

THE WORLD OF WORK IN 2018

Future Trends from the Global Partners
of WORKTECH Academy



INTRODUCTION

The future of work can be difficult to circumnavigate, especially on a global scale. We are living in uncertain times when the pace of workplace disruption appears to be relentless.

We face changing social attitudes and ideas that are renegotiating our relationship with work. In an era of 'fake news', growing distrust, data bias and polarised opinion, can we still believe those around us?

We face changing technologies that might set out to encourage communication and connectivity, but can also be used as a tool to distance communities and isolate people. In the era of rapid automation and AI, how can we make technology work for us?

We face changing economic conditions in which the gap between the haves and the have-nots is growing. How can we build a fairer, more equitable workplace?

To help you find a way through the workplace maze, WORKTECH Academy and its network of six Global Partners have produced this report on The World of Work in 2018. I am grateful to our collaborators at Aramark/LifeWorks Restaurant

Group, BVN Architects, Condeco Software, Fourfront Group, Haworth and UnWork for their insights and ideas.

Trends and predictions are described in five core categories: technology, design, culture, place and people. These headings mirror the organisation of material on the WORKTECH Academy platform.

Whether you seek ways to attract and retain the best talent, respond to the changing demographics of the workforce, entice employees to the workplace when there are so many alternatives to choose from, or explore new corporate real estate models to foster innovation, one thing is certain – you won't be alone in 2018.

Professor Jeremy Myerson,
Director, WORKTECH Academy

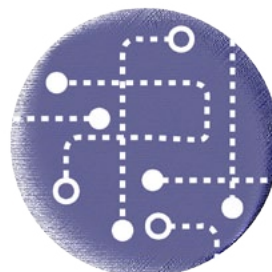
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Contents

TECHNOLOGY 4



DESIGN 6



CULTURE 8



PLACE 10



PEOPLE 12



TECHNOLOGY

From biometrics and facial recognition to a user-predicted workplace, human-centric technology will be more responsive than ever

In 2018, the wait for smart buildings to catch up with smart users will at last be over: 'real-time real estate' will start to seamlessly integrate a range of technologies into the workplace to respond to individual needs.

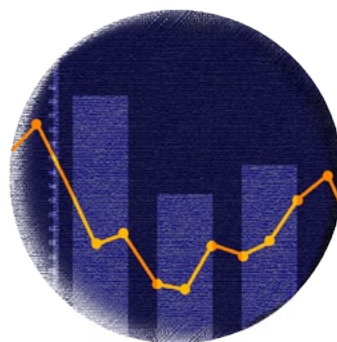
Smart space will explode as things connect and the big platform players launch smart building systems. The Internet of Things will finally take off as people accept that inanimate objects can 'talk' to each other – connecting the unconnected will become the new normal inside the workplace in 2018. Smart buildings will be clustered to form smart precincts, entire mixed-use districts offering the latest digital services to drive the tech economy.

Big data will become a new differentiator for real estate professionals – those with the foresight to add data analysts to their teams will deliver new value to corporations by providing insight into not just how real estate is performing but importantly how people are behaving in buildings, who is in and what they are doing.

Workplace apps will drive things forward as the new must-have technology, linking everything from adapting the environment for wellbeing to managing in-building social networks. The app-centric workplace will become a reality in 2018.

Biometrics and facial recognition technology will replace the use of laborious passwords, representing a huge leap forward in communication and helping to create a more tailored workplace experience for every building user.

In the technology-enabled workplace, digital assistants like Amazon's Alexa will evolve rapidly to update sales lists, email colleagues, tell you to take a break, allocate you a parking spot, book your meeting room or even order your meal for the end of the day in the family home.



As artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics enter the workplace, we may well see the first robot receptionist in 2018. But the smartest action could be at intersection of AI and human intelligence, which might introduce computer simulations for everyday decision-making, including workplace strategy.

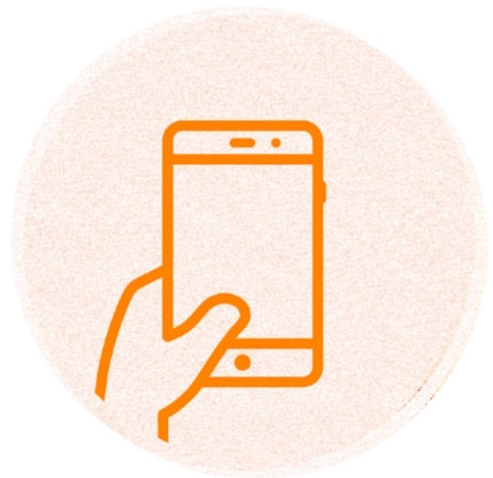
What we will increasingly see in the augmented era is a workplace that is user-predicted as opposed to merely user-centered. AI will map behavioural patterns to pre-determine how people will use space and even predict when there might be a maintenance issue.

Fast-improving voice recognition technologies piloted in consumer electronics and vehicles are also destined to hit the workplace, switching the focus from command-driven to conversation-driven.

New, increasingly fluid, multi-modal ways to collaborate between people across locations will emerge as a seamless handoff between devices such as smart phones and smart whiteboards, which will interact with the smart building. As a result of new technology, more inter-company (rather than intra-company) collaboration activities will be remote, planned, multiple-source and synchronous.

Generally, with the relentless rise of the cloud, work will become more independent of place. All one will need is a device, a connection and the cloud as documents become synchronised across all platforms and connectivity becomes 'unconscious'.

“Connecting the unconnected will become the new normal...”



DESIGN

Data-driven design and neighbourhood environments will be the drivers for collaboration, community and connectivity in the next generation of workplace design

Architects and designers will increasingly scrutinise and leverage big data to create innovative and connected spaces in 2018. Data shows patterns in building occupancy, email communication, calendars and behaviour – these organisational networks will be mapped over the physical environment to create more meaningful spaces for people to interact and communicate.

An evidence-based approach to design using deep data will help optimise the workplace for business efficiency while firmly placing employees at the heart of change. Some cautious experiments in staff-led co-design and participatory design will continue in 2018.

There will be a tipping point for agile work, now a feature of nearly every new workplace. This

will see a move away from uniform open plan, which is widely seen as noisy and distracting, and back to private and enclosed spaces with good acoustic qualities for focus work.

The growth of conversational computing and video conferencing, which means spending more time talking to screens and devices at work, will help drive this trend. So will growing concerns that blind faith in agility and collaboration will not solve the office productivity crisis.

Neighbourhood-style design, in which people are clustered on the plan for collaboration and identity, will also have a strong impact in 2018. This approach limits the distractions typically present in an open plan office and, by connecting each neighbourhood to a central atrium, creates a sense of community across the organisation.

As office interiors evolve, the holistic concept of 'landscape' will make a comeback in 2018. This term refers not just to the formation of space planning with an accent on creating a range of



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DESIGN

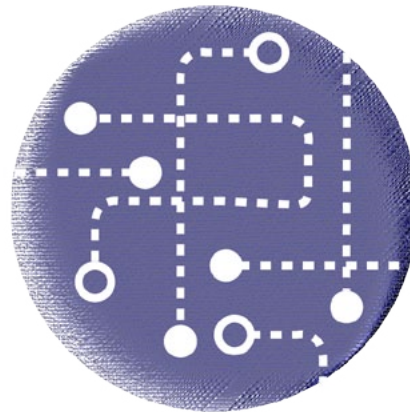
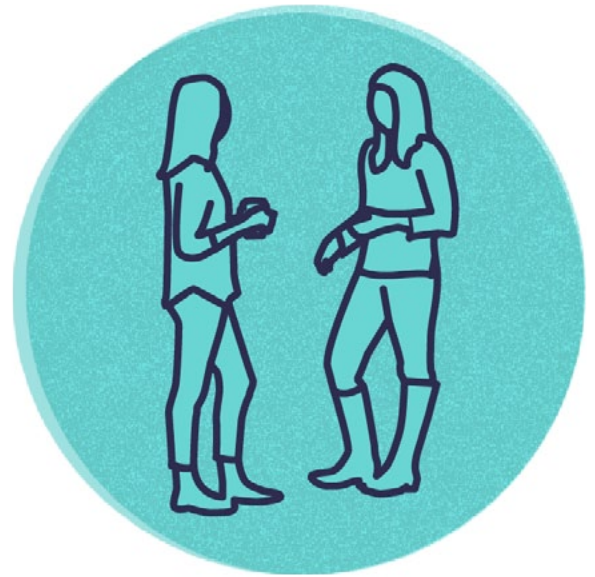
different and distinctive neighbourhoods, but it also leans towards the landscape of the interior – bringing the outside in. Biophilia is set to be a huge trend for the coming year.

Workplace as brand asset will be in the radar of most architects and designers in the aftermath of the landmark HQ schemes at Apple, Bloomberg and elsewhere. Companies will invest more carefully in their workplaces to differentiate from their competition while improving the employee experience.

But narrative workplace schemes are likely to be subtle and intriguing in their design language, rather than the overt, advertising-led brandscapes of the recent past.

The design process itself will shift in 2018 as more architects and designers use new technologies such as AR (augmented reality) and VR (virtual reality) to review and progress projects with clients. Robotics will also be piloted for labour-intensive building and fabrication processes.

“There will be a tipping point back to enclosed spaces...”



CULTURE

Forging the right company culture can be a complex endeavour, but a curated workplace experience and a broader mix of social amenities can be key building blocks

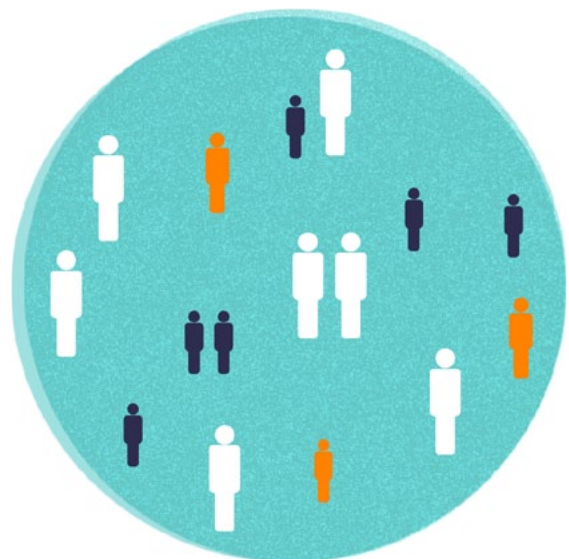
As the employee experience assumes greater importance, company cultures will come under the microscope as never before in 2018. For many organisations, moving the needle in the direction of a peak-performance culture through individual improvement will be a priority. For others, the accent will be more generally on creating a more unified, harmonious and collaborative community.

Whatever the approach taken, food services that are authentic, customised and local will provide the glue to bring workplace culture together. According to research, where there is a valued food service within five minutes of a workstation, productivity increases by up to 20 minutes per employee per day.

From food courts and retail-style restaurants to more nimble pop-ups and coffee corners, the food-centric workplace will help to bridge communication and collaboration gaps within an organisation. Companies will also study the links between nutrition and neuroscience as wellbeing in the workplace tops the cultural agenda.

To get the organisational culture right, aspirations for the future work environment will include a wider mix of amenities – not just food but also childcare, retail, yoga classes, fitness centres and other concierge services.

The accent will be on orchestrating an entire curated work experience. And this focus on experience will not just be aimed at employees but visitors, family members, suppliers and potential recruits - all those coming into the building for meetings, events, interviews and so on.



Company cultures will need to respond to wider societal pressures such as the need for businesses to be more open and transparent in decision-making, more sustainable in operations and more ethical and fair in investment. As a result, culture will come together more closely with design and technology in 2018, as architectural and technical decisions are increasingly viewed as visible and tangible evidence of cultural preferences.

In this connected world, one can envisage the corporate office no longer as a closed building for single use but as an open environment where suppliers, customers and partners belong to an ecosystem in which the cultural sum of the parts is greater than the whole.

“Wider societal pressures will influence work experience...”



PLACE

The workplace as a destination, as a service and as a community hub more geared to people's lifestyles will start to radically reshape real estate practice

Destination will be everything in 2018. If an organisation doesn't create a place where their people want to be, they won't come to the office. This work-life demand will see the workplace adapt its approach to embrace a wider mix of professional, public and private uses.

In many places, we can expect a move towards office buildings and campuses sharing with public libraries, housing, childcare, schools, post offices, community projects, public event space, non-profit enterprises and neighbourhood markets. In essence, the workplace will become part of a broader community space where people can live and work.

The office building won't lose its status as an essential organisational hub – it will continue to be important as a place where people can meet and collaborate, belong to a team and feel part of a culture. Studies suggesting that more remote working leads to less engaged workers will back that up.

However, the provision of more local hubs and regional centres will help to create a more flexible, user-centric property model, which fits better to people's lifestyles and reduces costs associated with expensive, poorly utilised big-city facilities. High costs in central business districts will continue to be a challenge in 2018 as all available space is taken up by coworking or corporate flex space.

Consumerisation of the workplace will be another key theme in the coming year, as commercial real estate shows growing interest in the Workplace as a Service (WaaS) model. Organisations will pay a monthly or annual subscription for a portion of real estate that includes the handling of building operations and amenities.



THE WORLD OF WORK IN 2018

PLACE

This model will not just allow organisations to be more flexible with the space they occupy, it will also respond to new Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) regulations in the US that come into effect on 2019. These aim to improve financial reporting of leasing transactions and could lead to shorter leases, with increased pressure on landlords and brokers.

As a result, we may see more companies investigating in full-serviced or turnkey offices as opposed to standard office leasing. Hosted and serviced environments such as WeWork and its competitors, where core tenants can expand and flex into shared or membership-based working environments, are set to become more popular. At the same time there will be many new specialist entrants to the coworking market, such as the

Ministry of Sound in the UK launching cowork space aimed at people in the music business.

While the service-provider coworking movement will continue to grow, there will be a corresponding rise in corporate coworking or incubator spaces, as companies seek to bring innovation back in-house and engage employees more successfully. This will be a priority for facility managers and HR teams as they work to retain and attract the best talent.

Meanwhile the merging of the workspace and hospitality industries will continue apace in 2018 as coworking appears in hotel lobbies, showrooms, restaurants, conference venues and shopping centres. The energy these spaces create blur the boundaries between public and private, and relate back to the core idea of work as destination.

“Moving to a more user-centric property model...”



PEOPLE

Mental health awareness, flexible staff contracts and a commitment to greater transparency are set to top the people agenda in 2018

Growing global awareness about mental health will impact the workplace in 2018. Organisations have long catered for physical wellbeing, but shifts in the physical and cultural landscape of the office will be required to address mental wellbeing and mindfulness.

Technology will play its part to help combat stress, anxiety and burnout through virtual reality (VR) headsets creating escapist scenarios that promote mindful thinking. So will the emergence of new standards such as the WELL Building standard.

In the war for talent, employees will be attracted to a workplace that caters for their lifestyle goals and supports their overall wellbeing in all its aspects, not just the environment. Staff contracts will become more flexible to fit around the lives of individuals – with more incentives, extended leave, parental leave and time-in-lieu arrangements. Job satisfaction will be redefined in new ways.

Issues of trust and transparency will be uppermost on the HR agenda (witness the furore at the BBC in the UK over equal pay) – companies that get it right will be rewarded with loyalty; those that fail to cover this will face growing challenge from a more diverse and demanding office workforce.

Lip service to diversity only at the stage of recruitment will be addressed by a broader engagement with diversity throughout the workplace – diverse thinking, diverse teams, diverse behaviours and diverse spaces. Companies will focus on creating a more heterogeneous workplace rather than the old 'one size fits all'.

At the same time, while much will be made about the expectations of millennials, the debate around the different generational cohorts present in the workforce will shift in 2018 away from points of difference to what all age groups share in common in relation to the work environment.



The needs of experienced older people, working long beyond the normal retirement age in part-time, project-based and consulting roles, will receive more attention amid the demands of the knowledge economy. So will the issue of intergenerational fairness as young people in major cities continue to struggle with housing shortages and wage stagnation.

A data-driven design approach will support the agenda around wellbeing, trust, empowerment, fairness, and individual and group identity. Building occupancy data, room booking and diary data will contribute to a richer picture of how people work, collaborate and use spaces. This in turn should inform a needs-driven approach to designing and managing facilities and services, as well as make it easier to predict future needs.

But a data-driven approach will also provide no room to hide. Algorithms will spot poor performers by correlating trends and big data analytics. There will be support for human capital development based on analysis and historic performance data, but also the fear of selection and gamification.

There is some irony in people-centred environments being shaped by the technical instruments of sensors and data analytics to improve the experience. But it is likely that IT and HR departments will play a much greater role in determining the physical attributes of the workplace, busting the silos of the traditional organisation.

Companies could also follow the example of universities in establishing 'safe spaces' to protect the sensitivities of particular groups – and also set up 'brave spaces' for different views to be aired.



“A flexible approach will fit around the lives of individuals...”



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Condeco develops and delivers workplace technology solutions that improve the way people work and how organisations operate across the globe.

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UnWork

UnWork is a management consultancy and research house focused on the future of work, and the collision between people, property and technology.

<http://www.unwork.com>



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About WORKTECH Academy

WORKTECH Academy is the global online platform and network for the future of work and workplace. It is brought to you by Unwired Ventures, the producers of the acclaimed WORKTECH conference series now in 18 cities around the world.

WORKTECH Academy captures and curates new knowledge about people, place, culture, design and technology from right across the WORKTECH network.

We analyse industry trends and showcase the best corporate practice, academic thinking and innovation in the field.

Workplace professionals face new challenges in a rapidly changing world - WORKTECH Academy can be your guide to the future.

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