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Work&Place

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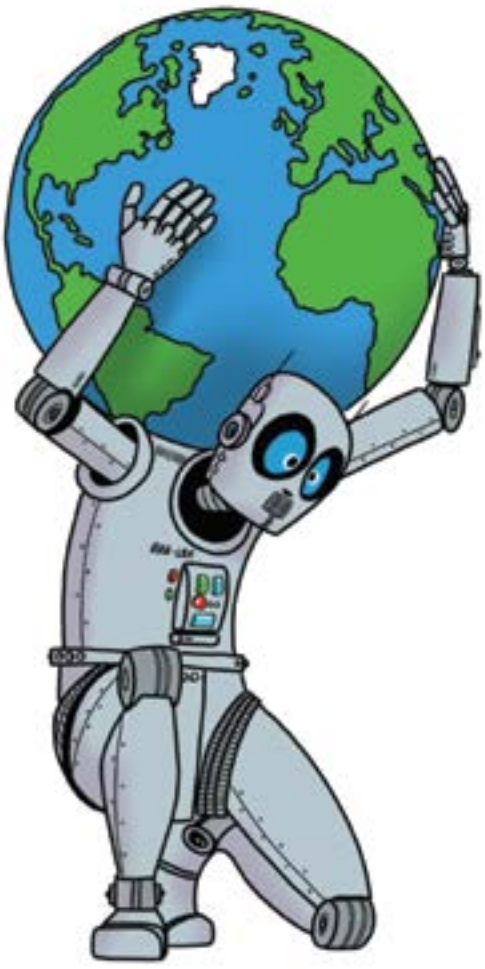

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Work&Place

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Work&Place is a global learning and development organisation serving professionals with an interest in the intersection of work with digital, cultural, and physical space. Since 2012, it has engaged the world's most progressive workplace thinkers to explore cutting-edge ideas about the ever-changing and transdisciplinary nature of work and place.

For further information please refer to www.workandplace.com.

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Editorial

Welcome to **Work&Place** 2.0! Of course, this is actually our 10th issue, but it is the first to appear on our new website. www.workandplace.com. Presumably, you have already visited the site to access this issue, but please explore the site more broadly. We now provide **Work&Place** subscribers access not only to all our previous issues, but also to downloadable copies of every individual article.

And that's not all. The site is searchable using key words, so, for example, as a subscriber you can find every article that is tagged "facilities management" or "workplace experience," or any other term you want to explore. We've also imported all the blog posts from our previous Occupiers Journal site, and are now beginning to create new, more current posts as well.

In the near future you will also be able to find and access short audio and video interviews with many of our authors as they reflect on their ideas and insights. As we say on the home page, "**Work&Place is the first journal for people like you [who live] at the intersection of work, real estate, and management.**"

We urge you to become an active participant in our growing global community.

And the best way to begin that participation is to dive into this issue, which is filled with exactly the kinds of cross-boundary articles that we love. Start with **Kay Sargent's** thoughtful analysis of how workforce demographics impact workplace design. Then move on to **Bruce Barclay's** call for a multi-functional 'organizational ecosystem" that brings the knowledge and skills of HR and IT together with FM to create a highly adaptable workplace environment. There is no better example of a critical organisational intersection.

Add to that foundational perspective **Alan Williams'** focus on the power of branding internal workplace services with the same passion and care that companies devote to product brands. Then dip into the power of maker spaces and "fablabs" as continual learning environments as described **by Stefano Anfossi and Fabrizio Pirandrei**.

Be sure not to miss **Susan Stucky's** powerful essay on the importance of conversation and collaboration in the conduct of work, made all the more critical as we increasingly interact with "chatbots" in our conversations. Talking with computers is becoming almost as common – and as important – as talking with colleagues.

And then move on to reading Professor **Terri Griffith's** review of the newest book produced by the London-based FutureWork Forum, *Conquering Digital Overload*: *Leadership Strategies That Build Engaging Work Cultures*. The book is an impressive multi-author look at the stresses and tensions that our near-total dependence on technology creates, both at work and in our broader lives.

And for a closer look at those tensions, don't put the journal down until you've read **Peter Thomson's** take on "Why are we all stressed out?" Thomson was the lead author of ***Conquering Digital Overload***, but his article is not just an excerpt from the book; rather, it describes his summary perspectives about digital overload following the completion of the book project.

We want you to engage with these ideas and spend some time sorting through their implications for your own work. But don't stop there. Engage with us too; use the website to extend the conversation, raise new questions, and tell us what you want to read about, and hear about, in future issues. We view **Work&Place** not as a dusty library, but as a continuing and lively global conversation.

Enjoy!

Jim Ware
Managing Editor


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Today many of our conversations at work involve speaking directly with computers, yet we don't understand the social components of work well enough to leverage the power of the new technologies

Susan U. Stucky

CONVERSATION • WORK • CHATBOTS • AUGMENTATION

Bots and the (work) place

Getting work done takes a lot of interaction – coordination, cooperation, collaboration – not just between and among people but between and among people and aspects of their built environment. That interaction can be between a person and "the cloud" mining bitcoins, or people standing around whiteboards trying to figure something out. It can be talking over a cup of coffee or tea in the kitchen or holing up to get some heads-down work done.

As we are learning in customer service interactions, it can also be a conversation with a chatbot[i] – a bot being a just a chunk of software that, when it is invoked, people imbue with agency. We respond to the automated voice that asks us for our telephone number for identification purposes and additional software continues to do the identification.

It is worth pointing out that the built environment includes digital technology, though sometimes we seem to forget that and relegate it to the realm of the virtual as if it didn't exist. But digital technology does exist. Recently, news headlines about the staggering amounts of electricity used by servers in bitcoin mining have served to remind us of the physicality of the digital.[ii] As with the introduction of any technology, digital technology has brought with it new forms of social interaction, the rise of more conversational modes and, hence, new ways of getting work done.

"It is worth pointing out that the built environment includes digital technology, though sometimes we seem to forget that and relegate it to the realm of the virtual as if it didn't exist."

There is a range of digital technologies finding their way into the places people go to get work done. Ambient technology that suddenly becomes relevant, for example the thermostat on the wall.

What happens when the whole room starts talking to the thermostat ("Hey, listen to us, turn the temperature down!")? What happens when the thermostat starts talking back ("Hey, I already did!")? Then there are those data centers in Iceland and server farms powered by hydroelectric generators on the Columbia River that run between Oregon and Washington state.

The "place" in which that technology resides has less to do with getting work done (unless, for example, you are in charge of configuring the server farm or involved in maintaining the cabling that runs to it). Rather, human conversation with digital entities has something of the here and now to it. It has presence.

An IBM TV ad shows a conversation with IBM's Watson as face-to-face with a finance executive.[iii] While this advertisement signals several different things to the viewer, one is that Watson is present right there, right then, together with the executive, and they are in conversation. (The executive's work? In this case, part of making a decision about a vendor, one presumes.)

People can learn a lot through conversation. Conversation is often where decisions are made. It is a place where knowledge is constructed, where things are understood. Conversation, that very special form of human interaction, has always been key to getting work done. It is surprising that we continue to assume that certain kinds of work do not involve conversation, such as writing a computer program or writing a book. Yes, there is heads-down work involved, sometimes quite a lot of it, but neither the program nor the book will get written. The work will not get done without conversation with other people.

In point of fact, the design of the (work) place has always been interwoven with the "sociality" of getting work done: meeting spaces, white boards, hallways for mingling and serendipitous encounters. Places for teams to meet provide persistent context available as shareable context when the team occupies it for weeks or months. Instant messaging, a digital technology instrumental in getting work done, facilitates conversational interaction as well. AI (Artificial Intelligence) now makes it possible for people to work together with digital entities. The participation of digital entities in people getting work done is here, whether we or the places we choose to get work done in are prepared for them or not.

> **"Conversation, that very special form of human interaction, has always been key to getting work done."**

Conversation is a lovely thing when it goes well, but it is full of missteps and misunderstandings even among humans. We seek clarification, we make repairs. Why should we not expect the same to happen with our digital conversation partners?

Conversation is a very local phenomenon. It only works well when there is shared, or some might say, sharable context. It can take a while to realize that the help desk you have reached is being serviced not by the company you bought your computer from, but by some other company, or by a consultant hired by a third company, and to discover that no one in the service network has imagined the problem you are having. What are the chances of getting the problem solved then?

Problems of reference abound too. It can take a while to agree exactly which particular laptop, or is it a tablet, is being talked about. Good luck if you should give the wrong serial number because the tag is too faint and scuffed up to read any longer. Or if you rely on memory as to which operating system is actually running. An endless loop can ensue. We should expect to be able to clarify things with our digital conversation partners. We should expect the digital entities to act in accordance with human expectations.

This article makes two points:

1. It behooves designers of the built environment to make use of what is known and understood about conversational interaction in the context of getting work done. At least to know that there are whole domains of expertise – computer dialogue systems and conversation analysis to name but two -- that are relevant to the design of the built environment and to seek them out.
2. It will be essential for designers to be clear both about the context of the digital entity they are conversing with and the content of those conversations – what the entities are talking about. This is a big ask since traditionally it has not been a requirement of system building. Apps as presently designed, for instance, do not have requirements about the contexts they will be used in. Yet their successful use relies on a particular, specific context.

Though people, both professionals (media included) and the public, talk about (and hype or disparage) AI in general, these new kinds of interaction up the ante on design. Designers will need to remember that digital entities, just like humans, operate in the particular.

Conversation and getting work done

Suddenly, it seems, we are in a world of bots. Chatbots, web robots or WWWbots, chatterbots, IM bots, persona-bots, and then there is Alicebot, the Artificial Linguistic Internet Computer Entity. "She" has been around since the 90's helping make chatterbot interactions better and better. There are also "bad" bots, such as those in a bot net that infects your computer. (While the difference between the good bots and the bad bots is, in some way, in the eye of the beholder, malware is not the subject of this article, as pressing as that phenomenon is).

Before we called bits of software that we interacted with 'bots' they were already evident. We know them as triggering replies to messages when someone is out of office, asking for information. Recommendation engines, as they are known, recommend books that others bought when they bought the one you did. (One colleague jokingly complained when a recommendation engine was first used by Amazon, that he had to convince a friend that they didn't need to buy all of the recommended books). While they are easier to ignore than someone in a human conversation, they are not that easy to ignore altogether, playing as they do, with social norms generally associated with human conversation.

Now, the likes of chatbots, chatterbots, and Instant Messaging (IM) have made bots both more present and more conversational. They "demand" a response. We are used to giving responses, and so we do, even as we wish the pop-up window wouldn't pop-up. Remember "Clippy" the Microsoft Word assistant of the late 90's and early 2000's? Perhaps it wasn't conversational enough.

To start with, conversation plays a significant role in getting work done, bots or no bots. It's a fact that seems to get overlooked in our insistence on only seeing and measuring what individual people do at work, what skills they each have. Time on task seldom takes into account actual human conversation. In fact, talk with others is sometimes considered (by both management and business process models) as time not on task, even though conversation is essential to getting work done efficiently and effectively.

Computer programming, for example, is often thought of as individual work done by an individual person that can be done any place, anytime. But that perspective cuts out a lot of what a programmer actually does at work. A recent piece in the NYT (*New York Times*) illustrates how conversation is part of getting work done. The story, recounted "as told" by Samara Trilling to Kevin Roose (a business editor at the NYT) who works at

Sidewalk Labs, which makes and uses technology to improve "the way cities work."

"Most days, I wake up in the morning, take the subway to work, grab coffee or tea in our work kitchen and start having a conversation with a colleague about some problem we're working on…I sit at a table with 12 other people…writing things called methods or functions that solve really small problems…we do a lot of pair programming – that's when you have one person typing code and one person looking over their shoulder. It means that if I have a question, I can ask my co-worker immediately.

Engineers need long, unstructured blocks of time to work without interruption…[Note that being able to ask a question of a co-worker apparently does not count as an interruption.] Code reviews are another big part of my day. After I've written a piece of code that I'm happy with, I submit something called a "pull request" and all my colleagues can see it…We have "retro" meetings very week…Two or three times a week we have 'stand-up' meetings…another big part of my day is communicating with non-engineers. You have to decide what to build with other people. When you have the knowledge of how computers work, one important job is explaining that to other people."

That hardly looks like working alone, notwithstanding heads-down time. Ms. Trilling reports talking with other people, sometimes virtually, sometimes face-to-face. If you are looking at how work gets done "in the wild" then the sociality of work is inescapable.6 And conversation, whether in meetings, the kitchen, at the twelve-person table, even while programming, is a big part of it. And now we talk with and to digital entities of all kinds.

What impact does the sociality of getting work done imply about our physical work spaces? And when that sociality includes digital entities, what does that imply about the places we work?

We have always wanted to talk to our digital entities

People have wanted to figure out how to talk to digital computers from the very beginning. There is the fabled ELIZA, a computer program that was designed to emulate a Rogerian psychotherapist back in the mid-60's. Now we have Alexis, Cortana and Siri, so-called smart assistants, sometimes called AI's (artificial intelligences) and now "smart" digital home assistants, Google Home and Amazon Echo.

"For a long time, we have analyzed how work gets done only by looking at what individuals do. This focus misses the sociality of getting work done."

At the present time two conversational models predominate in this space: rule-based bots that follow scripts and AI-based bots that aim for more flexible, more natural, interaction. Both models now use either text or voice. Conversational interfaces are getting better; who hasn't wondered whether they were texting with a chatbot or a real person at one time or another?

"Time on task seldom takes into account actual human conversation. In fact, talk with others is sometimes considered (by both management and business process models) as time not on task, even though conversation is essential to getting work done efficiently and effectively."

To date, mainstream uses of conversation with bots have been mostly about gathering information or answering questions, (e.g., surveys of one type or another, or customer support) both things people do when they are in conversation with each other.

There is another use for conversation that is just now making it into the mainstream, and that is conversation in the context of getting work done. Think about medical diagnosis being done through Q&A by IBM's Watson Care Manager with medical professionals.[v] Or DF 2020's Chatbot Author,[vi] which is used to construct real-time conversational interaction among medical personnel and chatbot-enabled procedures.

We have always wanted our digital technology to make getting work done easier

Just as people have always wanted to talk to digital computers, people have always wanted digital technology to make getting work done easier. Automating processes, whether in manufacturing[vii] or finance has moved along pretty steadily over the past 60 years.

In manufacturing, digital control of machines helped increase accuracy and decreased injuries of humans while increasing productivity. Automation in finance has likewise increased accuracy and decreased the drudgery of data entry while increasing productivity. At the very same time digital automation got off the ground, a second point of view emerged: viewing digital technology as assisting or augmenting human work.[viii]

These two views, **automating** work, as exemplified by digital spreadsheets and mortgage qualification and **augmenting** work as exemplified by the computer mouse and automated braking systems, have existed uneasily side-by-side all these years,[ix] although recently, with the rising awareness of job loss, the concept of augmenting or assisting human work has again received attention.

During that same 60 years, another shift has been taking place – the appreciation of knowledge work as a distinct kind of work, and its rise as a dominant form of work. Peter Drucker is credited with creating the term 'knowledge worker' in 1959, noting the difference between working with physical materials and working with information.[x]

> **"When was the last time you saw "ability to have and lead productive conversation" as a skill in a job description?"**

To the extent that we view all things digital as information-based, it would seem that all work is headed toward being knowledge work, at least in part. This isn't the place to pull in all the philosophical debates about what knowledge is and how it is acquired or used. However, it is clear that the sociality of knowledge is exposed through interaction, and conversational interaction in particular.

Conversation turns out to be an exquisitely structured human activity. A recent book by N.J. Enfield, *How We Talk: The Inner Workings of Conversation, makes this abundantly clear.*[xi]

Take the timing of taking turns in who is speaking. English speakers can initiate a turn, can respond to someone else, in a quarter of a second. A half second seems long; it makes the respondent seem to be hesitating. Danish speakers typically respond in a half a second, not a quarter second, resulting in the perception of Danes speaking Danish by English speakers as slower. That's only 250 milliseconds longer, the point being that 250 milliseconds, just a quarter second, is enough time to engender that reaction in English speakers. The timing of digital entities' responses may well be something that needs to be paid attention to, if it isn't already.

It is important to note that the findings that Enfield reports are about naturally occurring language, not language "in the lab." For much of the last 60 years the study of naturally occurring language was deemed off limits by Chomskian followers. Noam Chomsky, the 20th-century linguistics czar in the United States, declared early on that actual language use wasn't going to get us anywhere in understanding the cognitive basis of language.

However, not everyone, socio-linguists in particular, stayed away from naturally occurring language. They contributed to the field of Discourse Analysis, drawing insight as well from the Philosophy of Language. Methods of Conversation Analysis, originating in ethnomethodology in Sociology, have greatly informed how to study human conversation.

> **"It's time to address what it will mean to work with digital entities that actively participate in getting work done. We should take a cue from how we humans understand each other: co-constructing sharable context and sharable content as we go along."**

Of special relevance to the topic of this article is the work on discourse in Artificial Intelligence, in particular the more recent work on collaboration with digital entities (e.g., robots). Each of these fields has something to offer the design of conversational interaction with digital entities in the workplace. Technical developments in AI and Computer Science have made analysis of large naturally occurring data sets much more feasible and can now be used to understand the interaction of human and digital entities when they work together to get work done.

For a long time, we have analyzed how work gets done only by looking at what individuals do. This focus misses the sociality of getting work done. For instance, a study "in the wild" around the quality function in a manufacturing company revealed in one facility that it was not the six or seven people technically responsible, but rather about twenty-four all told.

In another investigation, (in the context of the failure on the ground of an automated costing application for outsourcing), it was discovered that the people doing costing had kept on using spreadsheets (and not the new automated tool that did not support spreadsheets). The spreadsheets had been *jointly* created over time among the costers themselves (Note "jointly constructed"). One individual had fifty-seven (!) spreadsheets open at a time, doing "what ifs" for the customer. That's not so many, someone once responded. He had found seventy!

Work Practice Analysis, another approach to figuring out how work is getting done "in the wild" reveals the sociality of getting work done: more people, and more tools and techniques, are involved than anyone (people doing the work, management or even management consultants) is aware of.

That's partly because, as the philosopher Michael Polanyi is often quoted in explaining tacit knowledge, "We know more than we can tell." And, the author of this paper would assert, because the sociality of getting work done is simply not acknowledged by organizations. It is not even seen, much less acknowledged.

Conversation doesn't appear in workflow automation, business processes, or task descriptions. When road workers are standing in a group talking by the side of the road, an immediate reaction is often along the lines of "Why aren't they working?" When was the last time you saw "ability to have and lead

productive conversation" as a skill in a job description? To be sure, soft skills are becoming recognized as important.

Yet conversations have been key to getting work done all along.

Yet, even though there are methods for making the sociality of work visible, too often technology and space designers do not or, more likely, cannot, avail themselves of these methods of inquiry. It is said that they take too long and cost too much. Now that technology is going "wild" that may be even less tenable than it was before.

What about conversing with digital entities to get work done and (work) place?

At first glance, it may seem there is nothing to think about. As long as the digital entity or entities you are conversing with are there with you, or immediately available "virtually" and as long as there is a safe, secure place for them somewhere, what is the problem? The thing is, it isn't the *place* where the digital technology is that matters, it is the context of its use.

The financial executive in that IBM Watson ad isn't sitting in an airline club. And that screen Watson is visible on didn't walk there by itself. Suppose the executive was in a hurry and had a laptop on in his hotel room and just clicked on a link to watch while he shaved. Probably not as productive a conversation, one guesses. This isn't any different from an ordinary conversation where both parties are present.

Chatbots have some of the qualities of human conversation, but quickly become useless as the context of use isn't shared. Using Google Assistant to talk to a Nest Learning Thermostat is possible now, but its effectiveness is dependent on the context of use – the particular speaker talking with the Assistant and the Nest sensors being in a certain particular location. Co-constructing the context of use through conversation will be key to human participation with digital entities. What co-location does is help establish the shared context of use. Are we in the hallway or in the boardroom?

The answer to the question posed at the beginning is framed here as a hypothesis: to the extent that the context of use for conversations between and among humans and digital entities is shared, or at least sharable, the greater the likelihood of productive conversation.

Conclusion

Is the emergence of conversation with digital entities the inexorable playing out of the trajectory we have been on -- increasing automation and assisting humans -- or is something new happening? The answer is Yes. The entry of digital entities into the workforce *is* something new. It's time to open the aperture, to move beyond individual behavior and individual performance to look at the inherent sociality of creating knowledge and getting work done.

It's time to stop thinking that human behavior can be fully understood without understanding the sociality of humankind, the various forms of social interaction and configuration that constitute society. It's time to address what it will mean to work with digital entities that actively participate in getting work done. We should take a cue from how we humans understand each other: co-constructing sharable context and sharable content as we go along.

Finally, as conversational interaction with digital entities moves out of the lab, and out of university research, it is foolish not to take advantage of the rich understanding of human conversational interaction. Without it, conversation with digital entities will be far less productive, even wasteful of human productivity. **W&P**

References

[i] A bot is a chunk of software that people regard as an agent. Some bots do our bidding; they act on our behalf, as in a computer game. Other bots are automated (by whom is sometimes not known), as with automated tweets.

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Susan U. Stucky

Work and Learning are at the heart of Susan Stucky's professional career. Since retiring from ten years with IBM Research first as a consultant and then employee, she has continued her focus on work in digital transformation and the design of work marketplaces. She led pioneering work on space design for knowledge work and informal learning on the job. Her insistence on how people work and learn is based on how these activities actually unfold in the real world. That approach, she claims, provides a much better foundation for change, whether it is in the context of the current push for digital transformation or in addressing the challenges and opportunities of the changing nature of work and learning.

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Successful workplace change initiatives rarely begin with conversations about the workspace; engaging stakeholders early-on regarding their needs is far more likely to produce positive outcomes

James Pinder, Ian Ellison & Sinead O'Toole

ENGAGEMENT • WORKPLACE CHANGE • LEADERSHIP

Early stakeholder engagement in workplace projects: a toolkit approach to inclusive design

> **...engage with the world as expert citizens, working with others, the citizen experts, on equal terms.**
>
> -Awan, Schneider and Till, Spatial Agency (2013, p.32) [1]

You have probably heard the now-famous claim, originating from a number of mutually-reinforcing *Harvard Business Review* articles in the 1990s, that "*70% of all organizational change initiatives fail*". The claim has actually been shown to be unfounded [ii]. However, whilst the rate of failure in projects might have been exaggerated, what we do know is that many projects don't go as well as they could or should.

Over the years scholars and practitioners have spent a significant amount of time trying to understand why projects fail or under-deliver. Although every project is different, time after time recurring issues have been found to negatively impact on project performance across a range of sectors. In a 2015 paper on why projects fail [iii], three eminent academics at Cranfield School of Management summarised these issues under four main headings:

1. Unclear objectives, definition or scope;
2. Inappropriate/inadequate project teams and leadership;
3. Poor project planning and controls; and
4. A lack of stakeholder communication and consultation.

If you've been involved in a workplace project – by which we mean a project that involves changing someone's working environment – you'll probably recognise some or all of these issues. Perhaps you fell afoul of them, or perhaps you dealt with them successfully. It's also not difficult to see how these issues can affect one another. For instance, if you don't have the right project team in place, how likely is it that the project will be scoped, planned, or managed effectively?

Acknowledging these interrelationships, our primary focus in this article is on the first and fourth points listed above. From our experience these factors are where workplace projects tend to go wrong, because everyone's effort is focused on *delivering* the project, rather than *understanding* its purpose and impact.

For reasons we'll explain below, client organisations can find these issues particularly challenging. The end result is that even if a project is competently managed – with respect to time, cost, and quality – organisations *still* regularly end up with the wrong workplace solutions for their specific needs and/or a lack of buy-in from their employees.

Beyond imagined user needs

For many organisations, workplace projects have traditionally been more about workspace – about building fabric, architecture, interior design, décor and/or furniture – and less about the people working in them. Think about this the next time you see those glossy promotional images of newly completed workspaces without any people in them. An industry has grown up to help clients deliver new workspaces. However, what is – on the face of it – a positive development has created its own problems.

One such problem is that discussions about new workplaces tend to be dominated by the *suppliers* and *providers* of workspace – property professionals, facilities managers, architects and designers – rather than the ultimate *users* (a term, incidentally, that has different connotations in different contexts) of those spaces. The lack of a user voice in the decision-making process means that the views and needs of actual users often become replaced by those of 'imagined users' [iv].

To put it another way, it is often easier to make assumptions about users' needs, behaviours, and attitudes, than actually to

go to the effort of finding out about them. However, the 'easier' approach is also usually far more dangerous.

The lack of a user voice in workplace projects is also symptomatic of the way decisions tend to be made in projects and organisations more generally. It is common for decisions in workplace projects to be decided by a small group of 'experts' (including senior leaders who may certainly command authority but do not necessarily have workplace expertise) and then announced to the broader community of stakeholders.

The group are then left defending their decisions from criticism by stakeholders. This 'decide, announce, defend' (DAD) approach[v] often leaves people feeling 'done to' and therefore dissatisfied. In this way, the *process* of changing a workplace can have a significant and negative bearing on how people perceive the workplace *product*.

Whilst it might not immediately seem so, a DAD approach is also time-consuming and tends to result in inappropriate solutions. These in turn can result in further downstream costs associated with rework and disruption. These costs can often occur long after a project's snagging list has been signed off, meaning they are absorbed into operational budgets, never reported, or overlooked.

Dangerous desire paths

The very real risk is that a project can successfully deliver the wrong workplace outcomes. Under a DAD approach, consultation can often be about the wrong things and ultimately become viewed as trivialised, insincere, and valueless by users who perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of predetermined solutions and imposed decisions.

> **"The very real risk is that a project can successfully deliver the wrong workplace outcomes."**

If this isn't starting to leave you with an uneasy feeling already, the *lived* reality of poorly researched and executed workplace projects is that the users will make things work to suit themselves – because people *always* find ways to make things work – irrespective of the design intent and idealised protocols.

There's a great analogy to show how we will always adapt workspaces to suit our needs, irrespective of how they were intended to work. They're called 'desire paths'[vi] (or desire lines) – those well-worn shortcuts across corners of lawns, through flowerbeds and so on, for instance linking car parks more quickly to nearby pavements. They're there because the people responsible for the area's design didn't work hard enough to understand peoples' behaviours and needs – perhaps committing to decisions too early in the process.

The other unfortunate outcome is that, because engaging with users can be seen as difficult work to do, client organisations regularly outsource workplace change in its entirety, often on a project-by-project basis. The all-too-familiar upshot is that any opportunity for organisational learning gets switched off, as the 'experts' come and go, only focussed – and understandably so – on the project within their remit.

Our own research in this area highlights how this process can affect the efficiency and effectiveness of project delivery, the quality of the workplace, and the experience of stakeholders. It is a classic situation, and with the catalogue of pitfalls laid out like this, you'd swear it wouldn't happen on your watch. And yet it does. The same problems occur over and over again.

An alternative approach

More recently, some more enlightened organisations have recognised the importance of viewing workplace projects as organisational change initiatives – rather than just capital projects – and the benefits of actively involving users in decisions about their workplace[vii].

Whilst work*spaces* should never be viewed as solutions for cultural issues, work*places* are most definitely becoming recognised as catalysts to help address them. Indeed, in his recent book, *The Elemental Workplace*[viii], Neil Usher encourages us to think in terms of adaptation to rather than adoption of workplace changes, the cultural ripples from which begin long before any tangible physical works take place and persist long after.

With this in mind, an alternative to the DAD approach can be described as 'engage, deliberate, decide' (EDD)[ix]. Under this approach, there is value in the early engagement of people who might otherwise be considered 'inexpert others', alongside – and very much complementary to – the work of the recognised workplace 'experts'.

This is not to advocate that workplace change initiatives become designed by committee. But it does highlight the value of stakeholder engagement so that – echoing the sentiments of professor Peter Jamieson from the University of Melbourne[x] – there is shared expertise around the project table, drawing respectfully on the knowledge of all participants.

In this way user engagement can become fundamental to successful workplaces, not only in terms of informing the final design but also by improving peoples' readiness for change. Perhaps the most bemusing thing is that the cost of engaging with users like this is trivial compared to the budgeted costs of designing and constructing new workplaces, not to mention the typically unbudgeted (and often hidden, yet significant) costs of the remedial works that attempt to redress problems further down the line.

But perhaps cost isn't the real issue here: as John Hunt from the London Business School is reported to have said, "*the hard things are easy; the soft things are hard; the soft things are the most important*".

Unlocking early engagement

Last summer, Sheffield Hallam University's (SHU) Facilities Directorate (FD) worked with UK-based workplace performance specialists 3edges[xi] to improve engagement in workplace and

learning environment projects at the University.

SHU have always had a reputation in the higher education sector for having a progressive approach to the provision of learning and office environments. The fact that they were the first higher education institution (HEI) to achieve the Leesman+ certification[xii] for their refurbished Bryan Nicholson building is testament to their drive to deliver great workplaces[xiii].

> **"The cost of engaging with users like this is trivial compared to the budgeted costs of designing and constructing new workplaces."**

But SHU knew as well as any HEI that academia is perhaps the toughest of all cultural nuts to crack when it comes to workplace change. Progressive learning practice does not necessarily translate directly to progressive workplace design.

Under a new Vice Chancellor, SHU's revised strategic vision clearly emphasised the value of its "*place at the heart of the city and the region*" to underpin its local, regional and global aspirations to provide "*an outstanding environment in which to study, research and work*"[xiv]. Consequently, the SHU executive and FD jointly acknowledged the need to revisit their campus masterplan. Whilst this effort would provide a roadmap for their ambitious investment and redevelopment activities, they still needed to ensure that each individual workplace element would be regarded as an enduring success.

Thus, we undertook a collaborative, emergent project that involved taking stock of the learning from past capital projects and then creating a 'toolkit' to enable the successful development of new learning environments and workplaces. We knew that the solution had to be scalable for different-sized projects, from the smallest refurbishment to the biggest new build. We also knew it had to respect the diverse, often vocal, stakeholder voices inherent in academic cultures, and adhere to the principles of effective engagement by being non-threatening, meaningful, stimulating, tolerant, inclusive, timely, succinct, and reciprocal.

The taking-stock exercise revealed that despite FD's strong track record of delivering *projects*, a range of engagement-related issues persisted that negatively affected the outcomes of those projects. These issues included: procedures and funding cycles limiting the scope for engagement; people feeling 'done to'; inconsistent engagement practice; engagement about the wrong things; patchy student engagement; and knowledge blind-spots.

It is important to recognise that these issues persisted *despite* the clear pride and desire by FD to do great work in a politically, culturally, and procedurally challenging context. It is also worth reflecting at this point: do any of these issues sound familiar?

Democratising the RIBA Plan of Works

Our co-created toolkit facilitates early engagement with *all* stakeholder groups, from key and often senior individuals, to hitherto under-accessed or underrepresented users. The toolkit is based on two principles. The first is an acknowledgement that ongoing (rather than project-centric) dialogue between FD and SHU's faculties and departments is required to develop a better understanding of their diverse needs. The second was reimagining the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Plan of Work as a democratising tool to help *everyone* understand the stages of a workplace project.

The RIBA Plan of Work[xv] (PoW) comprises eight stages from 0 to 7 and is familiar to architects, designers, and other built-environment professionals. It provides, in essence, a standard process for the built environment industry, taking construction projects through a particular sequence of activities, from strategic definition to use.

The RIBA PoW was first developed in 1963 and received its only major revision to date in 2013, on its 50th anniversary. With the advent of Building Information Modelling (BIM) technologies, the revised PoW recognised that involving users at the beginning of project, rather than just before the handover of a building, can lead to better design outcomes.

But there are two challenges here. Firstly, those familiar with the PoW are implicitly aware of its value, but people outside of the construction industry are usually unaware of it. Furthermore, the advent of BIM has seen the likes of facilities managers (responsible for the building in use, and ostensibly representing the user) seeking to engage in projects far earlier in the PoW process, but often without knowing how to do so effectively. We wondered how the PoW could be used to extend this standard process to a broader range of stakeholders?

At SHU we saw how different parts of what needed to be a complementary system were actually working against each other. FD and their supply chain were busy focusing on project delivery using the PoW. Meanwhile, the SHU executive required a series of business and commercial justifications to permit capital projects to proceed. Caught in the middle, SHU faculty leadership teams – with pedagogic but not necessarily workplace expertise – struggled to articulate their needs and aspirations.

In the words of one leadership team member, it was like "*knitting fog*". According to another, "*things get lost in the machine*". They were essentially caught in process limbo, crying out for someone to help them "*to see the art of the possible*".

Needless to say, it is extremely challenging to write either a robust business case or a strategic brief for a workplace project – a key requirement of the PoW 'Strategic Definition' Stage 0 – from an uninformed position. And yet creating a brief with the right outcomes is an essential part of setting a new workplace up for success. Recognising the challenges this was creating for SHU – both the leadership teams and FD alike – we looked at what activities needed to take place *before* Stage 0. These activities involved developing the client's strategic vision for the *potential* project, checking the project's strategic alignment against organisational goals and – in *readiness* for change leadership activity – devising a stakeholder engagement plan.

Stages in the RIBA Plan of Work (© RIBA 2013)

0. Strategic definition
1. Preparation and Brief

2. Concept Design
3. Developed Design
4. Technical Design
5. Construction
6. Handover and Close Out
7. In Use

Enabling genuine consultation

Being able to work this way involved rethinking SHU's governance approach to 'Project Boards', by broadening their remit beyond the design and construction stages so that they encompass the whole process (*including* the activities that need to take place before Stage 0). And to do this successfully in any organisation – particularly academic communities – requires stakeholder engagement from the outset.

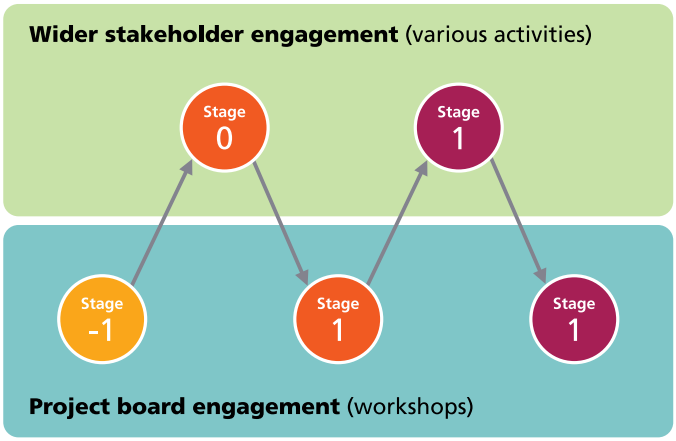
Think about the activities required to develop a new building. Room layouts, services and other building elements are often considered years in advance of the building opening. Yet we usually only 'consult' users six months to a year before they move in. Consulting at this point means that it is usually too late for users to influence anything that would make a genuine difference to their working lives, so we end up discussing things like filing cabinet layouts, desk partition heights and the colour of the buttons on sofa cushions (all of these are genuine examples and by no means unique to one organisation).

If you've been involved in situations like this, you will no doubt recognize the uncomfortable feeling as you cautiously seek to avoid emotive topics and conflicting agendas. We're back in the realms of the DAD approach again, entrenched in negotiations about specific work*space* elements, which are really symptoms of broader systemic issues.

Somewhat counterintuitively, when it comes to early engagement, perhaps the least useful thing to do is to begin with discussions about physical *spaces*. From our experience, the earlier that spatial solutions are discussed in workplace projects, the more likely it is that a project will become derailed by peoples' wants and political agendas. Instead, the focus should be on exploring peoples' future aspirations, goals, activities, and needs. These are the organisational insights you need to elicit. To hold true to this path often requires very skilful facilitation.

With this in mind, the toolkit takes the project board team through the early engagement activities and RIBA stages 0 and 1. *Only* at Stage 1, with the PoW Initial Project Brief, do spatial design considerations come to the fore.

A range of structured engagement activities enables the Project Board to: identify, understand and engage meaningfully with diverse stakeholder groups; consider the findings; and then use them to proactively inform the design. Different groups require different information gathering techniques, and innovative web- or app-based research tools (including, for example, wiki-surveys and new online debating platforms) push the traditional boundaries of quantitative and qualitative data capture.



The toolkit process: early engagement and RIBA PoW stages 0 and 1

Embedded learning

Initial use of the toolkit has had positive results, eliciting (for example) real enthusiasm from faculty leadership teams. As outcome-focused questions are asked, leaders are in turn challenging themselves and each other to think differently. Such early engagement also provides an 'early warning system' – a way to identify issues or concerns early enough to be able to do something about them.

Our own learning through this collaboration has been invaluable. Starting from the premise that successful workplace change initiatives rarely – in our experience – begin with conversations about workspace, we see structured, facilitated early engagement as a means to a better end for all involved. Consequently, we encourage other HEIs (and indeed all organisations) to consider the value of early engagement and this toolkit-enabled approach to prime workplace projects for sustained success from the outset.

The toolkit itself continues to evolve. The tools improve as we learn through using them. This of course means that in-house teams like FD can develop their own workplace competences and share learning from project to project. For SHU and their supply chain partners, as their campus masterplan takes them well into the next decade and beyond, this experience should prove invaluable. **W&P**

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This new book provides guidance to everyone experiencing the "digital overload" that comes from being always on and subject to the increasingly rapid pace of change

Terri Griffith

TECHNOLOGY • STRESS • DIGITAL OVERLOAD • LEADERSHIP

It's in our control: review of *Conquering Digital Overload*

Conquering Digital Overload: *Leadership Strategies That Build Engaging Work Cultures*, published in 2018 by Palgrave Macmillan, is a twelve-chapter work co-edited by Peter Thomson, Mike Johnson, and J. Michael Devlin. The sixteen authors of those twelve chapters each take on an aspect of digital overload and suggest possible solutions. These experts are brought together by their membership in the FutureWork Forum, a group that has been meeting for the last twenty years to discuss and work together to provide leadership as we build our futures of work.

The authors tackle digital overload from a wide set of perspectives. They argue that the experience of overload is triggered by a combination of being always connected/always on, and the pace of technological change more broadly. The authors describe effects felt at all levels, from individual to societal and suggest that, in the workplace, "...most organizations use twenty-first century technology, but with an operational twentieth-century mindset, processes, and organizational structures" (p. 6). They note optimism, however, given more organizations are thinking explicitly about their digital strategies.

I agree with the authors that issues of technology and our lives and work cannot be addressed using a single silver bullet. You need to think about more than just the technology tool or even your organization's digital strategy. You need to think and design work around all your resources. In the most recent rendition of my own approach, I describe this as "Thinking in 4T" (expanding beyond how we see in 3D):

The Four T's

- **T**arget: project and/or task goal;
- **T**alent: people working toward – and against – the target;
- **T**echnology: everything from texts to hard automation and robots, to basic bots and machine learning – all the tools you have at your disposal; and
- **T**echnique: the organizational processes pulling together the work of the talent and technology

To the extent that each chapter hits upon some version of the 4Ts, I'm certain that individuals, managers, and executives will find value as they read. I do, however, wish I could have found a common definition of digital overload, or if a single definition wasn't possible, a summary of the different views. Given my background and biases, I also would have appreciated more clarity that overload is experienced given some particular combination of target, talent, technology, and technique in a particular situation, rather than a certainty.

Human agency in our experienced overload is acknowledged throughout the chapters. For example:

"*… one of the challenges identified by those we spoke to in the course of researching this book is the tyranny of our default*

notification settings. Without a proactive approach, we are subject to the notifications and noises determined by the software developers. And it's not always clear whether they have our best interests at heart!" (p. 49).

> **"The sixteen authors of those twelve chapters each take on an aspect of digital overload and suggest possible solutions."**

And later:

"while the technologists are trying to make IT less interruptive, for me, the answer is not a technological one, but a cultural one. To improve the way we use technology, we must first change the way we perceive it. Frankly, we all need to grow up a bit!" (pp. 147-148)

I take this to mean that whether we are technology designers or a designer of work or organizations, people are at the heart of these designs. We need to acknowledge and be responsible for our designs -- and learn to design in a way that doesn't push us toward digital overload.

A Design-Focused Approach

This more design-focused approach is most clear in the two chapters by Susan Stucky and Jim Ware. I wasn't surprised by their insights as I've been drawn to their work for years and am happy to describe them as friends and colleagues. In Chapters Six and Twelve they take a focus on mindsets:

"We believe that a new mindset can reduce the stress we are all feeling and suggest new approaches for introducing and applying technology to the way we work" (p. 75)

They note that National Medal of Technology and Turing Award winner Doug Engelbart worked on designs that focus on human *augmentation* rather than the narrower concept of *automation*. Key to this focus is a mindset focused on understanding the nature of the work we do, not just the tools we use.

> **"Doug Engelbart worked on designs that focus on human *augmentation* rather than the narrower concept *of automation*."**

In Chapter Twelve Stucky and Ware turn this mindset focus towards the future of work: "We are on the brink of an AI [artificial intelligence] revolution which will potentially replace many knowledge work jobs." They continue by noting that we have a window of opportunity to redesign work (and I see this including all of the 4Ts).

As with many things, it's easier to get things going in a good direction at the beginning, before inertia or costly reworks come into play. We are at the very early stages of our work with AI. Stucky and Ware argue that now is the time to ramp up our work and technology design efforts and to shift our mindsets to focus on evolving designs and systems that augment human capabilities rather than automate and replace them.

I've touched on just the tip of the iceberg of the ideas presented in *Conquering Digital* Overload. Each of the twelve chapters, with different authors, provides its own perspective. Rather than second-guess the author team, I offer these chapter descriptions from Chapter One: *Introduction: Digitalization and Why Leaders Need to Take It Seriously*:

Chapter 2, we take a close look at the people issues. All too often in a machine-led world, the people are the last things we think about. This chapter sets out to address how we get people back to the center of the engagement equation.

Chapter 3 explains why this Digital Age is a business issue. Most importantly it asks why leaders have done such a lousy job keeping people on their agendas.

The next two chapters focus on the causes of Digital Overload. Chapter 4 examines what impact having, or NOT having an effective corporate culture has on how well you navigate the digital rapids that flow through all our organizations.

Chapter 5 lays out the technology issues and why we are still struggling with it.

We then move on to solutions starting with Chapter 6 that points a spotlight on the experiences of us humans in the workplace

and our struggle to make sense of the digital world around us.

Into Chapter 7, it's all about how to build a more effective workplace and the rules for doing that and this flows directly into Chapter 8 where we discuss creating a viable, engaging environment that people want to be and work in.

"Now is the time to ramp up our work and technology design efforts and to shift our mindsets to focus on evolving designs and systems that augment human capabilities rather than automate and replace them."

Chapter 9 asks what governments, companies, and individuals can do to mitigate and possibly leverage Digital Overload.

Chapter 10 is focused on developing effective coping strategies to deal successfully with the digital age, which leads us directly onto Chapter 11 where we discuss how technology can provide the solution we are all seeking

Finally, we move from today's solutions to look further into the future. In Chapter 12 we close down with the provocative thought about whether we are going to see what many have called 'the death of work.'[1]

As in any book with many authors, these chapters offer value more as punchy short stories rather than like a novel. The chapters are consistent in their design, with helpful introductory summaries and closing "Key Learnings for Leaders."

In conclusion, with my focus on finding ways to mix (and remix) the 4T's of Target, Talent, Technology, and Technique, I hope we work toward an approach for design and problem solving rather than trying to "set rules for human behaviour when it comes to how and when to use digital technology" (p. 6).

I think the design and problem-solving approach is supported by the chapters and perhaps the rules are best taken as possible examples. Every time I read a section where children or education were mentioned, I gave a mental round of applause. We have a chance to help children and others through education.

Maybe the shorthand is Thinking in 4T, or some other idea that fits as a public service announcement -- borrowing from p. 50: "How can we take back control? How can we change this culture we have unwittingly created?"

The answer I draw from *Conquering Digital Overload: Leadership Strategies That Build Engaging Work Cultures* is that we must use education and personal discipline to shift our mindsets to those focused on how we design and adapt our work and tools. We have control. We just have to use it. **W&P**

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Putting values at the centre of everything an organization does is the starting point to create a strong and authentic brand

Alan Williams

VALUES • BRAND • ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE • BUSINESS PROCESSES

Harnessing the power of alignment to create value and sustained performance

In my first article for Work&Place[i] I posed the question of whether workplace directors can deliver a customer experience like a 'service brand'. A clear understanding of the organisation's purpose and values is the fundamental starting point and provides the foundation for everything that follows.

That was in 2013. During the intervening five years, the v-word has caught the imagination, and values are even more front of the mind all over the world for a wide range of people, from political leaders to high profile celebrities and a variety in between, all seeking to win support for their various causes.

You might have noticed how values took centre stage for one of the world's biggest advertising events, the Super Bowl.[ii] The inaugural World Values Day took place in 2016, and people in more than one hundred countries took part last October.

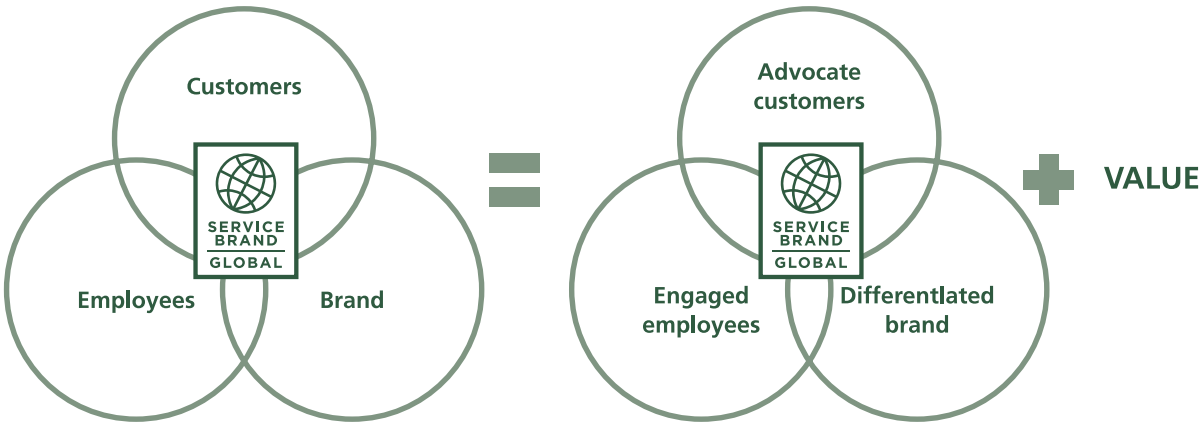
Putting values at the centre of everything an organization does is the starting point to create a strong and authentic brand. This strategy is particularly relevant for service organisations where people are a core element of their offer. But it needs to be done in practice rather than as some sort of lip-service PR campaign – witness the reaction to the McDonald's marketing initiative for International Women's Day[iii].

Defining a service brand

SERVICEBRAND® is a term invented by the author to refer to an organisation for which customer service is a fundamental and evident part of their offer. Examples of traditional service brands are hotels, airlines, law firms and financial advisors where it is very clear that a service is being provided and people are an important factor. A factory producing hammers is not a service brand. However, in recent years, businesses that in the past might have been considered product-based have become service brands.

There is evidence of this in the automotive, technology, and mobile phone sectors where differentiation based on product alone is a challenge, so service becomes the focus. The approach is also relevant in the public sector, e.g. hospitals or borough Councils, in the third sector and for membership organisations and internal business functions such as Human Resources, Finance, Workplace, and FM.

Much has been written in the workplace and FM sector over the years about integrator models, vested models, ecosystems, and the potential relationship between workplace, FM, real estate, IT and HR.



It is clear that workplace and FM has its own individual characteristics and complexities, and yet the service brand approach has been applied successfully in single-site, regional, and global portfolios over the last fifteen years, delivering remarkable business impact and receiving industry recognition. The overarching concept is a combination of just two principles:

1. Design the service delivery from the customer backwards instead of from "expert" silos forwards; and
2. Consider all functions, organisations and people who are involved in the service delivery as One Team.

> **"The core concept is a simple one: the holistic development and implementation of three areas of strategy (brand identity, employee engagement and customer experience)."**

The core concept is a simple one: the holistic development and implementation of three areas of strategy (brand identity, employee engagement and customer experience) in an integrated way so that consistency and credibility is achieved at all touch points of an organisation (inside and out) and, critically, is then sustained over a period of time.

The service brand can be developed by the coordination and alignment of the three areas, and additional value is created that could take the form of increased profit, increased customer satisfaction and advocacy, improved employee engagement and retention, improved brand recognition and reputation. In short, values-driven service for sustained performance.

The approach is based on the following fundamentals:

- the primary objective is to deliver an excellent customer experience;
- creation of a singular sense of purpose and identity supported by a common set of organisational values;
- day-to-day employee behaviour that is explicitly connected to the values and observable as such;
- an employee and customer experience that is aligned with the brand identity at all touchpoints (irrespective of geography, channel, or time) with 'brand signatures' to create a point of difference;
- appropriate systems and processes to underpin and facilitate the above, and functions recognising this support role; and
- effective measurement and insight mechanisms (quantitative and qualitative) across the four areas of Brand Identity, Employee Engagement, Customer Experience and Systems and Processes to inform continuous improvement.

To operationalise this approach, there is a service brand operating model that has five elements:

Brand Identity - the character/personality of the organisation; a combination of purpose/vision, values, brand attributes, visual identity and tone of voice.

Employee Engagement – the degree of enthusiasm by employees for delivering service to customers and an understanding of how the whole organisation needs to support the employees who engage directly with customers.

Customer Experience - the sum of all experiences customers have with a supplier of goods and/or services, over the duration of their relationship with that supplier. These experiences can include awareness, discovery, attraction, interaction, purchase, use, cultivation, and advocacy.

Systems and Processes - the arrangement of management and employees (their roles and functions and business administration requirements), business facilities and equipment, inventory management and policies and procedures along with how this supports the customer experience.

Measurement and Insight – a blend of quantitative and qualitative data to assess the performance of the above areas to facilitate continual improvement.

It is important that the above are considered at the three levels of strategy, management and delivery to provide the best chance of success. Taking the area of employee engagement, it might be an organisation's strategy to "develop our people".

> **"In our super-connected, increasingly transparent world, organisations no longer own their brands. Instead brands are co-owned by organisations and their stakeholders."**

At a management level, this strategy could be supported by a twice-a-year personal development plan discussion that is recorded and tracked. Then, at a day-to-day delivery level, there might be an online library of resources (research, reading, video, training courses, and so on) that employees are able to access. If any of the three levels are not in place, then there is a risk that performance in this area will be suboptimal.

Why values are the key

Values are the things that are important to us, the foundation of our lives. They are deeply-held principles that guide our choices and behaviours and influence our emotions. Values are the core of who we are. They are our motivators, our drivers, the passion in our hearts and the reason why we do the things we do.

In a world that is constantly and rapidly changing, values serve as a compass to navigate uncertainty. Research has shown that purpose and values-led organisations consistently outperform their counterparts. In this organizational context, values are moving from a PR exercise to become the guiding compass, not only for progressive, enlightened organizations but also for more well-established, mainstream corporates.

Simon Sinek's excellent and popular Golden Circle concept[iv] is a good place to start. Simon explains that it is not what people do that inspires them; instead it is the *why* (purpose) and the *how* (values) that achieve emotional engagement. This perspective is supported by findings of two of the most respected names in the corporate world.

> **"The pace of change will never be this slow again. Many traditional approaches are no longer relevant and there is a new business agenda emerging."**

The IBM CEO Study,[v] May 2012, surveyed 1,700 chief executive officers across 64 countries. The key recommendations outlined three imperatives essential for outperformance. The first of these was empowering employees through values.

"For CEOs, organisational openness offers tremendous upside potential – empowered employees, free-flowing ideas, more creativity and innovation, happier customers, better results. But openness also comes with more risk. As rigid controls loosen, organisations need a strong sense of purpose and shared beliefs to guide decision making. Teams will need processes and tools that inspire collaboration on a massive scale. Perhaps most important, organisations must help employees develop traits to excel in this type of environment."

PriceWaterhouseCoopers (doing business as PwC) conducted a similar study, CEO Survey 2016,[vi] amongst 1,400 CEOs in approximately 80 countries. This survey highlighted that 75% of CEOs are changing their values and code of conduct to respond to stakeholder expectations in an environment of unprecedented change. It reported how values can provide a guidepost creating internal cohesion to support achievement of organisational aims and assist strategy execution.

"96% of CEOs agree that it is important for leaders to take time to explain how values influence business decisions."

A radical rethink of governance

The Financial Reporting Council is perhaps the most influential source of governance advice around the world, as the originator in 1992 of the widely copied Corporate Code. Now, the FRC has torn up its previous code, with a radically rewritten version published in July 2018 that stresses long-term success and proposes a new requirement for businesses to test their values across the business, from top to bottom.[vii] The text is as follows:

The board should assess and monitor culture. Where it is not satisfied that policy, practices or behaviour throughout the business are aligned with the company's purpose, values and strategy, it should seek assurance that management has taken corrective action. The annual report should explain the board's activities and any action taken.

Values are now mainstream, it is no longer about a framed plaque on the wall. Values are the organisation's guiding compass; they are most effective when they inform everything else an organisation does. Values are for living, not for laminating.

How is this happening?

The customer experience is still frequently referred to as a brave new world in business and, laudable though the concept is, ***The Experience Economy*** was coined by Pine & Gilmour in 1998,[viii] That is now twenty years ago.

> **How can a Workplace and Facilities Management function build a strong internal service brand identity to enable the core business and to reinforce the organisation's brand and values?**

Nowadays, an experience no longer seems to be enough on its own. Customers (and other stakeholders) want to know the substance underneath the surface of an organisation. What is its reason for being and what are its values? Decisions to buy a brand or to be associated with it are being driven by more than simplistic financial decision-making criteria. Just consider the growth of the Fairtrade "brand" with sales of €7.88 billion in 2016[ix] (started in 1994) and how brands like North Face, Apple, and Gandy's are connecting with their customers at a deeper emotional level.

Companies on "100 Best Corporate Citizens" list outperformed the Russell 1000 by 26 percent. Balancing the needs of stakeholders — consumers, stockholders, community members — allows companies to create value beyond products or services. (Corporate Responsibility Magazine[x])

And notwithstanding all that is being said and written about AI and the digital world, people are still a critical factor because customers' perception of a brand is strongly influenced by the behaviour of the people representing the brand.

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. (Maya Angelou)[xi]

In summary, in our super-connected, increasingly transparent world, organisations no longer own their brands. Instead brands are co-owned by organisations and their stakeholders (customers, employees, outsourced service partner employees, local communities, and so on).

Some years ago, it was possible for organisations to fabricate a marketing and PR 'front', but now the truth gets out – fast. We refer to this paradigm as "The Values Economy". In the world of workplace and facilities management, you might be interested to see Carillion's organisational values given its bankruptcy and liquidation early in 2018 and the subsequent investigations.

The Carillion website used to state that a company can be financially successful and highly efficient, but it needs a heart, too. It continued to explain that Values were at the heart of everything the company did, driving commitment to delivering safe, sustainable and effective solutions for customers and creating positive legacies wherever the company worked. The four values that Carillion emphasised were:

- We care
- We achieve together
- We improve
- We deliver

And the company used to say that Carillion people are "living our Values" – the four Values defining the way employees behave, both with each other and with customers and partners, and how employees think, helping to shape the culture, character and beliefs of the Carillion business.

This perspective was summarised as the values meaning that for Carillion, work was always more than a job.

Impressive words... and yet the reality of the beliefs, behaviours, and decisions that drove Carillion's actions seemed to represent a significant departure from these values in some parts of the organisation.

What does this all mean for Workplace & Facilities Management?

We are living in extraordinary times – **V**olatile, **U**ncertain, **C**omplex, **A**mbiguous (often called VUCA for short). The pace of change will never be this slow again. Many traditional approaches are no longer relevant and there is a new business agenda emerging. This new reality is as relevant to the Workplace and FM sector as it is to business in general.

One of the most important stakeholders in shaping an organisation's brand identity is the employee. There are factors such as pay, approach to personal development, company reputation and others that will affect employees' perceptions of their organisation.

However, workplace and FM also play an important role: the location, quality, maintenance and cleanliness of the built environment; the workplace services (e.g., is there onsite provision of food and drinks?); and the behaviour of the facilities management services employees (who might be employed by other service partner organisations). These frontline facilities management people are often the face of the organisations they are representing, and their actions directly influence the employees' (and visitors) perception of the organisation's brand and values.

Referring to the Financial Reporting Council's focus on board and director responsibility to ensure that behaviour throughout the business is aligned with the company's values, what role is played by Workplace & FM?

Imagine a hypothetical example of a big utility company with a core value of "Our Environment", alongside a public commitment to sustainability and protecting the planet. How is this value embodied in the organisation's workplaces?

Does the organisation provide coffee machines with indestructible foil sachets? Does the company car policy allow gas guzzling 4x4s? Is it customary to print paper documents one side only in colour? Is there a night cleaning regime with a need for out of hours lighting? These are examples of how the organisation's stated commitment to "Our Environment" can be demonstrated in practice, or not. And who owns, or at least is an influencer in, the associated policies and service standards? The answer is Workplace and FM.

What Can You Do?

The key question is, "How can a Workplace and Facilities Management function build a strong internal service brand identity to enable the core business and to reinforce the organisation's brand and values?" And what are the risks if a facilities management function does not do that? The purpose of this article is not to theorise about this subject; much has already been written on the topic of workplace over the years.

Using the service brand approach described here provides a number of valuable benefits. Workplace and facilities management, regional leads and service providers can clearly understand performance, recognise successes, flag areas for improvement and communicate these factors effectively. The approach focusses

> **"Values-driven alignment between brand identity, employee engagement, and customer experience unlocks value."**

stakeholders' collective attention on the delivery of a high-standard, brand-aligned employee and visitor experience. It is a very practical and simple approach that can avoid silo mentality and the associated challenges that mindset brings.

The Values Economy is here, and the value of an organisation's brand DNA and values cannot be overstated. Behaviour strongly influences perception; and employees, including outsourced employees, *are* the organisation. Values-driven alignment between brand identity, employee engagement, and customer experience unlocks value. All of this is as applicable in FM as in the commercial environment, and it creates an opportunity for FM to lead and enable the business.

But sustained success requires sustained effort. Leaders need to lead in practice. And practice makes more perfect. **W&P**

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i Alan Williams

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Organisations must blend the diverse skills and knowledge of FM, HR, IT, and Finance professionals to produce a complex ecosystem capable of sustained performance

Bruce Barclay

ECOSYSTEMS • FACILITIES MANAGEMENT • COLLABORATION • INFRASTRUCTURE • CROSS-FUNCTIONAL

Creating a workplace ecosystem: anticipating and managing unprecedented change

The natural world is a story of constant change and evolution. Animals, plants, insects and micro-organisms exist in an ecosystem, adapting to relentless changes in their environment, where they are influenced by habitat, climate and their co-habitators. They respond to change faster than humans, because they are not tied by the same restraints and conventions. They are compelled to adapt to changing environmental conditions – or die. They are interdependent and reliant on each other, on competitors and on cohabiters for mutual advantage.

"In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed."
- Charles Darwin

As humans move into what Klaus Schwab, Director of the World Economic Forum, has called the "Fourth Industrial Revolution",[i] there is much we can learn from nature, particularly regarding the workplace environment. The transformation of an organisation's real estate, facilities management, IT, and HR functions into a workplace ecosystem has been discussed publicly for some time, part of the natural evolution of the business world.

Professor Franklin D Becker, known as one of the founding fathers of FM, coined the phrase "organizational ecology" to demonstrate that all organisations are essentially complex systems characterised by the interdependence of the social and the physical.[ii] "Changes in any one aspect of the system reverberate throughout the system. Organizational ecology conceptualizes the workplace as a system in which physical design factors both shape and are shaped by work processes, the organization's culture, workforce demographics and information technologies."

Organisations, are, Professor Ilf Price later argued, "ecologies produced by variation, selection and retention, acting on replicating narratives, representations, signifiers or discourses."[iii]

In 1992, the International Development Research Council (IDRC) looked at the ways the corporate real estate world was changing. In a series of studies, known as CRE2000, the IDRC examined how real estate was moving up the value chain from stage one, being seen as taskmasters (concerned with the technical aspects of supplying buildings), to stage five, a business strategist, where the real estate professional focuses on influencing competitive advantage, productivity, and shareholder value. That role involves becoming business partners with other areas of the organisation, such as HR, IT, and Finance, the study argued.

These views were echoed in the 1999 publication, *The Competitive Workplace*,[iv] which viewed the workplace as an ecosystem, an integrated system of interactive parts, requiring a holistic understanding for strategic planning. The workplace is not just physical infrastructure to be managed by real estate

and facilities but "the entire spectrum, from the organizational structure to real estate and facilities which shelter and support the work of a corporation."[v]

In the introduction to her 2010 *Liveable Lives*[vi] report, Ziona Strelitz pointed out that the report was aimed at both HR and CRE professionals, alerting them to the tensions faced in managing work and life commitments when long travel time is involved. She went on to argue against centralised workplaces and for "narrowing the physical distance between the workplace and employees' domestic and family realms" which she saw as an "HR aspect of corporate real estate".

But there is a common gap in understanding among the real estate, FM, IT, and HR functions in most organisations, described by James Ware and Paul Carder in the first *Raising the Bar*[vii] report sponsored by RICS, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. "We have seen this gap in many situations, over many years; improvement has occurred, but there remains a long way to go."

Workplace can be the focal point in the relationship between these functions, they argued. They went on to demonstrate that FM is "embedded within a complex web of relationships, each of which has the potential for strategic significance, and each of which presents particular challenges to FM professionals."[viii]

More recently Gartner analyst Paul Miller has argued that strategic partnerships between support functions such as CRE, FM, HR and IT departments "empower and engage employees in all phases of their journey through the digital workplace"[ix].

The Stoddart Review[x], meanwhile, went one step further and proposed a "Chief Workplace Officer," or CWO, acting as a 'super connector' who removes obstacles, fosters collaboration, and oversees an environment in which peer-to-peer information sharing, collaboration, and production can occur. Crucially, the CWO is an interpreter between the different business units. essentially refereeing the turf wars between the support functions and bringing them closer together.

This concept was something that Paul Carder raised in the first issue of **Work&Place**, in August 2012: "We are convinced that a new role is needed to bring together the several corporate functions that do not have enterprise-wide leadership…. Who brings together the 'when, where and how' to work, to set policy and options that can support employees?"[xi]

Dr Graham Jervis has developed this insight further, arguing that changes in socio-economic and political worlds, developments in technology, and changes in workplace culture are significant adjustments that shift the FM focus from physical asset management to design, development, provision, and maintenance of workplaces that encourage and support peoples' productivity in all the types of work they do.

> **"FM is embedded within a complex web of relationships, each of which has the potential for strategic significance, and each of which presents particular challenges to FM professionals."**

"However, asset maintenance and provision of building-based services remain, making the job of the FM very demanding and probably too wide to do alone. The collaboration of other service functions (HR, IT, procurement, legal, etc.) and the business itself is, and will be, the foundation for the management of workplaces."[xii]

Separating the functions that contribute to the workplace experience has even been called "a folly" by Dr Rob Harris, who argues that "the increasing fragmentation of workplace disciplines runs counter to the trend of greater convergence in the way people work."[xiii]

This fragmentation has resulted, Harris says, in the customer not sitting "at the centre of our complex industry, but on the fringe." Workplace Management, he says, brings together all the fragmented parts of the design, construction, real estate, and facilities sectors into an integrated management function, allied to its colleagues in HR, Procurement and Technology, among others, to provide an integrated Workplace Resource Management function."[xiv]

But Neil Usher argues that a Chief Workplace Officer (CWO) role, while interesting, "is premature[xv]". Firmer foundations are needed, he said in his recent book ***The Elemental Workplace***[xvi].

The convergence of FM, HR, and IT has been building for over a generation. Some have called this trend infrastructure management;[xvii] it has been described as having three phases: the first beginning with the introduction of enterprise-wide technology platforms known as enterprise resource planning; the second with the individual support units developing technologies that provide "discrete process and workflow management of each of their data sources and applications." The current, third wave of convergence, provides "interoperability between these discrete business unit solutions."[xviii]

Most commentators over the past few decades agree that removing the silos and turf wars between these support functions makes good business sense by enabling the organisation to function more effectively. The 'why', putting the workplace experience and productivity at the heart of business performance, has received much air-time. 'How' to achieve this goal and 'what' needs to happen in practice has received far less attention.

The How: Implementing a workplace ecosystem

Continual change is one of the fundamental laws of nature, and just as the animal kingdom is constantly adapting, we as humans, are living in an era of unfathomable change.

This exponential rate of change is referenced in Herman Miller's report, *The Office: a facility based on change*[xix], published in 1968 but just as relevant today. "The office in its relationship

Workplace Ecosystem Value Proposition

to the organisation it serves must now obey the dynamic new factors this imposes."[xx]

Former CEO of General Electric and widely recognised business guru Jack Welch described the necessity of change and its intrinsic friction this way: "If the rate of change on the outside exceeds the rate of change on the inside, the end is near."[xxi]

Technology-driven advances are happening at an exponential rate, changing our habitat and with it the very fabric of society. Everything we do is becoming enabled and enhanced through new technology, apps, and intelligent machines. To survive and thrive in this new digitally-enabled, consumer and experience-driven world, businesses must completely rethink how and where they supply their product, service, or other value proposition. Manufacturers, service providers, and retailers will have to reinvent themselves to compete effectively in a rapidly-changing, highly-demanding world.

The old corporate-centric models with rigid hierarchies, silo mentalities, and traditional business strategies are slow to respond and are rapidly becoming disconnected from today's world. We need to be bold enough to break conventional methodology to form new alliances and strategic partnerships, way beyond the concept of the simple outsourcing models of the last five decades.

Forbes describes this capability as "a Responsive Organization." This type of organisation is less focused on efficiency and more on responsiveness; it is moving away from hierarchies to networks; and from customers and partners to a community[xxii].

What is required in the new world are dynamic networks and communities made up of a much wider range of internal and external specialist contributors; working with a shared vision and interacting with each other to create and exchange sustainable value for all participants, with each entity benefiting from the co-creation of value and co-evolving. Such value co-creation dramatically increases innovation and the impact of a product or service, ultimately boosting core organisation performance.

Knowledge *- focus on the generation of insight and accurate advice*

The main outcome of knowledge processes is accurate data and strategic knowledge, and it includes network nodes where the knowledge is created and retained.

Innovation *- focus on business innovation and adaptation*

Innovation processes occur as an integrating mechanism between the exploration of new knowledge and its exploitation for value co-creation in business engagement.

Engagement *- focus on understanding and enabling the business*

Performance improvement and value is delivered to the core business through engagement processes aligned to business need and leveraging co-created value through knowledge and innovation.

The challenges facing the real estate and facilities world are now so complex that they cannot be solved by individuals working in one function. What is needed are groups of interrelated subject matter experts working together in cohesive workgroups or ecosystems to co-create value and co-evolve into a highly effective one-team solution. Today's businesses need strong support functions – real estate, FM, IT, and HR – sharing the same values and working collaboratively together to solve these challenges.

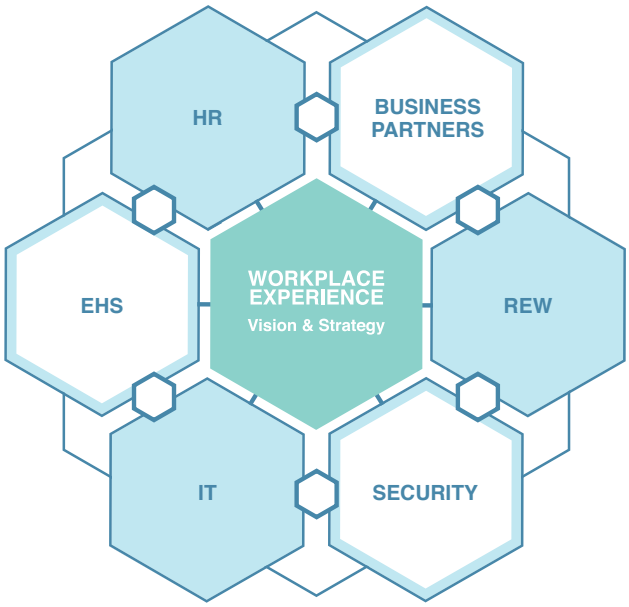
An article in *Harvard Business Review* by James Moore[xxiii] looked at how in an increasingly dynamic and interconnected world of commerce, the successful businesses are those that evolve rapidly and effectively. "They must attract resources of all sorts, drawing in capital, partners, suppliers, and customers to create cooperative networks In a business ecosystem, stakeholders co-evolve capabilities around a new innovation:

"The challenges facing the real estate and facilities world are now so complex that they cannot be solved by individuals working in one function. What is needed are groups of interrelated subject matter experts working together in cohesive workgroups or ecosystems to co-create value and co-evolve into a highly effective one-team solution."

They work cooperatively and competitively to support new products, satisfy customer needs, and eventually incorporate the next round of innovations."

What value could be created by adopting this ecosystem model in the workplace arena?

A structured ecosystem focused on the workplace experience that enables stakeholders to learn faster and accelerate performance improvement in the core business, especially in environments that are shaped by increasing uncertainty and unexpected events, will secure a profitable future for FM. This is an approach for thriving in a world of increasing and rapid change.



The Actors in the Workplace Ecosystem

The What – the infrastructure to achieve this kind of ecosystem

Traditionally, people have seen competitors as rivals who battle each other for dominance and profit. The same can be said of support functions that battle each other for share of a budget and the ear, and favour, of the board. Today's organisations operate in a more complex world. They compete and cooperate in innovative and unexpected ways, and they need each other in order to survive. This is the new world of business ecosystems.

The Deloitte organisation defines business ecosystems as dynamic and co-evolving communities of diverse actors who create and capture new value through both collaboration and competition[xxiv]. We've seen this concept play out in examples of competing businesses coming together to solve problems under what V. Frank Asaro, author of *A Primal Wisdom: Nature's Unification of Cooperation and Competition*, described as 'co-opetition.'[xxv]

Rivals BMW and Toyota have worked together on carbon-fibre and hybrid technology to develop a hybrid sports car. Supermarket retailers are sharing transportation costs to reduce carbon emissions and cost, but they still fight it out at the supermarket shelves. More businesses than ever are getting involved with joint ventures, with research from McKinsey[xxvi] revealing that 68% of companies believe they will be involved in more JVs in the coming five years.

Ecosystems enable and encourage the participation of a diverse range of participants, including business function and supply chain stakeholders, as well as enlisted subject matter experts, who together can create value and business impact beyond the capabilities of any single entity.

This kind of collaboration provides the requisite variety for a healthy and sustainable business solution. Participants are bonded by a combination of shared interests, purpose, and values that incentivises them to collectively nurture, sustain, and protect the ecosystem because there is vested interest and shared benefit.

This approach is about designing the organisation structure around the purpose of the organisation and putting the customer at the centre. Every business will be slightly different and will apply this idea differently. However, with the creation of a workplace experience ecosystem there will be different stakeholders with different points of view all focusing on the same goal – making the workplace experience the best it can be, enabling improved business performance.

The IT experts will discuss the latest technology they're introducing. The HR specialists will talk about the impact of new labour law changes, for example, or how to support people adapting to changes in how and where work is done. The FM professionals will look at how cleaning/catering or security regimes might need to change to accommodate workplace sensors. And the real estate experts will focus on how the property footprint might need to change to adapt to the latest changes in the business and its supporting technologies.

Rather than these functions all working separately, and often duplicating work and not sharing information, in an ideal world they will all work together in a One Workplace Team delivering an outstanding workplace experience that enables the core business.

Some might argue that the HR team, for example, will have subject-specific work that does not involve other specialities. But this rarely the case. A new training programme, changes in headcount, a wellbeing drive, and new legislation, all affect the workplace experience. As does an upgrade in technology infrastructure introduced by the IT team.

In addition, a One Team approach, whereby different organisations and/or teams work together in a non-competitive way, provides a unified solution for the end-user, the individual in the workplace. Rather than be sent from pillar to post with a query that may fall between the HR/ IT/ FM silos, they get an

immediate response from one person who takes responsibility for dealing with the issue, whoever's former remit it falls into.

This approach speeds up the response to end-users and enables them to get on with their core job, delivering value to the business, more quickly. Whichever way you look at it, the Real Estate, FM, IT, and HR functions work better in a workplace ecosystem where they are focused on delivering the core needs of the business.

This view was reflected in the Raising the Bar report, which confirmed that:

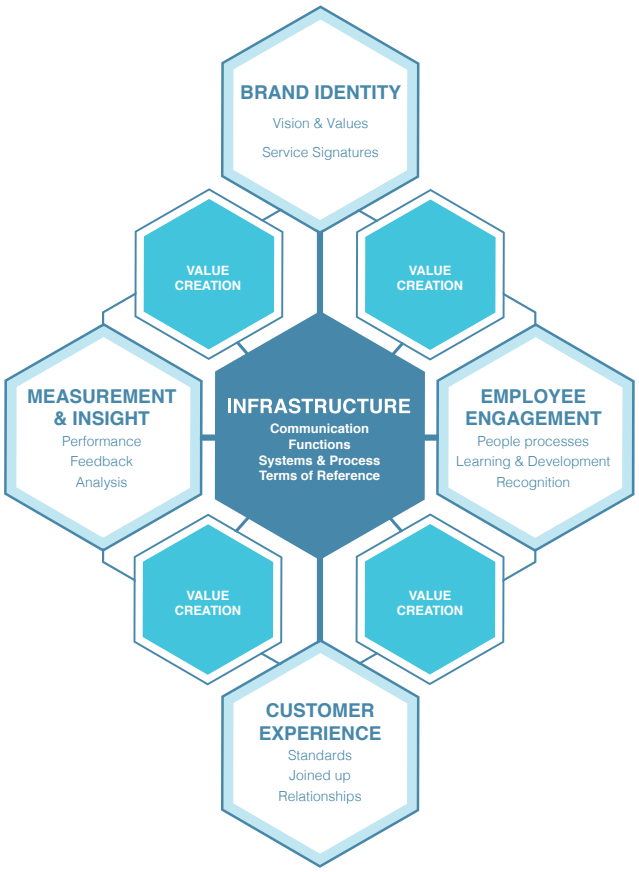
"the workplace can be a focal point in the relationship between the RE, IT, and HR functions, and in the development of a comprehensive workplace strategy. The physical workplaces and facilities are vital to organisational performance; everyone needs a comfortable and productive place (or places) in which to work (including, increasingly, places not under the organisation's control, such as home offices, co-working operations, and other public spaces)."[xxvii]

In that report Ware and Carder argued that HR is becoming a vital infrastructure partner for FM, creating the policies and conditions to support knowledge workers in their quest to become more mobile and flexible. Meanwhile, the IT infrastructure is also clearly essential, to facilitate ease of access to the tools that we need to work, including network access, WiFi and peripheral equipment. The report urged FMs to address the gap between FM and the other support functions by building relationships between RE/FM, IT, and HR, to create a workplace strategy.

But building relationships is just part of the task. Key to the success of any ecosystem is the creation of the environment and conditions in which the various stakeholders can engage with each other and collectively thrive.

Dell EMC's 'One Team' initiative

A good example was the recent One Team initiative formulated and delivered by Dell EMC. The real estate and facilities senior leadership had a clear directive to create a One Team ecosystem, better enabling the core business. The One Team system would provide a seamless service to the customer by using shared business intelligence, gained from different experiences and differing perspectives, as well as the analysis and interpretation of detailed data. Internal players and external commercial organisations from environment, health and safety, FM, real estate, and security, as well as business partners in HR, IT, and Procurement, were brought together.



Workplace Ecosystem Operating Platform

A shared vision and values were co-created, and a common operating platform was put in place to provide structure and alignment. The group formulated specific working practices to co-create value and innovation, and it generated new tools to monitor and measure performance. Collaboration, sharing, and openness were key to making a difference, even among members who were commercial competitors outside of the group.

> **"HR is becoming a vital infrastructure partner for FM, creating the policies and conditions to support knowledge workers in their quest to become more mobile and flexible."**

In addition to creating operational efficiencies, generating significant cost savings, and improving overall employee wellbeing, an additional unexpected outcome emerged. The One Team participants found they had renewed credibility with the customer and started to engage on a more strategic level. In addition, they gained insight into competitors' innovations that they were able to bring back to their own business and introduce to other clients, improving those relationships as well.

Are we getting leadership from the professional institutions?

The British Institute of Facilities Management's recent decision to rename itself the Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management (IWFM) reflects the growing importance of the workplace as a defined discipline, albeit a relatively young one – especially as the Institute has announced it is seeking Chartered status.

But this change very much emphasizes workplace as a facilities discipline, not an organisational one. Although the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has supported IWFM's chartered approach, we need to see professional bodies from all support functions working together. And not just with Memoranda of Understanding that gather dust. The joint effort must be an ongoing dialogue focusing on how these professional bodies can encourage their members to collaborate effectively to drive the success of their core businesses.

The steps to forming an effective workplace ecosystem are easy to define, but much harder to initiate. Business leaders must break free from the traditional corporate models and embrace a whole new way of working.

> **"We need to see professional bodies from all support functions working together. And not just with Memoranda of Understanding that gather dust."**

We need to recognise the ecosystem as a key engine of future performance and move beyond the notion of high-performing individuals or teams. Like Darwin's theory of natural selection, those who don't adapt and prepare now for the next great wave of transformation will be left behind. **W&P**

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In today's dynamic digital economy, employees must upgrade their skills on a continuous basis. Two new kinds of workplaces – maker spaces and fablabs – create innovative learning environments

Stefano Anfossi & Fabrizio Pierandrei

Cultures and working spaces designed to foster peer-to-peer learning

A culture of innovation is transforming contemporary organisations with features that contrast markedly with what has gone before.

Technological advances coupled with a continuously changing business culture mean that every company must up its game and embark on a programme of continuous improvement in developing the skills of its employees.

At the heart of this change is a process of innovation with regard to learning experiences that empowers employees to make their own individual choices about training and education, leading to continuous personal development, which in turn shapes the culture of learning in the firm.

Providing an environment that allows the employees to learn new skills and competencies is a feature that helps companies stand out in the highly competitive talent market.

Traditional learning management system companies are rapidly evolving in their ability to deliver modern, compelling experiences for learners .... CB Insights, which tracks venture investments, estimates that more than US$3 billion was invested in new learning and educational start-ups in the first six months of the year 2015. Almost $1 billion of this went into tools, content, and companies that focus on the corporate market.[i]

A new perception of what we perceive personal development to be and how it should function underpins the renewed interest of organisations in learning cultures.

According to a trend report by Deloitte[ii], learning has become "an essential tool for engaging employees, attracting and retaining top talents and developing long-term leadership for the company", even when this new demand leads to a profound transformation in the organisation.

One of the most apparent manifestations of this change can be seen in the way that the process of learning is embedded in the day-to-day working lives of people, rather than as a series of separate programmes and courses.

None of this is particularly new. Some existing learning models have already embraced the idea that a range of experiences and activities lead to better outcomes. For example, the 70:20:10 model created by Morgan McCall at the Centre for Creative Leadership, in which employees obtain 70 percent of their knowledge from job-related experiences, 20 percent from interactions with others, and 10 percent from formal educational events.[iii]

One new factor is the way in which learning is now viewed as a continuous process for people. In practice this perspective

means that skills are not merely shared between people, but often reframed and redefined.

It is not merely about exchanging information with individuals but helping them 'learn how to learn'.

While each individual is empowered to undertake this process of continuous learning, the prevalence of teamwork in the workplace means this learning to learn takes place alongside collaborative learning, a process pioneered by schools and higher educational institutions, which have been forming new models of learning and new techniques for some time.

Research into the dynamics of learning amongst small groups of between four to six people in schools is just as relevant for the collaborative learning techniques of the workplace.

Learning in this context can also help overcome some of the drawbacks of teamwork. It helps to restrict the tendency for groupthink and the potentially overbearing presence of a dominant leader and also discourages the idea that meetings are a waste of time or even completely useless.

In contrast to purely individual learning, which improves specific skills and competences, team learning is more likely to foster the creation of a shared vision or goal for the team, a greater understanding of the processes activities of the whole group, and a sense of ownership of specific roles and responsibilities.[iv]

These benefits demonstrate how new forms of learning are a prerequisite for the adoption of changes catalysed by technological and cultural improvements, which frame hierarchy and leadership in a completely new light.

Experiential and informal learning is relevant for all age groups because it disproportionately improves the performance of younger workers while also ensuring older workers are able to cope with an increase in the retirement age.[v]

In this scenario, new skills are needed while others are less relevant to some degree or another, so a third type of employee is emerging – one who is neither a manual nor a knowledge worker in the strictly traditional sense, but is instead *a learning worker*, distinguishable by his or her ability to learn.[vi]

This worker is characterised by a high degree of flexibility, adaptability to new situations, and the ability to learn how to face brand-new challenges and issues.

Compared with knowledge workers, whose skills are rooted in experience and precedent, learning workers develop their own skills by uncovering and combining different ideas in a learning environment that is always on and always present.

How an office space can support this learning process is still being debated.[vii] Rather than pointing out the specific features of such a workspace, it seems more interesting to analyse two models that embody its core principles: the coworking space and the fablab. Both are designed to foster peer-to-peer learning and to mix skills and competences.

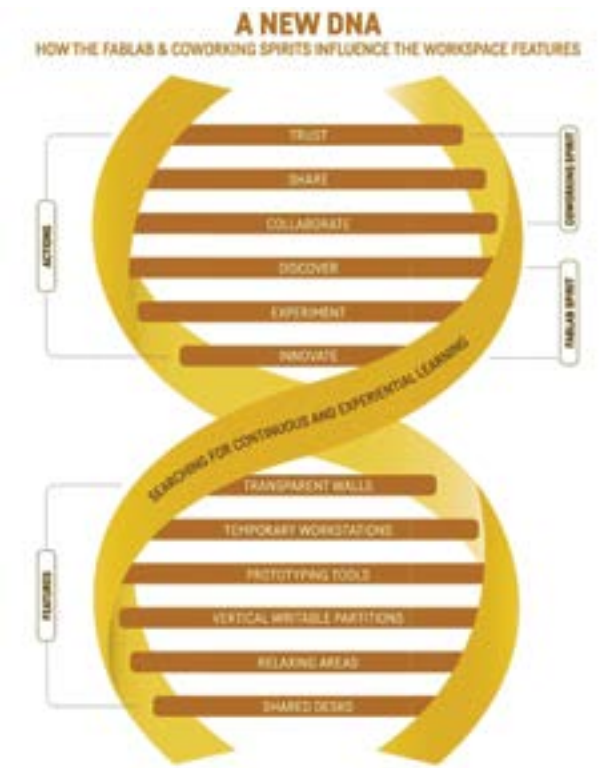
The coworking model provides a perfect example of a space conceived primarily for sharing knowledge. In the last decade, it has evolved from a model focussed on the ability to rent a desk for a short period to one that creates a community of workers.

This evolution transformed the people in the space first from strangers to colleagues and then into "co-workers". These are people who are not forced to work together but want to.

A growing body of research[viii] proves how such an environment is mutually beneficial – within limits – for professionals with a range of backgrounds, skills, and goals. Larger organisations are now also attracted to such spaces alongside their more traditional offices in order to enjoy their benefits and also disrupt the daily routine of working always in the same place at the same time and with the same people.

However, the most important change wrought by the adoption of coworking spaces is the chance to work alongside like-minded people in a form of competitive collaboration that sparks new ideas and new ways of learning.

Many of these processes are defined by their cross-pollination and take place while people work side-by-side on totally different projects, in a very informal and spontaneous way. These instances are supported by more structured events organised by the community of co-workers, events that have the common goal of creating shared experiences and highlighting which skills are needed most.



The advantages given by the adoption of experiential and continuous learning.

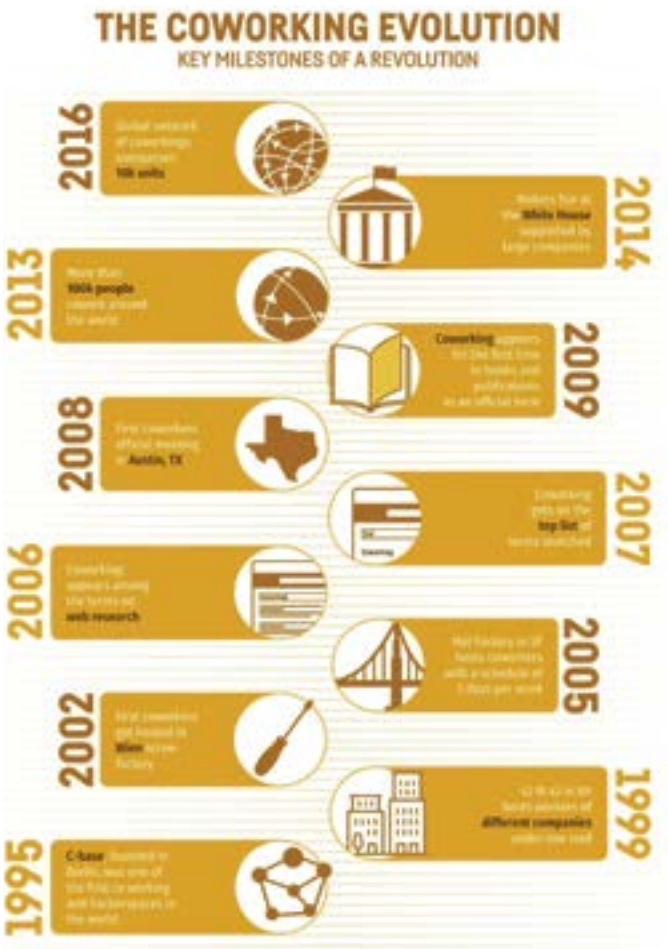
Data: 8 Reasons Why Experiential Learning Is The Future Of Learning, 2014

The fablab model is more experiential in its outlook. Also known as 'makerspace', a fablab consists of a blend of traditional and digital laboratory spaces and fosters a culture of learning by doing, innovating by experimentation, and encouraging 'successful failures'.

Makerspaces encourage both an interdisciplinary approach and the creation of project-based teams, which are ideal for hands-on learning and for compressing the traditional innovation process. Fablabs have also given birth to variants such as the "garage", in which engineers and technicians are free to explore their own creativity, challenge their ability to innovate, and create the spirit of a start-up.

Both coworking and fablab facilities are models in which a self-learning process is accelerated, engagement and collaboration among participants is fostered, and the gap between theoretical ideas and practical skills is shrunk.

These new kinds of workplaces provide an example of how the organisation of a workspace can foster personal growth and embed learning principles in the process of innovation. **W&P**



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The digital age was supposed to be a dream come true: a life of leisure filled with easy access to rich information and inexpensive but productive technology. In reality, it is more like a nightmare

Peter Thomson

TECHNOLOGY • STRESS • DIGITAL OVERLOAD • LEADERSHIP • DIGITAL AGE

Why are we all stressed out?

Welcome to the Digital Age dream:

At last we have the life of leisure we've been waiting for. Since the dawn of the Internet some of us have been predicting a form of 'technology heaven'. We have been anticipating a world where all the routine work is done by computers and the humans just get the interesting stuff. We have looked forward to the three-day week and four-day weekend. We have been preparing for work-life imbalance to turn into life-work harmony, where technology allows us to choose how we fit our work around the important things in life. We left stress behind in the Industrial Era and are all more relaxed about work. Now Artificial Intelligence (AI) is about to deliver the final pieces of this perfect picture.

> "Why are we not all enjoying the life of leisure that was predicted?"

Wake up! It's a dream.

Look around and the real world looks more like a nightmare! Instead of bringing shorter hours, digital technology follows us around 24/7. We have our smartphones at the dinner table in case there's an urgent message. We take our laptops on vacation with us so we can keep in touch. And we take hours of our day simply trawling through the email inbox finding the important messages from amongst the hundreds coming in every day. Instead of giving back control over our lives, technology has taken over. Instead of contributing to our peace of mind, it has increased stress levels.

> "Something has gone wrong on the road to the promised land."

The World Health Organization,[i] (WHO) having called stress 'the health epidemic of the 21st Century,' has recently stated that 'depression is the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide' and also, even more worryingly, predicts that by 2030 'there will be more people affected by depression than any other health problem'.

Why on earth is this happening? Why are we not all enjoying the life of leisure that was predicted? Surely technology has taken over some of the routine work leaving us with the more stimulating things to do? Flexible working has been around for a while now; surely it must have improved work-life balance?

It's clear that something has gone wrong on the road to the promised land. Yes, we now have technology that gives us flexibility in the way we can work. We are no longer tied to a desk for long hours because our office travels with us in our pocket. You might expect that the 'presenteeism' culture, that drives long hours at work, has disappeared.

Unfortunately not. We are still expected to turn up to meetings at our employers' premises and in most cases still expected to spend 'core' hours at a workstation typically staring at a screen or talking on the phone. Despite the ability for knowledge work to be done anywhere, the predominant model is still based on a fixed workplace.

We have simply added digital communications on top of the physical pattern of work. So instead of just dealing with the 'in-tray' on the desk and leaving it behind at the end of the day, we now have the email 'in-box' that follows us around.
The presenteeism culture, that had people sitting at their desks into the evening to impress their boss, has now been replaced by 'virtual presenteeism' where the boss now expects replies within an hour to his/her emails almost any time of day or night, any day of the week.

How have we allowed this to happen?

This was the question faced by the Future Work Forum[ii] two years ago when one member of this group of consultants raised the problem. It seemed that many organizations were suffering from 'Digital Overload' and were struggling to understand why. This observation triggered a collaborative effort from sixteen

contributors to get to the bottom of the problem, and the result is a book published earlier this year.[iii]

The key conclusion from this research was that the 'problem' is a leadership issue. Leaders set the example, and that is reflected in the behaviour of the people beneath them. Organizational cultures that encourage long hours and ignore the impact on the rest of peoples' lives are the cause of the problem. Digital technology is simply a tool that amplifies that reality and is the catalyst for increasing stress levels.

It is too easy for leaders to ignore this problem until it reaches a crisis level. Because 'culture' is an intangible subject it gets lost at board level amongst the hard financial figures and real operational problems. Executives will invest in capital equipment and would not deliberately run machinery above maximum speed/capacity knowing that it will break down as a result. They will ensure routine maintenance is carried out on equipment so it will work effectively and reliably.

But when it comes to the human resource they throw out these sensible guidelines and allow people to become overloaded. To further exacerbate the problem, they set an example of working long hours themselves, which encourages unhealthy working patterns.

"The presenteeism culture, that had people sitting at their desks into the evening to impress their boss, has now been replaced by 'virtual presenteeism' where the boss now expects replies within an hour to his/her emails almost any time of day or night, any day of the week."

Investing in human capital and using it productively is a key business goal. But it is one that often drops down the gap between the chairs around the boardroom table. The HR Director may have responsibility for attracting and retaining people. The Finance Director may be looking at the labour costs in the profit and loss account. The Real Estate Director will be focussing on occupancy costs and space utilization. Operational directors may be worried about achieving their goals with the resources at their disposal. But who is responsible for maximising the productivity of the workforce as a whole?

Now that we are entering the age of the 'gig economy' we have an even bigger question for leaders. Why do you need employees at all? Running an enterprise involves sourcing work from people and providing products or services to customers. Traditionally this was done by dividing the work into jobs and filling them with employees on fixed terms and conditions.

Now you can source the work from someone on the Internet and serve the customer through an app, so why have the burden of an employed workforce getting in the way? Maybe not every industry sector is as open to this approach as the ones occupied by Uber or Airbnb but many areas of work can now be sourced without the need for employing people directly.

If employment continues to be a source of stress and poor work-life balance, more and more people will be voting with their feet. Thus, it is important that organizations create an environment where people have freedom and control over their working lives and don't have to quit the 'rat race' to enjoy life as a whole.

This perspective involves a changed view of work. We have moved away from the era of Taylorism, where jobs were deliberately boring and repetitive. We now understand that employees will be engaged if they are trusted to use their judgement and given freedom to choose how they work. But we still operate a model where the employer defines the tasks and rewards the hours spent doing them. This is an 'input'-based reward system where effort is applauded, and long hours are seen as dedication.

The gig economy has shown us that there is an alternative approach to getting work done. Instead of rewarding effort we can reward output. In this model the person who is smart enough to get the work done in the shortest time gets more time with the family and is less stressed than the long-hours worker. But this approach conflicts with most corporate cultures, where being seen to put in extra effort and time is the key to success. And in the Digital Age that means being 'always-on'.

The organizations that will be successful over the next ten to twenty years will be those who recognize this change. They will still have employees, but they will measure them much more on what they achieve, not just on hours worked. They will give people freedom to choose how, when, and where they get the work done and not insist they come to a fixed workplace. When they do come to the 'office' it will be for a specific purpose. They will have chosen this as the best environment to perform some work. For some people that may be daily attendance as there is no other option. But for many it will be less regular as they find suitable alternatives.

Instead of technology being intrusive into people's personal lives it will become liberating. Under the control of the individual, the smartphone brings a choice of when and where to work. But more importantly it brings the choice of when NOT to work. Being measured on output means the pressure is off from being available all the time and instead is on delivering results on time. People end up with better life-work balance because ***they*** are making the choices.

Hold on! We started this article by saying this dream of a digital utopia hasn't emerged so far. Why is it going to be any different in the future?

Like many changes in society, it takes time to build up pressure for change. But once the dam is broken change is likely to flood in. The retail market is a good example. We have had Internet shopping for twenty years, but it is only now seriously impacting the high street. Major retail chains are in trouble because it is easier and cheaper to buy online. They have to adapt the shopping experience to attract footfall in the stores and introduce their own Internet outlets to compete for the home-based customers.

So it is with the 'work' market. If I can get paid as well, or better, by providing output directly to customers and I can do it on my terms, then that looks attractive. I might be able to advertise my services on the Internet directly or use an intermediary to provide me with work. I have a choice to stick with conventional employment or try the alternative. As with retail customers, we might soon see a time when people who are 'customers' of employers no longer like the offering and prefer an alternative.

The smart leaders will avoid this conflict by recognising that they are managing work rather than employees. They will make work attractive and may well buy outputs from individuals instead of buying their time. They will see that their competitive advantage is tied up in the quality of work produced and the value for money they are getting from people, regardless of whether they are employees or not.

This, however, is not the death of the organisational culture, it's the reverse.

Instead of relying on culture to spread throughout the organization under its own steam, culture must be explicitly managed. When everyone was working under the same roof at the same time that was easy. The behaviour of senior managers could be seen by everyone, and culture was what people experienced on a day-to-day basis.

Now that employees are working virtually, they cannot absorb culture from their surroundings in the same way. And many of the people working for the organization are no longer employees but are contractors or suppliers, so the values of the organisation cannot be left for people to discover as they sit at their desk in the company office. Values have to be communicated clearly to staff at all levels and be backed up by managerial practices that demonstrate them.

> **"Who is responsible for maximising the productivity of the workforce as a whole?"**

It's not sufficient to have a set of values written by senior management and simply posted on the notice board. Saying that the company cares about its employees and then allowing them to suffer from stress is poor leadership and will result in high staff turnover. Saying that work-life balance is important and then rewarding long hours in the office will result in low engagement levels. Organisational leaders must review formally-documented working practices to ensure they reflect the culture the leaders desire.

Many organizations are in the process of moving from the 'Command and Control' culture of the 19th Century to the 'Trust and Empower" climate suitable for the 21st Century. They have introduced agile working schemes and redesigned their workspace to allow for more flexibility. They may have a wellness programme with healthy food in the restaurant and subsidised gym membership.

But if people are grabbing lunch on the run and don't have time to go to the gym it's all a bit pointless. Unless there is a tangible change in behaviour nothing has really altered. And this reality provides a new challenge. How do you transmit culture to a distributed workforce through channels other than face-to-face experience?

How people today identify with their 'employer' is no longer through the beautiful corporate building or fancy furniture. They may spend more time working from home or at a hub than in the corporate office. And when they are there they could be at a different desk each time. So now they experience the culture from the way they are treated by their manager and colleagues. But most of these interactions are electronic. They receive hundreds of emails from people they've never met and have team meetings on conference calls because no one is ever in the same place at the same time.

> **"How people work, and the freedom they have to choose their own work environment, is critical for today's knowledge economy."**

Thus, the atmosphere in the virtual workplace replaces the impression from the physical workplace. If the technology is slow, the information flow is intermittent, and the content is irrelevant, then it's hardly surprising if engagement is low and productivity falls. If the email inbox is filled with copies of emails with long distribution lists, it can be demoralising. If team members appear to be sniping at each other or trying to score points, it doesn't help cohesion. And if there is an unwritten rule that all emails get answered

within a few hours, it doesn't support a healthy stress-free life.

We need to take some lessons from the physical office and apply them to the virtual one. In designing office space we think about the well-being of the occupants and how conducive the workplace is to productive work. Why don't we do the same when designing the online working environment? When introducing a new technology, do we ever ask what it will do for the mental health of the users? Yet we are very concerned about the physical health of the occupants of our workspaces.

One solution that is now being tried by many organizations is mindfulness. The concept is too easily dismissed as some strange Buddhist meditation practice that has no place in the serious organisation. But companies such as Google point out that in the last century nobody paid much attention to physical fitness as being a concern for employers. Now they are viewing mindfulness as 'fitness for the mind'.

It makes business sense for employers to invest in improving the quality of brainpower in the workforce.

> **"We need a new discipline of 'work design' that combines understanding of psychology, sociology, and technology."**

This perspective also aligns with the wishes of the next generation of workers who are looking for quality of life, with work integrating into a meaningful and satisfying existence.

How people work, and the freedom they have to choose their own work environment, is critical for today's knowledge economy. We need leaders to think through how people can be most productive and what constitutes a healthy working experience.

We know, for example, that concentration drops off rapidly if people are tied to a desk for long periods. But how do we stop people from being tied to technology instead? That question is not being addressed by the IT department or HR.

There is no equivalent to the office designer in cyberspace. We need a new discipline of 'work design' that combines understanding of psychology, sociology, and technology. This is the key to the successful 21st Century organization, and it's about time leaders took some notice. **W&P**

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He headed up the HR function for Digital Equipment for Northern Europe for 18 years leading up to the dawn of the Internet. On leaving DEC, Peter became a Visiting Fellow at Henley Business School. At the same time he formed Wisework Ltd, now a leading consultancy in the field of smart working. Peter is also co-author, with Alison Maitland, of the business bestseller *Future Work*, now in its second edition.

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Both work and the workforce are changing at an increasingly rapid pace. We must understand the workforce of the future if we expect to design future workplaces that work

Kay Sargent

WORKPLACE DESIGN • DEMOGRAPHICS • GIG ECONOMY • SPACE AS A SERVICE • EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

Generationally speaking

We are living in a time where things have never moved so quickly, yet we are also living in a time where they will never move so slowly again. We work differently today than we did five years ago, and in the coming five years we will work very differently than we do today. In our rapidly changing world, we are more and more focused on designing workplaces for the unique attributes of people and organizations. But to do so, we need to understand the workforce we will be designing for.

Today's intergenerational workforce is composed primarily of individuals born between 1945 and 1995, a 50-year span of unprecedented social and technological change. The current workforce can be divided into four groups, or cohorts, who share certain characteristics based on the social influences present in their formative years.

- **Traditionalists**, born from 1925 to 1945, are loyal, formal, respectful of rules and authority, and patriotic. They place duty before pleasure. In the workplace, they highly value job security and being recognized for their experience and dedication.
- **Boomers**, born in the "baby boom" of 1946 to 1964, are cooperative, optimistic, and idealistic. They highly value personal growth and gratification, and they challenge authority, but they were also the first workaholics. In the workplace, they prefer face-to-face conversations, and seek to be valued and respected as people.
- **Generation X**, born during the "baby bust" of 1965 to 1980, are skeptical, independent, self-reliant, and entrepreneurial. They were the "latchkey kids" whose parents divorced and mothers entered the workforce en masse; as young adults they witnessed the AIDS epidemic and the end of the Cold War. They were the first generation that didn't expect to work for one employer their whole career. In the workplace, they value direct communication and dislike being micromanaged.
- **Millennials**, or Generation Y, born from 1980 to 2000, are realistic, practical, civic-minded, and technologically fluent. Raised by "helicopter parents" in a world made increasingly unstable by both terrorism and the Internet, they are the most highly educated generation yet; one in three of them possesses a college degree. In the workplace, they prefer to be coached rather than managed, and they value challenging work more than high salary or job security.

> "We are living in a time where things have never moved so quickly, yet we are also living in a time where they will never move so slowly again."

Over-analyzed Millennials

The arrival of the Millennials coincided with advances in technology that untethered us from the workplace, thereby enabling a rise in mobility. And with greater mobility comes more options, and the need to create compelling spaces that people want to come to, that draw them in, and that engage and empower them. Because now they have choices.

As Millennials mature and move into their next life stages, their desires and needs are shifting. A recent Leesman survey[i] showed fewer differences between Millennials and Baby Boomers than were previously believed to exist. Life-stages actually have a bigger impact than generations. Most 20-year-olds are idealistic, ambitious and driven regardless of their generation. That is not something that was unique to the Millennials.

And every generation has embraced and brought new technologies with them to the workplace. The Gen Xers took us from the drafting table to Computer-Aided Design and Drafting (CADD), so a claim of being technology-savvy is not something unique to the Millennials. Change has always been a constant, and each generation has brought in its new ideas, new tools, and new ways of thinking.

The Millennials, however, have probably been the most over-analyzed generation of our time. You can't define a generation by a snapshot in time; you need to give them time to grow,

mature, and establish their own legacy. Yet the Millennials have been judged solely by what they were like in their early 20's. And yes, they are ambitious, demanding, and filled with high expectations; but those are all attributes of a generation that will drive, and adapt to, change. And that is exactly what we need today to stay relevant and competitive.

Emergence of Gen Z

But a fifth group is on the horizon. Generation Z, born after 2000. The oldest members of this new generation are now in college and poised to emerge on the work scene. They grew up with even more technology than Generation Y did, hence they are also dubbed the "sceenagers," or the "always-on" generation.

This group is truly the first of the "digital natives." But the pressure to be always available, 24 hours a day, is creating anxiety, emotional detachment, and interpersonal difficulties resulting from a shortage of real-time, face-to-face human interaction. And their patterns physical inactivity and sleep disturbances are weighing heavily on them as well. In fact, the World Health Organization predicts that "Techno-stress"—the feeling that you need to be connected 24/7—will be the health epidemic of the next decade[ii].

> **"If employers want their Gen Z workers to be able to do anything requiring more than a couple of minutes of sustained attention, they should plan for work environments that help the Gen Z's to dial down, not up."**

If employers want their Gen Z workers to be able to do anything requiring more than a couple of minutes of sustained attention, they should plan for work environments that help the Gen Z's to dial down, not up. Members of this generation need comforting, soothing environments that enable them to achieve a higher level of thinking and do what they do best.

To help Generation Z, and everyone else, focus on work and aim for simplicity and comfort, we need to provide a variety of work zones tailored for different kinds of tasks, and to create "team-based environments" that support community and a sense of belonging. We need to design spaces that minimize visual clutter, simplify navigation, intensify contrast, and provide plenty of light – both for the aging Gen Xers and the overstimulated Gen Z's.

Other Demographic Attributes

While much of the talk regarding workplace dynamics centers on the singular aspect of a multi-generation workplace, it isn't the sole element of demographic. Globalization, the ability to work from anywhere, and social economic shifts have together created a diverse workforce in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, and personal traits. Today we are becoming a majority of minorities:

- Asian, Hispanic, and multi-racial groups will represent most the workforce by 2044;[iii]
- 47% of U.S. workers are women.[iv] And while there is plenty of room for improvement, women are rising to top ranks;
- Both men and women are working longer hours and retiring later;
- Gen Y already outnumber Boomers;
- Gen Z will start to join the workforce in less than five years;
- Twelve percent of adults have a learning disability. Most are entitled to Reasonable Accommodations under the Affordable Care Act;
- Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) diagnoses have increased 53% in the past decade;[v] and
- Introverts represent between 35 and 50% of the population.[vi]

Diversity not only expands the talent pool, it leads to better financial performance, increased innovation, higher employee and customer satisfaction, a better public image, and more.[vii]

Workplace design and work cultures must go beyond accommodating personal differences; they need to invite, embrace, and celebrate them. Understanding who you are designing for and how their attributes and traits affect the way they work must be factored into the design of your workspaces.

Attracting and retaining talent is the leading driver of workplace change today. Nearly half (46%) of US employers and 40% of global employers report that they are struggling to fill open positions.[viii]

Yet the war for talent is just heating up. Baby Boomers will continue to exit the workforce over the coming decade. With them will go the experiences, knowledge, and talents they've acquired over a lifetime of work. The pipeline of recruits will be strained to replace them, both in numbers and in meeting the demands of Information-Age work. As the shift to a knowledge-based economy accelerates, employers will increasingly battle over a shrinking pool of qualified workers. We need to embrace the notion that we are designing for a more culturally diverse workforce.

Need for Choice and Flexibility

The workforce of tomorrow will expect, even demand, flexibility. According to the World Economic Forum, global business leaders predict "changing work environments and flexible work" will be the number one demographic/socio-economic driver of workplace change over the next decade, ahead of even cloud technologies, big data, AI, and robotics.[ix] Specifically the Form report refers to a changing business model that includes a greater integration of external labor. The workforce today wants, and increasingly expects, to both earn a living and have a life.

- 64% of employees would opt for a lower-paying job if they could work away from the office (Deloitte)[x];
- 74% of employees say "being able to work flexibly and

still be on track for promotion" is of top importance in a potential job (Ernst & Young)[xi];

- 74% of employees say "working with colleagues, including my boss, who support my efforts to work flexibly" is of top importance in a potential job (Ernst & Young)[xii] ; and
- 70% of parents and 59% of non-parents say lack of workplace flexibility, including no option to telecommute, would cause them to seriously consider leaving a job (Ernst & Young)[xiii].

The Gig Economy

We are on the crest of a new wave that fluidly draws its strength from both internal and external talent from wherever it is to wherever it is needed. A report by McKinsey suggests that 10% to 15% of the working age population derive its primary income as independent laborers.[xiv] Another 10% to 15% do independent work, but don't fully rely on those earnings; and an additional 17% of traditional workers would work independently if they could.[xv]

Understanding the dynamics of moving from a full-time workforce to contractor-based workers will be critical to having the right workers, with the right skills, when and where they are needed.

But the gig economy is still in its infancy. Driven by new generations of entrepreneurs, the growth of the contingent workforce is also having an impact on the workplace. The traditional way of working – commuting to the same office every day – isn't working for many people today.

Be it the grueling commute, the lack of opportunities, the rift in the employer/employee contract, or the rigidity of the traditional 9-to-5 work schedule, people and companies are looking for additional options. Today 83 percent of U.S. adults believe the sharing economy makes life more convenient and efficient, and that "access is the new ownership."[xvi] The sharing economy has enabled companies to use shared place as a viable part of the real estate strategy.

Independent workers rank their work-life satisfaction an average of 7% higher than traditional employees. When asked why they like their independence, words such as 'empowered,' 'choice,' 'creativity,' and 'work atmosphere' bubble to the surface.[xvii] Even gig workers who work that way, not out of choice, but because they need the work, report higher satisfaction than those who are office-bound.

Similarly, entrepreneurs report greater satisfaction with their work and life than traditional employees. In many cases, they, and the people who work for them, are happy to toil away in cluttered garages with what most of us would consider to be only the most basic of comforts. Their strong sense of purpose, connection, and choice is what drives them.

Space as a Service

The importance of place takes on new meaning as we evolve beyond simply providing space to creating what is now often referred to as "Space as a Service", or "SaaS." Shared workspaces offer easy and quick access to space in prime markets and reduce the need for long-term leases, furniture and equipment procurement, and the liability and demands of ownership.

This scenario can be ideal for companies that need to expand rapidly, face unpredictable growth patterns and/or a lack of resources to develop a new workplace. They usually do not mind an upcharge of between 15 to 20 percent and an extended period of obligation to the space, typically 3 - 5 year commitments. The fact that they can take less space initially but add more when and where they need it syncs up well with the ebb and flow of work and the demands of the workforce in many industries today.

A new model is emerging in which building owners offer available shared workplace and amenities to their tenants as a way to accommodate their shifting needs. This model alleviates the risk associated with longer-term leases and frees up all parties to react more quickly to changing market conditions. Companies are beginning not only to embrace elements of SaaS but also to design their own creative offices and "maker spaces." In many markets coworking and shared space is becoming the new amenity.

Human-Centric Focus

Why is the focus on workforce so important? In an age in which ideas and knowledge drive the economy, people are the chief currency of every business. With up to 80 percent of a company's expenses coming from human resources, it's vital that the workforce be engaged and empowered to enable the highest productivity. Yet according to the latest edition of Gallup's annual engagement survey, only 32 percent of the U.S. workforce is engaged, with 50.8 percent not engaged and 17.2 percent actively disengaged.[xviii] So if you are designing the workplace of the future, you need to understand who the workforce of the future will be.

Though many factors contribute to these statistics, research by Advanced Workplace Associates (AWA) and the Center for Evidence Based Management[xix] has identified six factors that have the most impact on knowledge worker productivity:

1. Social cohesion
2. Perceived supervisory support
3. Information sharing
4. Common vision, goals and purpose
5. External communication
6. Trust.[xx]

In workplaces that lack these attributes, engagement and productivity often suffer. A well-designed workplace that reflects a company's organizational DNA can be a powerful tool for enabling social connections, sharing information, and building communication and trust.

Just as a bad attitude is contagious, a good one can be infectious. A study by the Harvard Business School and Cornerstone OnDemand showed that in densified spaces populated with productive people, the efficiency and effectiveness of nearby workers increased. But employees who sat near toxic workers experienced a "*spillover effect*."[xxi] This sphere of influence diminishes outside a 25-foot radius. Given that the average per-person space allocation in the modern workplace

is 150 square feet, one bad egg—or disengaged worker—can negatively influence up to 16 people without moving from his or her desk.

Entrepreneur Jim Rohn once said that, "*You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.*"[xxii] And National Geographic Fellow and New York Times bestselling author Dan Buettner has identified "Blue Zones" as the parts of the world where people live the longest. On his list of the nine specific characteristics of these places is choosing the right tribe, which means surrounding yourself with people who support positive, healthy behaviors.[xxiii]

Work How

However, the traditional practice of limiting people's ability to choose where they sit in a workplace often has a negative impact on their satisfaction and capacity to focus on their work. Free-address workplaces, where work locations are unassigned and employees are free to move to a variety of settings and select one that matches their work style for the task at hand, enable people to select the right tribe. Because they are not assigned a permanent spot, free-address employees can self-select their neighbors.

This organic selection process diminishes the ability for the negativity of toxic employees to rub off on others. But in the void of strong leadership and/or a positive culture, self-selection can also lead to the formation of cliques. It is important to use the space as intended and reinforce that by encouraging movement, use space based on the task at hand and empower employees with choice.

No workplace can single-handedly solve an HR issue or cure employees of a bad attitude. But we can offer people options, embed healthier alternatives, and provide choices. We need to ensure that people – our most valuable asset and the true currency of business – are happy, healthy, engaged and empowered. By truly understanding an organization and designing space that is tailored to match its organizational DNA, we can create workplaces and user experiences that help everyone succeed.

To gauge how we are doing we can start by looking at the basics. We are human beings, and therefore most of us are creatures of habit, territorial, and social pack animals. Open work environments have often disturbed our ability to meet those basic human needs, and they therefore do not enable us to meet the basics of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. To do that, an environment must first meet the physiological needs of the occupant – lighting, temperature, movement, air, noise.

Once those basics are met we can then begin to address secondary concerns of safety, privacy, and ergonomics. But if those needs aren't met, it is consciously or even subconsciously unsettling and we are unable to achieve a higher level.

When people were in offices with private workstations most of them felt somewhat grounded and protected. But when we move people into an open environment they often feel exposed and constantly distracted. The open environment may have created more open communication and collaboration, but it often came with an unwanted side effect - unsettling discomfort. In the open plan people often feel more vulnerable; that prohibits them from operating at a higher level that produces greater engagement and personal satisfaction, to say nothing of organizational productivity.

"With up to 80 percent of a company's expenses coming from human resources, it's vital that the workforce be engaged and empowered to enable the highest productivity."

When we create environments that address the basic means of people and allow for a healthy balance of focused individual work and collaboration, via variety and choice that encourages movement, we put the power of place in the hands of people.

The workplace of the future is about what you do, not where you do it. We are focusing less on *WorkPLACE* and more on *WorkHOW*. As a side effect to this new paradigm of work, the very purpose of an office will change. Instead of being a place that you go to for 40 hours a week, the office will morph into a place where you go to engage others.

After all, work can happen, and is happening, anyway, or what is the real purpose of the office? It is a connection point. And whether you work from your home or the corporate office has less to do with personal preference and more to do with the type of work you do and the amount of interaction you need to be effective.

If your business is oriented primarily towards sales and consultative activity, then not only do you not need to be in the office every day, you probably won't make any money if you are. On the other hand, if your business is primarily creative or professional services, then bringing your team members together so they are synergized, think as a unit, and ideate collaboratively is critical.

Your space solution should follow the needs of your organization and your people. Space solutions today must be varied enough to accommodate a vast set of individual and organizational needs while being able to change on a dime.

As we shift from a "commodity-based" to an "experience-based" society, place takes on new importance. Organizations are looking to create "*curated experience*" and employing

"Experience Managers," "Place Concierges" or "Chief Cultural Officers"" to ensure employees' needs are met and they are engaged and vested in the organization.

These curated experiences often offer employees an ala-carte workplace experience with a menu of services, location, and support. Opportunities for sharing information – visually, graphically and via technology – are all important to connect teams today and are often the most-overlooked element in any space solution.

Today's intergenerational workforce needs to have the ability and flexibility to adapt to rapid changes. Understanding the workforce we will be designing for is a start; empowering them with options, choice, and solutions that can meet the rapid pace of change is critical to the success of any company. More so than ever before, the diversity of the workforce demands a diversity of workplace solutions. **W&P**

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The Transdisciplinary Workplace Research Network (TWR) welcomes participants to the first conference on work environment research, to be held in Tampere, Finland, from 20-22 September 2018

Suvi Nenonen

TRANSDISCIPLINARY • RESEARCH • WORKPLACE • WORKPLACE STRATEGY • WORKPLACE DESIGN

The first Transdisciplinary Workplace Research (TWR) Conference

The Transdisciplinary Workplace Research Network (TWR) welcomes participants to the first conference on work environment research, to be held in Tampere, Finland, from 19-22 September 2018.

We encourage both academic and professional researchers to join us. This conference aims to bring together work environment researchers from all relevant disciplines, from both academia and practice.

This focus includes, but is not limited to, the physical work environment (e.g. facilities management, real estate, architecture and design, building physics (HVCSE), bio-technology), the social work environment (e.g. human resource management, behavioural sciences, organisational science, business, health, environmental psychology), the digital work environment (e.g. ICT, virtual reality), and work environment management (leadership and management, economics). The program will include presentations based on 57 submitted abstracts, from which the number of accepted papers is 18.

The conference will provide delegates insight into both current topics and future interests. During the two days, we will be discussing and analysing research on the work environment from many different perspectives, with researchers from around the world working in parallel sessions.

Venue:
Kampusareena, Tampere University of Technology
To Register:
http://www.tut.fi/en/twr2018/registration/index.htm

In addition to parallel sessions, the conference will also provide attendees the opportunity to discuss further enhancement of the field in special sessions and workshops aimed at jointly identifying future roadmaps for related sub-themes. This format will provide many opportunities to form and join transdisciplinary, international research initiatives.

In addition, a pre- and post-conference excursion will be organised to visit innovative workplaces in Tampere, and an attractive social program is also available. Pre-conference activities include visits to local co-working places and activity-based work environments in Tampere. After the conference there is an opportunity to participate in an interesting campus walk at Aalto University Campus in Espoo. There are many interesting new working and learning environments in the area, and of course you can see a wide variety of Alvar Aalto's architecture.

Well-being has been the most popular theme of research submitted for the conference.

One of the papers asks: What do we know and what should we know about healthy workplaces?

There will be a research report on measuring outcomes and value from health and well-being workplace interventions. If you are interested in flourishing workplaces you can learn about multi-sensory approaches including, for example, how plants and flowers affect happiness.

Psychological wellbeing, occupational medicine, and impacts of human resource management practices will be discussed; these perspectives are indeed achieving the transdisciplinary research initiatives. Finally, the conference will include research conducted in terms of workplace-related predictors of exhaustion symptoms. This topic is important also for one of two keynote speakers; he is Nigel Oseland.

"I am looking forward to come to Finland", he said, emphasizing the close connection to nature as an important part of wellbeing. Nature and the nature of the workplace is also essential for Siri Blakstad, who will touch in her keynote speech on the theme: **"Work is no longer where it used to be"**.

It has been said that wellness advantages will play a more important role in the future than ever before. Happiness and wellness are walking hand in hand, and lots of effort has been made to discover the design solutions, concepts, and actions taking place in new kinds of workplaces.

We will also discuss many different workplace concepts. Research about activity-based offices includes insights about how to translate design to the actual use of activity-based offices as well as how to adapt to workplace change.

This new approach is focused on need-based work environments. Narrative design will also be discussed, indicating how narratives and visualized stories can enhance the use of an activity-based work environment. The keywords of the research focusing on open office layouts are: collaboration, employee views, affordances, and obstacles and hindrances of layout solutions for user experiences. Additionally, co-working offices are investigated from the perspective of investments in the property market as well as by understanding consumer preferences and wellbeing.

What would a conference about workplace be without insights into knowledge worker productivity? Two papers are dedicated to that topic, while several more focus on communication and networks. There is data gathered from business centres, campus environments, co-working places, and also from work-from-home experiences. In addition, technology is brought into the picture by sharing research about co-located meetings and collaboration. A tool for mapping out the Hub-concept is also being used to assess areas and environments that are dedicated to industry-university collaboration.

Methods of user-oriented design like the customer journey will be presented. In order to link the diverse disciplines to one big picture, new workplace trends will be on stage as well.

> **"The question following how to design a workplace is how to *manage* workplaces."**

The future and culture are major topics that will be captured in several presentations.

The question following how to design a workplace is how to *manage* workplaces. The topics addressing that question include change, power, the Internet of Things, and sustainability. In addition to knowledge workers in diverse work environments, university and campus environments will also be discussed.

Based on our review of the papers and abstracts we can claim that much of the research is evidence-based, and the data to be presented has a distinct international flavor. Research from Mexico to Australia, as well as diverse European countries, provides inspiring insights but also a wonderful opportunity to network and learn, meeting both new persons and new disciplines. Architecture, corporate real estate management, business, diverse managerial approaches, psychology, and technological approaches will be prominent, just to mention some areas of interest.

The time is right for getting a transdisciplinary crew on board. As the first organizer of the conference it warms my heart that the some of my research papers have been focused on the challenges of building frameworks and methods for transdisciplinary workplace research.

And not only research: the work environments in practice require holistic and systematic approaches. It is all about people, teams, and organizations, the diversity of tasks, and their requirements for physical and digital platforms.

In order to help people be happy in their work environments we need to learn more, collect more evidence, and look bravely to the future, towards socially sustainable ways of working and living. We wish the workplace community welcome to experience this first conference; the planning of the second conference in 2020 is already about to start. Join us now, and join us in the future. **W&P**

Suvi Nenonen

Suvi Nenonen, adjunct professor, Tampere University of Technology is in charge of the first TWR-conference. She is acting with the help of an international board chaired by Rianne Appel-Meulenbroek from Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands. Suvi´s research is about people and buildings as well as usable digital and physical work environments.

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