks. Savills played a key role in these reflections. You were able to tackle at once the organisational aspect on site, the structuring, the setting up and supporting of these new services and the animation on the premises. Since then we have felt a real improvement in the smooth operation of the services put in place on the site. On the ground, I make the distinction between buildings that have a sizeable playground in service terms and buildings where this is less the case. This is where Savills, depending on

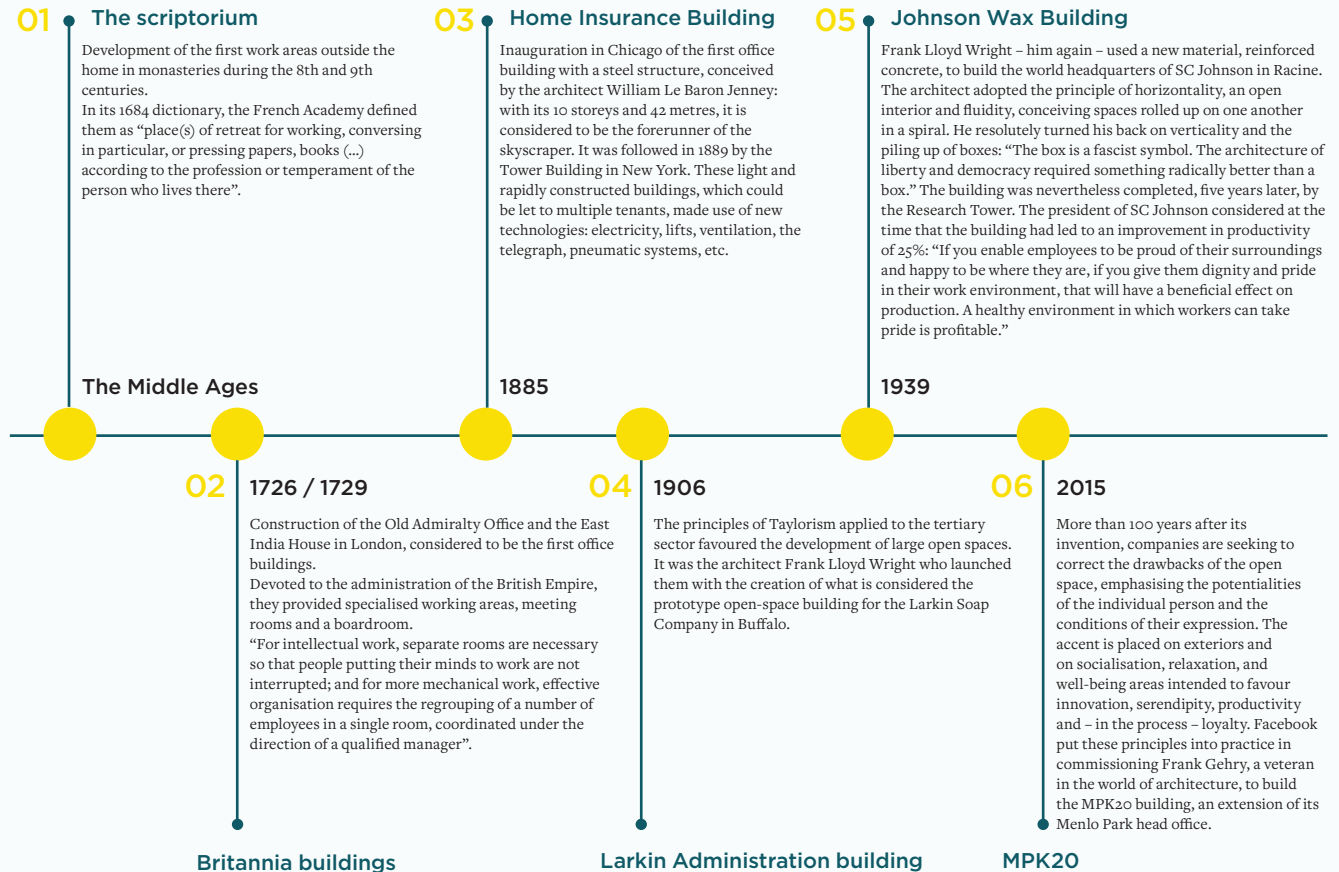
the configuration, also adopts a very different angle of attack. For a highly services-based building, Savills handles sequencing and coordination playing an organisational role. For buildings less services-oriented, Savills sets up animations, events that serve to pep up life on site. It is ultimately a highly adaptable service.

Géraldine Ménard :

To conclude, how would you sum up your Community service partnership?

Marc-Philippe Hamamciyan : The Community service brings real added value and it is also adapted to the type of building concerned. Owning buildings that acquire well serviced surfaces is a challenge, and this is a tool that needs to be developed, manipulated and managed. For the services part, there are synergies to set up and the possibility of rationalising organisation on site. This may cost more but enables dynamic management of the presence, and proximity with the building, its occupants and its needs, which also makes it possible to be more rationalised. In any case, this extra cost is not preponderant and operating cost ratios remain quite reasonable.

Office buildings time-line



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Employees confronted with their affiliations

In analysing the office market, one always talks of users and investors. Much more rarely about the employees, even though it is they who occupy and give life to these spaces. You, me, us, in all our diversity, antagonisms and shared aspirations: third and final volume of the trilogy, the one where the office has to learn to speak and respond to the employees of 2025.

And this is no light affair! You just need to converse with any senior executive or manager to understand that employees' attitudes with regard to work have changed and that their

aspirations are no longer those that prevailed 15 or 20 years ago. These changes form part of older and deeper evolutions that are modifying all social relationships.

On average, we work about 70,000 hours in a life of 700,000 hours (for men). In other words, we don't devote more than 10% of our existence to work. The proportion was 40% a century ago. Inexorably, work is losing importance in the structuring of society: the principal production of standards and values now emanates from time outside work (which, apart from childhood and retirement,

includes relaxation, studies, sports and leisure, holidays, voluntary undertakings, culture, etc.).

The increase in life expectancy produces a desire to try one's chance periodically and embark on new adventures, whether in an amorous, professional or geographical context. The time has come for individual empowerment and relegation of the major groupings of collective belonging that have prevailed for so long: the social class, the profession, the territory and even the nation. These include the company. The sociologist

Jean Viard compares the contemporary person to the poke-bowl, the mixed dish where everyone chooses their ingredients cut into cubes and mixes them together: “We are dealing with a construction of our own identity by drawing on very diverse reference base.” And he concludes with this interrogation: “We could ask ourselves how we make society.”

No doubt, that is now achieved via what Jean Viard calls the family-tribe: an entity of reference constructed by the individual that

is as friendly, affective and affinitive as it is biological. It is based on subjective bonds as beneficial as they are rational. One could also call it a community...

Only companies that manage to play on these various registers and thus come to resemble the employee’s “family-tribe” can hope to be convincing and generate identification, attachment, loyalty and hence personal investment. So there we have a means of providing fulfilment and advancement for the employee and efficiency and performance

for the company – a tool capable of restoring the honour of work. To accomplish this, you need to be capable of listening, decoding, synthesising and exchanging and then be able to convert the result into a number of coherent actions. Actions that are identifying, participative and inclusive, which might appear strange, trivial or gimmicky outside the company but which, because they correspond to the fundamental nature of these employees, will help to form a community and write a story. This is where the Community Manager comes in.

2/ Live my Life

In the shoes of a Community Manager

What is an office building Community Manager?

Community Manager... the job title is familiar but the reality and content of this profession remain obscure for many of us. In most cases, we only gain a remote understanding because we confine this profession to the world of the media and social networks, in the context of Web applications providing a networking service on line.

When we are talking about the Community Manager of an office building, this is too restricting: here, the social network is richer and more extensive. It refers to the set of connections between individual people and/or organisations, constituting a group that has a signification – in this case the company, colleagues, employees of other companies accommodated in the same building, service-providers responsible for the life of the building and/or company, etc.

The simplest way to define the Community Manager of an office building is perhaps to begin by saying what they are not. They are not the Community Manager for a brand, who animates the image and life of a company on the social media by retransmitting their messages, from the top down, by animating an editorial calendar, by defending the brand and by trying to limit the damage in the event of controversy or attack.

To clarify the distinction, perhaps we should refer to the person of interest to us here as an Office or Building Community Manager.

Our Community Manager, in contrast with that of a brand, remains in the shadow. Their function is more that of a strategist. First of all, they work (as Community Builder) on the construction of the community by developing a community strategy connected with the owner’s or the leasing company’s objectives and the employees’ aspirations.

Based on this listening and comprehension work, they will define standard profiles as well as the channels and the most appropriate types of action.

Responsible for the strategy as just defined, they are in charge of animating the community and increasing the level of commitment of the players in the life of the building. Their first objective is therefore to develop as many synergies and interactions as possible between community members and thus provide them with value.

The office is a little like a home: it is nothing without its inhabitants and the story they create together. The Community Manager is there to help with the construction of this story, getting as many people as possible involved and thus creating a fulfilling and beneficial environment. They turn the office into a place of life, the culmination of a long process initiated a long time ago by those who worked on the form, lay-out and equipping of this work space. It is thus they who give the office a meaning.

FACE-TO-FACE

with Florence Fifi Community & Service Manager with Savills France



What does a Community Manager offer in a building?

Our main objective is to propose services consistent with the needs of the building's lessees and bring people together around a common project. There are numerous themes (environment, well-being, social, sport...), which are always adapted to suit the nature of the occupants.

How do you manage to provide the best response to the lessees' expectations?

It is not just a question of proposing a catalogue of services. We are in regular contact with the Office Manager and organise the presence of staff on site to exchange with the employees. This enables us to assess everyone's feelings and desires. This observation phase is essential. In parallel, we also do a lot of sourcing work with service-providers so that we can always remain innovative and attractive.

Is it always easy to succeed in getting everyone on board for an activity?

Different lessees in the same building sometimes have diverging wishes but ultimately this is also a source to be tapped: the desire of one group can sometimes arouse the curiosity of others. It is also during this phase that the work on observation and exchange is essential.

If you had to sum up your day-to-day life in five words, which ones would you choose?

Observing, exchanging, coordinating innovating and federating.



Savills Team

We provide bespoke services for landowners, developpers, occupiers and investors across the lifecycle of residential, commercial or mixed-use projects. We add value by providing our clients with research-backed advice and consultancy through our market-leading global research team.

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