

# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

## Building an Intelligent Workplace



Today, smart buildings are becoming more dynamic and tailored to individual requirements, specifically within the office space. The ability to work remotely from just about anywhere has put pressure on building owners to provide a desirable environment and service. With the traditional set up no longer enough, the workspace is enduring dramatic changes and altering the nature of work and what we once knew as 'the office'. And with Gartner predicting that the greatest source of competitive advantage for 30% of organisations over the next few years will be their ability to creatively exploit the digital workplace, the pressure is on for businesses and building owners alike to invest their time and resources into the latest technologies.

### Employee Expectations

Office expectations are changing. We are now seeing an increasing number of employees working outside of the office and customising their workspace to meet their needs. Current research reveals that millennials would be willing to take a pay cut to work in a nicer office, likewise would also consider quitting over the fact that their workplace is either outdated or inefficient. In light of this, it is increasingly important for employers to keep up with the rapidly changing demand of employees in order to stay competitive when attracting and retaining talent.

The office is now expected to be a work-life experience; and keeping up with the digital culture plays a large part in this change, as does flexibility in terms of workflow and the physical space. Designed to foster creativity and create a healthier work environment, workspaces are now becoming more 'aware' through an ecosystem that allows buildings to dynamically adjust to the requirements of users who are both temporary and permanent, through the convergence of IT and Operational Technology (OT) such as building management systems, energy and space management. There is an expectation in place, and if existing or new companies don't adapt, then they will fall behind.

### Collaboration and Productivity

With 87% of employees worldwide still not engaged, and a lack of motivation and productivity proven to be linked to the office setting, companies need to rethink the role and purpose of the office and focus on providing a combination of streamlined communication and social collaboration.

Smart office design is blurring the lines between the traditional formal-informal setup, with more ad-hoc social spaces and areas designated specifically for socials or team building. Many companies are leading the way, revolutionising the way that offices function with shared office facilities and hot desks on a part-time or multi-lease basis. With desk layouts developed by algorithms instead of designers and spaces that can adapt to employees' priorities and needs, companies are responding to the demand for mobility and flexible consumption in the modern digital workspace. By configuring open and closed spaces through noise-absorbing fabrics and glass doors, buildings are providing the privacy that comes from individual offices within an open plan setup, meaning that staff no longer need to be confined by physical walls.

Real-time collaboration has also become an extremely essential technology for offices, and it is IoT that defines it; fixed, portable and wearable devices are integrated into the design and interact with each other through a cloud-based network. Examples of this include fixed AV screens which can be controlled through a users phone, wafer-thin sensors that can detect occupancy, and indoor wayfinding platforms that help employees navigate office floor plans via smartphone. The scalable and robust solutions that IoT offers can enhance business efficiency, and most importantly, employee productivity.



## Sustainability

With sustainability the hot-button topic, businesses are constantly working to meet the demands of a growing ecologically conscious marketplace. And with 72% of office workers revealing that a sustainable environment is important to them, embracing this move has become a competitive necessity. Through clever environmental design which optimises space, consumption and resources, smart offices can reduce the overall environmental impact and save money and resources along the way. From autonomous energy systems that shut off heating and lighting when rooms are vacant to systems that monitor and optimise the use of water and electricity, these offices can identify their most wasteful aspects and also lessen the pressure on the national grid. For new companies, integrating green from the beginning is the way to go, and for existing buildings, embedding strategic energy management as part of the business strategy will drive strategic business advantage as well as attract new employees, clients and business partners.

## Making the Business Case

Smart buildings in themselves are a new revenue stream. But the cost of IoT implementation is frequently perceived as a barrier to its adoption and development, despite the cost-benefit analysis in the majority of cases presenting significant financial savings. Many smart offices are built from the ground, so existing workplaces need to be retrofitted. And although there is an upfront investment or cost to retrofit an existing building, once installed, additions such as optimised lighting make running these spaces much more cost-effective to the building owner. As a result, offering lower fees to the customer for an enhanced experience will be able to make the offer even more appealing.

## Conclusion

People are the largest investment of an organisation, and as new technologies evolve to make their lives easier, safer and more comfortable it is important to look at which technologies will create the biggest impact to your office. The efficient, ease of use and cost-effective nature of what defines a smart office is what will drive both its growth and normality in the workspace. IoT is forcing its way into our business lives, and rather than waiting for the fad to pass by, it is imperative that companies keep up with the trend and innovate their working space, or they will risk falling behind.

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