

# The 'How-To' of IFMA Area Measurement

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As the economy forces many companies to streamline their portfolios, plan for drastic downsizing or strategize a future upswing, understanding current industry planning tools is unprecedentedly critical. Two standards have now come together to speak a common language. Space planners, leasing agents and FMers need to understand the intricate application of these guidelines.

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## Let's first look at our audience

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Depending on your role in the industry, you will want to use a particular standard. The IFMA and BOMA guidelines are built from many perspectives to support a wide range of roles in the industry. These roles may range from a Corporate Tenant needing to track their portfolio for continual improved space utilization, to a speculative office complex developer readying their portfolio for marketing. In today's fluctuating business environment, you may hold one or several roles; which may include:

- Tenant seeking lease property  
A tenant will want to compare each lease opportunity equally. Understanding how much area will be available to optimally house their staff and functions. What is the best venue for comparison?
- Building Owner  
Building owners are seeking income on their investment. They have an incentive to properly market and compete within established industry metrics.
- Property Manager  
The cost efficiency of maintaining a property may be improved by accurately tracking the square footage of the facility(s). For example, identifying the accurate area of cleanable area will add value when renegotiating annual contracts.
- Facility Consultant  
The facility consultant will have varying requests from clients that demand preliminary 'due diligence' to appropriately articulate each client's need.

## Next, let's understand why Area Measurement Standards are so important

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BOMA<sup>1</sup> created its first Floor Area Measurement Standard in 1915<sup>2</sup> and it has continued to evolve. Close to a century of legal documents, trends, benchmarks, etc. are tied to this standard. It has helped the tenant to more effectively compare 'apples to apples', and allowed/encouraged the landlords to compete more 'fairly' for tenants.

IFMA<sup>3</sup> created its first Area Measurement Standard in 1995 and it also continues to evolve. Its original intent was not for the use of lease documents, but rather for planning, space management, and internal chargeback of space. Again, utilizing the IFMA standard allowed facility managers to compare and benchmark their 'area' with comparable 'area' in another corporation.

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<sup>1</sup> Building Owners and Managers Association

<sup>2</sup> Building Area Measurement, LLC <http://www.buildingareameasurement.com/boma.htm>

<sup>3</sup> International Facility Management Association

As a simple comparison or rule-of-thumb, BOMA is meant for the Landlord, and IFMA is meant for the Tenant. However, for these standards to co-exist in the industry and serve the industry *well*, they must be compatible:

- have clear definition of terms (i.e., one word/term cannot have a different meaning from one standard to the other),
- identified uniqueness (what makes each different),
- and a comprehensive description of application.

Fortunately, IFMA and BOMA have assured the industry compatibility of the standards. Through their recent drafting of the Unified Approach For Measuring Office Space<sup>4</sup>, the taxonomy [definition] for each common term was reviewed and confirmed. The current standards were reviewed and supported by ANSI<sup>5</sup> and ASTM<sup>6</sup> for conformity and integrity. This lengthy process allows both BOMA and IFMA future standards to speak a common language and communicate with confidence.

One of the most important reasons for recent standards collaboration is global software development within the industry. Software must be designed and built to respond to industry best-processes and practices. Until the industry is consistently measuring space, using distinct and defining terms, and identifying unique processes for varied outcomes, computer software will not reach its potential as a tool! This is not a local issue, but a global issue!

### **Next, let's understand the importance of the 'Standard' decision.**

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The risk involved in adhering to a standard lies primarily in the 'cost' of placing the polygons in the drawings. That risk is negligible compared to the value you will find in working with industry measured area. However, to minimize the financial 'hit', it is important to place the most minimal amount of polygons in your drawing and still accurately calculate the area.

An easy approach to understanding the application of Area Standards to a portfolio is to focus on the two fundamental methodologies of which you'll be working: measure and calculate.

#### **Measure:**

In the aforementioned recent publication by IFMA and BOMA, proposing a Unified Approach For Measuring Office Space, consideration was made toward the electronic format of which drawings are usually maintained. Most in the industry utilize a CAD program and it has become engrained to the user that a 'polygon'<sup>7</sup> is drawn around a space to provide the 'area'. Many, but fewer, in the industry use a CAFM program to maintain and manage the 'area' those polygons produce. Utilizing a CAFM system, a methodology for measuring space is hierarchical by nature. Placement of the 'polygon'

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<sup>4</sup> [A Unified Approach for Measuring Office Space](#) For Use in Facility and Property Management. Copyright 2007. Building Owners and Managers Association International and International Facility Management Association.

<sup>5</sup> ANSI | American National Standards Institute

<sup>6</sup> ASTM International | American Society for Testing and Materials

<sup>7</sup> 'Polyline' is a product specific name authored by AutoCAD for the term 'polygon'.

around a room's walls defines the level of hierarchy. A wall may encompass the wall, share the wall at the centerline, or exclude the wall. This understanding is the most critical factor of measuring space. Hence, executing this correctly *the first time* can save time and money! You may gain information on 'how' to measure space for both BOMA and IFMA guidelines in the following publication.



ISBN Number: IFMA ID 147254

**Product Description**

A Unified Approach for Measuring Office Space, For Use in Facility and Property Management" created by IFMA and BOMA. The report provides a new taxonomy classification system and procedures that will allow users to measure different categories of floor area in a building once and calculate the results using either the IFMA or BOMA area measurement standard. The report contains commentaries and detailed drawings to demonstrate the principal concepts.

**Calculate:**

Once you have measured the space properly, based on the standard you have 'adopted', you are ready to calculate your area. The process of calculating is taking the areas of the polygons received from the measurement process and placing them in your calculation. For example:

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Measured area of the term 'Interior Gross'} - 50,000 \text{ SF} \\ &\quad \text{Minus} \\ &\text{Measured area of the term 'Vertical Penetration'} - 3,000 \text{ SF} \\ &\quad \text{Equals} \\ &47,000 \text{ SF} - \text{Calculated area of the term 'Rentable Area'}. \end{aligned}$$

It is important to note that you may not need to 'measure' the space if you do not need it for your calculation. For example, the biggest difference between BOMA and IFMA standards is the notion of Plannable Area. If you are utilizing IFMA Measurement Standards and seek to calculate Plannable and do not have a need for Rentable Area, you need only measure the Plannable Gross space and not the Interior Gross space.

## You'll become proficient!

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Give yourself time, you'll become proficient at measuring space, calculating area, and communicating the concepts to your team. First, understand who you are as a user, what you're trying to accomplish, and measure and calculate with confidence!

Using a consistent approach to area measurement will elevate your standing in your organization and will ensure that sharing this critical information within your organization will produce reusable, reliable, consistent and defensible results.

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