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A GUIDE TO
BETTER COMMUNICATIONS
IN THE AGILE
WORKPLACE

Communications Advice for the **Hybrid Workforce**

CONTENTS

The New Workplace

Technology, tastes and expectations have been pushing organizations to rethink how their workplaces work, and then the COVID pandemic accelerated that trend. Employee expectations have changed, and there are a number of new ideas on what the workplace can look like. While completing tasks and achieving goals is still important, ideas of new workplace configuration and systems put people first.

In this guide, we'll look at several ideas that are getting implemented around the world in an effort to adjust to these changing times. Concepts such as Human-Centered Design (HCD), Activity-Based Working (ABW), Agile Work, Flexible Work, Remote Work and Hybrid Workplaces are explained. Specific methods for adjusting the workplace, such as office neighborhoods, room signs, office hoteling, hotdesking, QR codes and augmented reality (AR) space booking are all explored, with suggestions on how any organization of any type or size can start changing the way they work.

There are many tangible benefits to adopting some or all of these notions. Employees are more engaged, which means they are more productive. It's easier to attract talent and also to keep them around longer. Some newer technologies enable analytic metrics, so organizations can have real insight into how things are being used (or not used). And, of course, digital signage remains one of the best tools for achieving and enhancing these goals.

Ultimately, all of this impacts on the bottom line. Employees that stay longer don't need to be replaced, which is expensive. New physical configurations of workspaces can lead to a reduction in overhead costs, like rent, electricity and so on. Many of these new methods save time, and time, after all, is money.

While much of what follows is about adjusting the physical aspects of the workplace, the underlying message is that organizations need to change their mindsets in order to become more agile. As unexpected events impact everyone's lives, companies that can adjust quickly will thrive and survive, while moribund organizations still stuck in the past will flounder.

There's no reason the modern workplace can't be responsive to employees' needs and a pleasant place to interact with, yet still get the job that needs to be done, done. It just takes a shift in perspective.

As mentioned before, some people say they'd take a pay cut in order to work from home. That's partly because, when looking at things from a wider perspective, it's actually in their best interest. Almost a third of people working remotely personally save $5000 a year in costs (commute, lunches, daycare, etc.) and companies save an average of $10,000 per year for every employee that works at least half-time out of the office. But there's more to the bottom-line benefits than just dollars and cents.
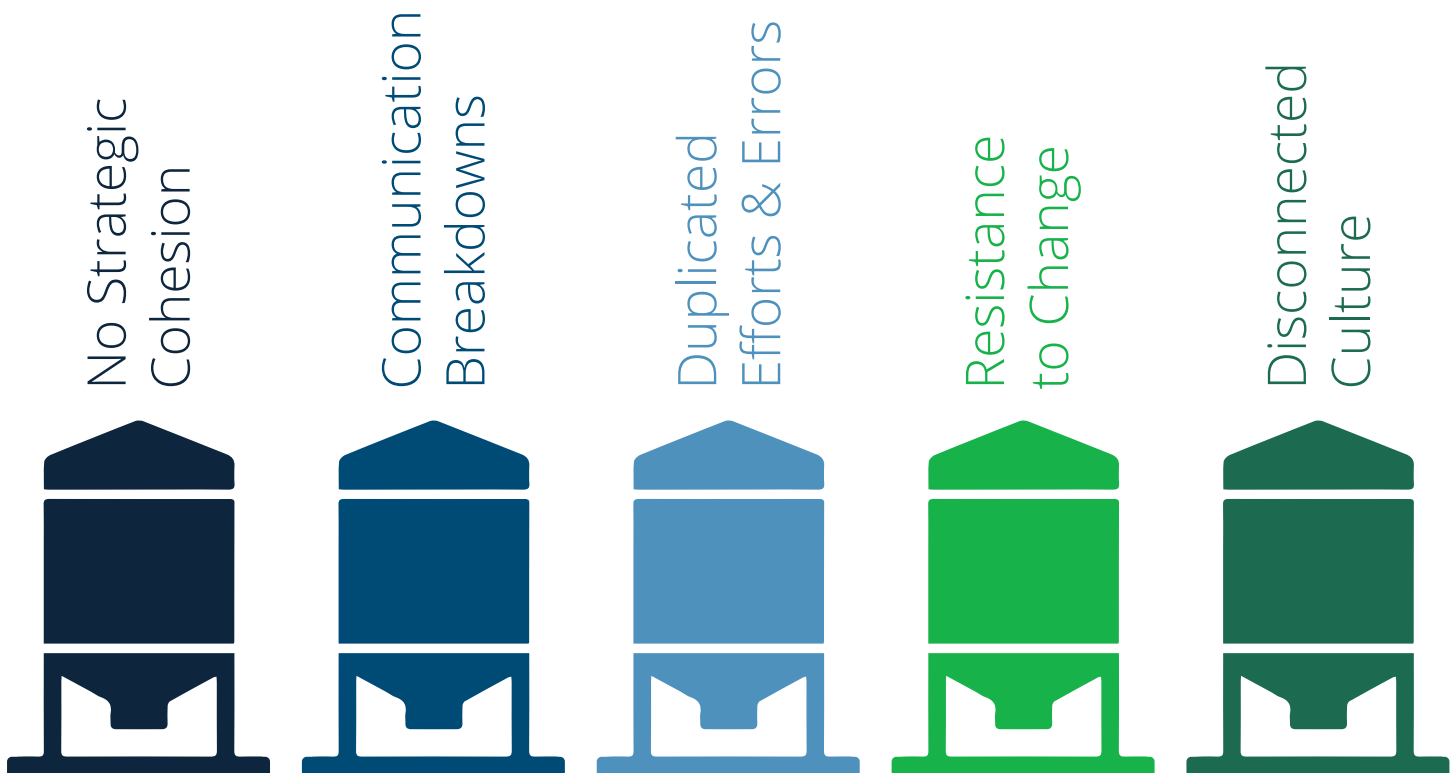
Corporate Silos Don't Help, They Hurt

In today's fast-paced business environment, effective communication is critical to success. Communication is what allows companies to share information, collaborate on projects and respond to customer needs. However, when corporate silos are formed, communication is hindered, and the negative impacts on the business can be significant.

What Are Silos?

Corporate silos are the organizational structures that exist within a company, where each department or team operates independently with little to no interaction with other departments. This can create barriers to the flow of information, ideas and resources, sometimes resulting in inefficiencies, duplicated efforts and missed opportunities for innovation and growth.

Corporate silos arise for many reasons, such as differences in priorities, conflicting goals, lack of trust and poor communication. Silos are often created when departments become too focused on their own goals and objectives and lose sight of the bigger picture. They can be particularly common in large organizations with complex structures and multiple layers of management, where different departments may have their own cultures and ways of doing things.

No Strategic Cohesion

Communication Breakdowns

Duplicated Efforts & Errors

Resistance to Change

Disconnected Culture

DISADVANTAGES OF CORPORATE SILOS

How Silos Impact Communications

Corporate silos often result in a lack of coordination and collaboration between departments, which can cause significant communication breakdowns. The impact of corporate silos on communications can be felt in many different ways, and the following are some of the most significant negative impacts that silos have on communications:

Duplication of Efforts: When departments work in isolation, they often end up duplicating efforts, resulting in wasted time and resources. For example, if one department develops a new product, and another department is working on a similar project, they may not be aware of each other's work and therefore duplicate their efforts.

Lack of Knowledge Sharing: When departments don't communicate with each other, they miss opportunities to share knowledge and expertise. This can result in missed opportunities for innovation and growth and can mean employees are looking for answers or solutions that already exist.

Slow Decision Making: When departments work in isolation, decisions can take longer to make. This is because there's no one to coordinate and facilitate discussions between departments, which can result in delays and missed opportunities.

Inconsistent Messaging: When departments aren't communicating with each other, they may inadvertently send inconsistent messages to customers or stakeholders. This can cause confusion and erode trust in the company.

Poor Customer Service: When departments don't work together, they may not be able to provide customers with the level of service they expect. This can lead to dissatisfied customers and lost business.

Overcoming Silos

While corporate silos can be detrimental to communication, there are strategies that companies can use to overcome them. Here are some of the most effective strategies for breaking down corporate silos and promoting better communication:

Establish a Shared Vision: It's important to ensure that all departments have a shared vision of the company's goals and objectives. This will help to align everyone's efforts and create a sense of shared purpose.

Encourage Collaboration: Companies can encourage collaboration by creating cross-functional teams and projects. This will help to break down barriers between departments and encourage knowledge sharing.

Foster a Culture of Communication: Companies should foster a culture of communication by promoting open and transparent communications across all levels of the organization. This will help to build trust and encourage collaboration.

Invest in Technology: Companies can invest in technology that facilitates communication and collaboration between departments. This can include tools such as instant messaging, video conferencing and project management software.

Provide Training: Companies should provide training to employees on effective communication and collaboration. This will help to ensure that everyone has the skills they need to work effectively with others.

DIGITAL SIGNAGE
CREATE | MANAGE | DELIVER

AxisTV Signage Suite software gives you the tools to craft stunning visual communications that connect and engage your viewers wherever they are.

Our content management software gives you an array of content sources, smart playlists and flexible scheduling tools to attract viewers, connect people and drive results.

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- Drag media files right into playlists for quick scheduling
- Select from a growing library of easy widgets to design messages, templates and layouts
- Pull in content from a shared network folder
- Customize data display from calendars, Excel, XML, JSON and other sources
- Design screen layouts with built-in interactivity
- Publish to HTML5 playlists for webpages, email and mobiles to reach remote employees
- Track playback, user activity and more with analytics
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Our platform is flexible enough to fit every budget, whether you want daily communications using simple slides, or deep data dives with customized data integration and visualizations on screens.

Get on premise or cloud-hosted solutions, with perpetual or subscription licensing.

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Digital Signage Help Break Down Silos

Digital signage software can be a powerful tool for breaking down corporate silos by promoting communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing. Here are some ways in which digital signage can help overcome corporate silos:

Encouraging Communication: Digital signage can share company news, updates and messages in real-time across multiple departments. This helps ensure that everyone is on the same page and opens up communication between departments.

Creating a Sense of Community: Digital signage can be used to create a sense of community within the organization by highlighting team successes, sharing employee achievements and recognizing outstanding work. Personal milestones, such as birthdays and work anniversaries, can also be part of these efforts.

Sharing Information: Digital signage can be used to share information across departments. For example, one department can use screens to share product updates or valuable information about customer feedback with other departments.

Promoting Collaboration: Digital signage can promote collaboration by showcasing ongoing projects or initiatives that require input or assistance from other departments. This can help to encourage cross-functional collaboration and break down silos.

Highlighting Opportunities for Growth: Digital signage can highlight opportunities for growth within the organization. For example, if a department's working on a new project or initiative that has the potential to benefit other departments, digital signs can promote this opportunity and encourage participation.

Displaying Training Materials: Corporate digital signage can also display training materials and resources that can be accessed by employees across departments. This can help to ensure that everyone has access to the same information and skills they need to perform their jobs effectively.

Corporate silos can have a significant negative impact on communication within an organization. Leaders need to foster a culture of collaboration and communication, encourage cross-functional teams and projects, and ensure all departments are aligned with the organization's overall goals and objectives. By breaking down silos and promoting better communication, companies can improve their efficiency, innovation and overall success.

The New Culture

Company culture refers to the shared values, attitudes and practices that shape the way an organization operates. It encompasses everything from the organization's mission and goals to its daily operations, communication practices and social norms. A positive company culture can help businesses attract and retain top talent, while a weak or toxic culture can drive employees away.

A strong company culture creates a sense of identity and purpose among employees and helps align their behavior with the organization's values and goals. It can impact employee well-being, motivation and job satisfaction, as well as business performance and competitive advantage.

Company culture can vary widely depending on the organization's size, industry and history. Some companies prioritize innovation, risk-taking and experimentation, while others prioritize stability, predictability and loyalty. Some cultures are more formal and structured, while others are more flexible and informal. And just because we use the word "company", this isn't restricted to offices. Schools, hospitals, retailers and all other types of organization have their own culture.

Regardless of the specific values and practices that define a company's culture, it's essential for leaders to cultivate a culture that aligns with the organization's goals and values, while also supporting employee well-being and growth. A positive and motivating culture can help attract and retain top talent, increase employee engagement and drive business success.

Culture Matters

A strong company culture that creates a sense of community is essential for employee engagement, well-being, retention, innovation and performance. Businesses that prioritize building a positive and supportive culture are likely to attract and retain top talent, drive business growth and achieve long-term success.

Moreover, a positive company culture can contribute to a sense of pride and identity among employees, which can increase their attachment to the organization. Employees who identify with the company's values and mission are more likely to feel a sense of purpose in their work, leading to higher job satisfaction and reduced turnover.

In contrast, a negative or toxic company culture can drive employees away. A culture that fosters unhealthy competition, favoritism or disrespect can demotivate people and erode their sense of belonging and loyalty. Such negative cultures can also harm employee well-being and lead to increased stress, burnout and absenteeism. And in today's online world, the odds of your toxic practices spilling into the real world are pretty high, so be warned.

It's worth noting that creating a positive company culture isn't just about offering employee perks or organizing team-building events. While these are important components, a strong culture requires a deeper commitment to shared values and a clear vision for the organization. It's about creating an environment where employees feel safe, respected and empowered to contribute their best work and to push themselves to excel.

Also, it's important to recognize that a company's culture will evolve over time. As an organization grows and faces new challenges, its culture will need to adapt to meet the changing needs of its employees and customers.

Benefits of a Positive Company Culture

A positive and motivating culture can help foster a sense of community, pride and commitment among employees, leading to higher job satisfaction, lower turnover, and reduced recruitment and training costs. Leaders must be intentional in nurturing a positive culture that supports company objectives while remaining responsive to feedback from employees and other stakeholders.

Creates a sense of community

A strong company culture goes beyond simply having a set of values and beliefs that are shared by employees. It's also about creating a sense of community where employees feel connected to each other and to the organization as a whole. This sense of community is vital for fostering engagement and commitment among employees.

When employees feel like they belong to a community, they're more likely to be personally invested in the organization's success. They understand the importance of their work and how it contributes to the larger goals of the company. A positive culture can help employees feel like they're part of a team working towards a common purpose, which can boost morale and motivation, leading to increased productivity and job satisfaction.

Impacts employee well-being

A strong sense of community can have a positive impact on employee well-being. A positive culture that promotes work-life balance and supports employee mental health can help reduce stress and burnout, which can have a lasting impact on productivity and job satisfaction.

Work can be a significant source of stress for many people, and a positive company culture can help alleviate some of that stress. When employees feel supported and valued, they're less likely to experience burnout or other negative effects of workplace stressors, and are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work. This, in turn, can lead to better mental health and higher job satisfaction.

Encourages employee retention

A strong company culture and sense of community can also help companies retain talent. When employees feel connected to their colleagues and the organization, they're more likely to want to stay with the company long-term.

A positive and motivating company culture can help foster a sense of loyalty and commitment among employees, which can reduce turnover, and save the organization money on recruitment and training costs. By contrast, a negative culture, especially one that goes public, can hinder recruitment efforts, as well as damage public relations and brand perception.

Foster innovation and creativity

Another benefit of a strong positive company culture is that it can foster innovation and creativity. When employees feel empowered to share their ideas and take risks, they're more likely to come up with new and innovative solutions to problems. They're also more likely to feel engaged and invested in their work, which can lead to increased productivity and better overall performance.

A strong company culture that supports innovation and creativity can also help attract and retain top talent, especially among younger job seekers. By fostering a culture that encourages experimentation, exploration and risk-taking, businesses can also stay ahead of the curve, remaining agile and adaptable.

Improves employee performance

Finally, a strong sense of community can impact employee performance. When employees feel valued and supported, they're more likely to go above and beyond in their work. Also, when employees feel like they belong and are part of a team, they're more likely to be motivated to work together and support each other. This can lead to higher levels of employee engagement and retention, which can have a significant impact on business performance.

A positive workplace culture that emphasizes community and teamwork can also create an environment in which employees feel appreciated and recognized for their contributions. When employees feel valued and supported by their colleagues and managers, they're more likely to be happy and satisfied in their jobs, which in turn leads to improved job performance. This can lead to higher levels of productivity and better business outcomes, ultimately contributing to the success of the company.

Digital Signage to Reinforce Company Culture

Organizations can use digital signage in a variety of ways to improve and reinforce community and values. By sharing visual communication on topics such as company culture, DEI, well-being and work-life balance, businesses can improve employee engagement, foster a sense of belonging and ultimately drive better business outcomes. Here are just a few ways you can use digital signage to reinforce your company culture:

Reinforce company culture and values

Digital signage can be a simple and effective way to share information about a company's culture and values. For example, an organization can display its mission statement, core values and employee benefits in simple, eye-catching designs. It can also show data like event schedules, countdowns and progress to goals to keep everyone updated and motivated.

If a company is involved in community outreach, or has broader social programs like sustainability initiatives, you can show info about those plans on screens. By sharing this info with employees, you can help build a strong sense of community and foster a shared understanding of what your organization stands for.

Promote diversity, equity and inclusion

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are key concepts that have gained significant attention in recent years, particularly in the context of workplace culture. In fact, there are a number of variants of the acronym, including D&I (diversity & inclusion), DIB (diversity, inclusion and belonging & access) and JEDI (justice, equity, diversity and inclusion).

Digital signage can be a powerful tool for promoting DEI and other initiatives in an organization. By using digital displays to communicate messages and celebrate achievements, companies can help to build awareness and support for DEI programs among their employees. For example, digital signage could be used to display diversity and inclusion metrics or to spotlight employee success stories from diverse backgrounds.

Additionally, digital displays can be used to communicate updates on DEI initiatives or to promote events that celebrate diversity. Messages can also help everyone understand why the organization is promoting these policies, and how these initiatives fit into the overall company culture.

Boost employee motivation and recognition

When a company creates a culture that recognizes and rewards employees who go above and beyond, employees are more likely to be motivated to perform at a high level.

Businesses can use digital signs as an effective tool for employee motivation and recognition in several ways: celebrate employee achievements, such as reaching sales goals, completing projects or winning awards; share positive feedback from customers, clients or colleagues about individuals or teams; and show trivia or quotes that inspire employees, adding a little fun into their day.

Bolster mental health and well-being

Employee mental health and well-being are critical factors that can impact productivity, job satisfaction and overall job performance. Digital signage can be used to promote mental health and well-being initiatives, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), mindfulness training and other resources.

You can also show things to promote physical well-being like exercise tips, healthy recipes and desk stretches. By promoting these initiatives on digital signs, businesses can help to reduce the stigma around mental health and encourage employees to take advantage of available resources to feel healthier and happier.

Support work-life balance

In today's fast-paced business environment, work-life balance has become increasingly important to many employees. Digital signs can be used to promote work-life balance policies and encourage employees to take advantage of flexible work arrangements.

For example, a company might use screens to highlight its telecommuting and PTO policies, or to remind employees to take breaks and practice self-care. Employees will always respond positively to a workplace that cares about them outside of work.

These are just a few examples of how your digital signs can build and bolster your company culture. A lot of the content will depend on what type of culture you have, along with your communication style and platforms. Regardless of what you put up on screens, always ask yourself if a message will help or harm your culture.

Company culture matters to employees for a variety of reasons. It can impact their sense of belonging and community, their engagement and performance, their creativity and innovation, and their overall well-being. As such, organizations that prioritize building a positive and supportive culture are likely to attract and retain top talent, achieve long-term success and most importantly, make employees' lives better.
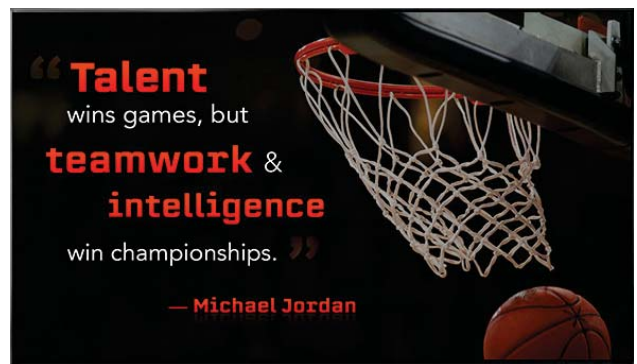
Human-Centered Design (HCD)

In the 21st century, technology, current ideas in corporate culture and a new generation are changing and challenging the very concept of what a workplace is and what it looks like. There have always been different sorts of spaces for work – offices are different from consulting rooms, studios and workshops are not the same as galleries or showrooms, on-site workers have different needs than off-site ones, and many spaces are multifunctional and can be reconfigured depending on what is needed at any given moment.

Labor is shifting from repetitive tasks to more varied and dynamic work. Employee engagement is now understood as a key factor in motivating employees to be more productive and increasing staff retention. Projects are increasingly being completed by small teams who share ideas and tasks, and both internal and external communications have been transformed by the advent of social networking.

There is no "right answer", no "one size fits all" of how to configure a modern workplace. As with so much in the modern age, it all depends on several factors – what your corporate culture is, who your employees are, what kind of physical space you have and how you use it, and what technology is best suited to increasing productivity and employee satisfaction.

Modern attitudes and systems are beginning to really get across a key difference between the modern workplace and those that have come before: today, work is not a place, it's an activity. And all organizations are made up of people.

Embracing the Differences

The old one-size-fits-all workplace is pretty much outdated. There are many diverse types of organizational cultures, and there are many types of employees. This is at the heart of what's known as Human-Centered Design, or HCD.

HCD is all about organizing and designing things to maximize the human experience. You probably already do this with your customers – how can you give them the best products and services possible, and gain their loyalty? Now extend that to your employees. Think about your office and processes from their perspective. Find methods that allow greater flexibility for your employees, empower them to make decisions and utilize particular work areas as they prefer, grant them a sense of ownership (which builds trust within the organization) and increase their wellbeing and health.

Obviously, people have to perform certain tasks in order to do their jobs, and optimizing workspaces for those tasks is still something to keep in mind. But we cannot forget that it's people who are performing those tasks, so the places people use for their jobs also need to be designed in a way that encourages the best from them.

There are many typologies out there as to different employee types, most of which are about what motivates people to excel. Very often, money is not the prime motivator, as more and more workers are making very clear – most of them will choose things like scheduling flexibility and other things that used to be considered experimental or "extra" over a pay increase and will leave one company for another in order to get those things. What once was thought of as "perks" are now expected to be part of any compensation package.

Defender

Friend

Star

Director

Builder

Expert

Creator

Spirit

Searcher

James Sale, creator of Motivational Maps, has made a list of nine distinct types of workers:

- the Defender – wants security, stability and clear roles and paths

- the Friend – wants fulfilling relationships and to belong

- the Star – wants to be respected and recognized

- the Director – wants power and influence

- the Builder – wants material satisfaction

- the Expert – wants knowledge and skills

- the Creator – wants innovation and change

- the Spirit – wants independence and autonomy

- the Searcher – wants purpose and meaning

How each type is treated, what they will or won't respond to, and how they are best communicated with will vary depending on each set of motivations.

How an office or pother work environment is organized can also affect different kinds of employees differently. More and more, flexibility is becoming key to not only attracting the right talent but retaining them.

Some newer ideas for workspace configurations include:

- **Group Desks** – clusters of desks that are available to anyone at any time, encouraging teamwork

- **Quiet Desks** – workstations off on their own, for when people need a quiet place to focus their concentration

- **Visitor Desks** – group or quiet desks that are designated for use by people who are visiting or just in the office for a very short while

- **Team Desks** – large tables for a group to have a collaborative meeting or discussion, but don't need the privacy of a separate meeting room

- **Huddle Spaces** – small private spaces for 1-2 people, isolated from the rest of the office environment; could be a booth, a work pod or a cabana

- **Standing Zones** – common spaces without furniture, designed for a super-fast meeting or quick conversation; the idea is to use these spaces for no more than 15 minutes

- **Super Desks** – new ideas for desks, from long high tables that are shared by people sitting on stools, to moveable desks that can fit together to make a larger work area or break apart into smaller spate ones; or very long desk areas that also include small huddle spaces in their design, making a mini office all in itself

- **Meeting Rooms** – for longer meetings, training sessions, presentations to large groups or longer collaborative sessions

- **Overlap Zones** – parts of the office where people from different departments or specialties can run into each other, fostering unplanned interactions that can spark creativity and collaboration

- **Lounges** – casual gathering spaces with conformable furniture where people can meet in an informal environment to collaborate or relax

- **Video Zones** – single desks, huddle spaces or meeting rooms with videoconferencing capabilities to connect remote workers, vendors and others to people inside the office

Digital Signage and HCD

Digital signage has been leading the way towards the digital workplace for some years now. Especially in an office environment where people are constantly moving from one location or workspace to another, nothing unifies the company more effectively. And with modern technology, you can turn any device with a screen into a digital sign.

You can publish a playlist of messages to any number of screens, and those screens can be anywhere you want – different rooms, different floors, different buildings, even different locations around the world using a cloud network. Or different screens can be targeted with different playlists for different audiences, letting you deliver unique communications for different cultures, spaces or teams.

You get your audience to rely on your digital signage by offering hooks - things like news feeds and tickers, current date and time, local weather and forecasts, commuter traffic data. They want this information, and you save them the time it would take them to look it up on their laptop or smartphone, and they see your corporate announcements at the same time.

In addition to messages about upcoming events, safety reminders, deadlines and whatever else your audience needs, you can display auto-updating metrics that show data changes in real time. Display progress towards goals to motivate your employees to push that extra little bit to get to the target. Show current energy and water consumption to encourage people to adjust their behavior, save money and be environmentally responsible.

Interactive touchscreens allow even denser message saturation. Searchable directories let people sift through substantial amounts of information quickly on a single screen. You can combine multiple playlists and data sources in one place for easy access. Having digital signage with interactive menus can let people see what's on offer in the on-site cafeteria and order right there from the screen. Or you could offer short training modules at touchscreen kiosks throughout your facility.

Then there are room signs. These are mounted on the wall outside meeting rooms, huddle spaces and other office hoteling areas, and show when a space is booked and when it's free. Interactive room signs let people schedule a space right at the sign, and the sign communicates with your calendar app, so there are no double bookings. Plus, you can see data on how effectively people are using your spaces. You can even integrate your online calendar app, room signs and large interactive screens to offer room booking from anywhere.
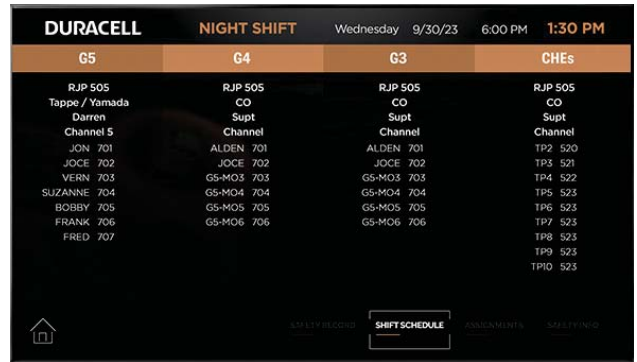
Digital signage is also a great tool to promote another modern workplace concept – microlearning. Show clear, concise snippets of information, like "How to Book a Huddle Space" followed by a stripped-down set of instructions, or "The Benefits of Snacking" followed by statistics on health and productivity. These short instructional messages get repeated throughout the day as people walk past your screens, and the information sinks in after just a few repeated viewings. This can also be a highly effective way to inform your employees of changes you make to the workplace environment as you implement modern things like relaxation rooms and standing zones.

Using Digital Signage to Promote HCD

At every stage of a project, the focus should be on users and other people involved – what they need, what they want, what they will find useful or interesting. In the digital signage context, it means getting into the mindset of the people you are trying to communicate with and trying to get them to engage and maybe even interact with what you're telling them.

It means asking the right questions at every stage of your digital signage deployment, including:

- Pre-deployment Planning
- Implementation
- Expanding to a larger deployment or other locations
- Continuous assessment and improvement

You want your digital signage to be the best it can be – it costs some money to get it up and running, and the better you use it, the more valuable it becomes. And you can't do this sitting at your desk, thinking about it.

Walk Around
Get up and roam the premises. See which digital signs and messages draw your interest, and which ones don't. Stand in one place for a while and observe how many people look at the screens, and if they just walk past or stop and linger.

Think about why they do what they do. If you have on-site venues, such as a café or commissary, and are using screens to drive traffic, ask both patrons and staff if they've seen recent messages, and if those messages increased traffic, or inspired them to go there.

Think about everything – even the placement of your displays. Is that one too high? Wow, that one sure gets a lot of glare in the afternoons. The best way to understand your audience is to become a member yourself.

Make Feedback Routine
You need a system in place that allows people to let you know what works and what doesn't. This should be commonplace, woven into the fabric of your organizational culture. Create a system, or series of interlocking systems, which allows people to give you feedback any time they want to.

This gets them interacting with your organization at a higher level than just recipients of information – it makes them active partners in an ongoing process of people communicating with people. For digital signs, this could involve periodic surveys, letting viewers vote on favorite designs or asking people to submit a simple suggestion form detailing what they'd like to see on screens.

Communication is a Group Activity
Imagine a cocktail party where everyone took turns speaking one at a time. How much fun would that be? Not much. At a party, you want buzz, a word that is also used to describe both excitement and word-of-mouth about something. In a world of social media, of tweets being official pronouncements and Facebook comments being used as news copy, it's all about the buzz.

Communicating with your audience isn't just the job of one team pushing content out onto digital screens. People today consume information, but they also interact with it. Websites that don't allow comments are seen as less trustworthy (what are they afraid of?), and old-style push-only communications are seen as hopelessly outdated and old fashioned at best, and as annoying and authoritarian at worst. People expect to interact, so use that to both your advantage and theirs.

Create message templates so anyone can create screen content, or publish design and layout guidelines so everything remains consistent. At the very least, set up an easy-to-remember email or web address where people can send message ideas.

Members of your audience can help create and curate content, but you also want them to interact with what's being shown. Make sure each message has some sort of measurable call to action – something people can do, preferably right then and there. On static screens, this could be a limited time offer ("Buy one muffin and get a second one free for the next hour", and then you track how many muffins are sold in that hour). Or you could have something right there that people can interact with (show messages about signing up for a blood drive, and have a table nearby with forms and information, maybe even people they can talk to).

You can also drive traffic to the web by supplying a QR code or short URL, so people can immediately get more information using their mobile device. On interactive screens and kiosks, people can simply push a button that says, for example, "Sign Up Now" and go to the online registration form right there at the sign.

An HCD Design Kit for Digital Signage

The company IDEO is one of the pioneers of HCD, and they break the process down into four stages: Inspiration, Ideation, Prototyping and Implementation. Looking at their website can give you some inspiration that you can turn into ideas that can become prototypes and get implemented. In this blog, we look at the first stage and how it can be applied to digital signage in your organization.

Inspiration

HCD says to "frame your design challenge", so maybe we should say "frame your communication challenge". For single messages, try to sum up the essential information in as few words as possible, then design the text around them. Ask yourself what you're trying to get your audience to do, and think of several ways to communicate that.

Make sure the important words are accented in some way – bold text, slightly larger font, placed in area of the screen where the eye naturally goes, etc. Would a picture help communicate some of what you want to say? You want your message to have maximum impact, so craft it wisely.

Then think about when to schedule it in the playlist – what the best time of day for this message is, how often it should be displayed in an hour, if it should only go to certain screens, etc.

When designing an entire implementation, use the same ideas to decide where to put displays, what kind and what size, and so on. How do you want people to interact with your digital signs in, say, the lobby? Would a big video wall be best, or would a series of smaller screens and interactive kiosks further your overall aims better?

Another part of this stage of HCD is asking the Five Whys. This is applicable when improving your digital signage offering. Are people following your calls-to-action? Why or why not? And ask why multiple times – drill down to get to the nut of the issue, find out why certain messages that succeed work and how you can apply those lessons to ones that don't work so well. You might have to keep asking why four or five times.

There's a nice idea at this stage before interviewing people to ask them to take snaps of everyday dynamics and moments. Getting a few people to walk around and snap a picture each time they see something appealing on your displays could be a great way to get feedback on what's effective and what isn't. Ask them to photograph things they like, but also things they don't. Then discuss the pictures they, and others, took when interviewing them.

You also want to talk to people – your audience as well as the people who create and schedule your content. If it's feasible to talk one-on-one with people, do so. If not, create a feedback system so people can tell you what works, what doesn't, and what they like and don't like. People are the focus of digital communications, so let the people be your inspiration. Ultimately, they are the judges of whether something is successful or not.

When you involve people in your digital communications strategy, make sure it's fun and not a chore, or yet another directive from on high. After going through the process a couple of times, they should be looking forward to the next chance to talk with you instead of dreading it.

No more than three people should be conducting the interview, and each person who is there should have a clear role (this one asks questions, this one takes notes, etc.) Make sure interviews take place on neutral ground – no one wants memories of being sent to the principal's office. Group interviews can also be highly effective – people will bounce ideas off one another, and they may feel more at ease in a group. If you have more than one interviewee at a time, have a strategy for encouraging quieter members to share their insights and impressions. Try to have a range of types when conducting interviews, power users and part- timers alike, so you can get the broadest picture possible about how effective your communications are.

Gamification is a great way to get people interacting with your message content. Tweaking your calls-to-action so they're presented as part of a contest of some sort (or a race against other people or teams) will get people's competitive spirit up. Having tangible prizes of value at the end of a "game" also encourages people to take part. Another benefit of gamification is that it builds a sense of community among everyone who knows about it – not just those who actually take part, but even people who are around in the background; they hear others talking about the game, or the prizes, or laughing about how fun something is, and it allows them to share in the experience. They might even be encouraged to actively participate in a future game, once they see how much people enjoy it.

The real point here is to inspire your audience – not just wow them with stunning visuals but make them all fans of your digital signage system. Allowing them to interact with the admin side of things by creating content to be scheduled, or by providing feedback to content creators, gets them thinking about the whole system more. And the more it's on their minds, the more attention they will pay to it. Even technophobes will start to shift their opinions – instead of screens everywhere, pushing content out at them in a Big Brother-type way, they'll start to see that communication is a two-way street, and that they also have valuable things to contribute to the ongoing conversation your digital signage enables.

> *"It is about them and for them. The closer the end-users' needs are analyzed and answered, the more successful the adoption or purchase of a solution. You iterate until you get it right from a customer perspective. This the power of HCD."*
>
> *~ Olivier Delarue, UNHCR*

INTERACTIVE
ATTRACT | EXPLORE | ENGAGE

Maximize the audience experience. Give people a fun, self-service option with touchscreen wayfinding, directories and more.

Maximize your digital signage real estate by offering touchscreen navigation to move through multiple pages and experiences for your viewers. Whatever your idea, our award-winning digital signage artists will combine imaginative talent with technical know-how to translate your ideas to the screen.
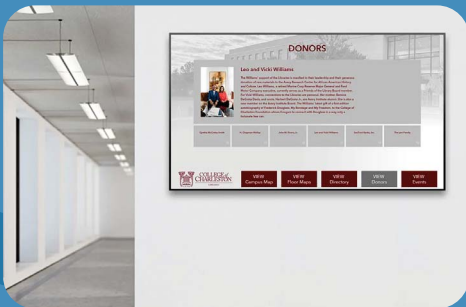
- Engage more visitors with interactive wayfinding, directories, donor boards, menu boards and more
- Match your branding with custom colors and fonts
- Present beautiful graphics with intuitive navigation
- Include quick-reference legends and ADA controls
- Offer touch and voice (contactless) user interfaces
- Get HTML5 designs to scale correctly on any screen size
- Let viewers continue interacting with your project on mobile devices with QR codes and SMS options
- Use databases to feed directories for easy updates you can do yourself

Everything we create is uniquely tailored to your project and specifically created for impact on digital signs. We'll also deliver the original artwork, media and uncompiled source code files with the final project.

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Ideation

You've found ways to get inspired in new directions, as well as inspire others, so now it's time for Ideation – giving form to your ideas and concepts. More specifically, how will all your wonderful ideas actually be presented in the real world? What steps need to be taken to turn ideas into a working prototype – in the case of digital signage, messages that have maximum impact and engagement.

In the first step, Inspiration, you gathered a lot of information – data, pictures, quotes, impressions, interviews, etc. Now it's time to Download Your Learnings (but not with computers). Get your team together and sit in a circle. Each team member shares the basics of the information they gathered on Post-It notes, as well as details as to how they gathered that information and who from.

As more team members report, the Post-It notes are put on a board where everyone can see them, grouped in a way that shows their similarities and connections. In this way, all the information begins to come together in a way that can be useful. It's best to do this when impressions are still fresh.

Then the group as a whole begins to Bundle the ideas into solutions – maybe two or three ideas can be combined into one more complex theme. As you do this, more patterns and themes will emerge. Workable solutions will begin to become apparent and can now be turned into elements in a single system that furthers your overall goals.

As individual ideas begin to fit into larger patterns, it may help you to draw some of them. Things like charts, Venn diagrams or matrices can make things clearer, and so easier to work with as you shape your Frameworks. You want to take all the ideas you've bundled and refine them into Concepts.

A Concept is something you can turn into a workable real-world solution. Think of things in terms of answering the question "How might we…?" The results of this process will drive everything else in this stage.

So, let's say that some of the information gathered in the first step includes:

- Pictures of hard to see displays (because they are too high or get mid-afternoon glare)

- Quotes from interviewees about previous messages and campaigns they remember that indicate that having high contrast colors and text draws their eye more

- Further quotes that show they remember funny mascots and characters created in previous communications efforts

- A lack of pictures or comments about messages that you thought would be effective (which tells you that they aren't)

- Observational records that show that people stop when they see video or movement on the screens

- Complicated graphs and charts don't seem to register with your audience

- Longer campaigns (a linked series of messages displayed over time) are more memorable to your audience than single messages

One of your team's goals this month is to reduce power usage in the main building. By assembling all the above information into clusters, you can see that one way to do that might be to create a mascot, say a smiling light bulb, to guide your audience through simple explanations of when to turn off lights and equipment, how to set electronic devices to enter energy saving mode, and why these are good ideas. You can see from the information you've gathered that complicated graphs of power usage would be a less effective way to reach your audience than these simpler messages. And pictures with slight movement, cinemagraphs or very short video clips will probably be more effective and engaging than just still images.

Of course, if you found instead that graphs and charts are more appealing to your audience than cute characters, then you would know that you should incorporate those into your digital signage offering. (Perhaps you could even incorporate real-time data in an attractive dashboard display.)

Another useful tool is to look at an overall goal, and then list all the barriers that can prevent that goal from being realized. What limitations get in the way? Have a brainstorming session about how to marry your overarching goals with the realities of your environment and resources. This is also an effective way to find out that some specific ideas won't work – it's okay to let them go and focus on what is achievable.

Mashups are a terrific way to stimulate thinking. You ask yourself what it would be like if one thing were like another. For example, if you want more people going to the on-site café, and you also find that your audience seems to prefer Instagram to other forms of social media, then you might ask "What would an Instagram version of a café look like and do?" Combining seemingly disparate concepts into one can stimulate a lot of innovative and creative ideas.

You need to isolate one quality from this Mash-Up that you can add to your overall solution. In the example of the Instagram Café, maybe it would be the ability to share information (specifically pictures), or to add filters to things (which could translate as more options to individualize orders at the café). Or it could be about some great food and drinks photos (shareable, could be turned into a gamified solution in which the best pic of the day gets a free drink). Be bold, be wacky – this is outside-the-box thinking.

And always be thinking visually. Is there an image you can use to further your goals rather than words? How will it all look on the distinct types of digital signs you're using? What have people told you attracts them, and what do they remember? Design for them, not for you.

With your designers and content creators, who are people, working with the information taken from the audience, who are also people, you can be sure that you are crafting digital signage messages that will engage and increase participation and engagement.

Prototyping & Implementation
Now we'll take a look at how Prototyping & Implementation – the final stages of the process – can be adapted to craft meaningful digital signage strategies.

First, you'll want to come up with a rapid prototype of what you want to accomplish. You are mainly looking for interaction – with your digital signage messages, with your calls-to-action, with your screens – so consider roleplaying the ideal interactions your audience would have after seeing your communications. This means actually going through the motions – you need to see something tangible that you can really work with.

After trying this out on yourself and your team, get some of the people you interviewed earlier to walk past a single display with your message on it, and see what their responses are. If you're trying to design a logo or mascot character, put it on a hat or t-shirt or poster, and see what people's reactions are. If you want people to follow a call-to-action, see if they take the correct steps. Then interview them and ask them for their impressions. Getting feedback is crucial if you're going to have long-term success with your audience.

The next thing to do is integrate that feedback, and then iterate another prototype. Use brainstorming sessions, frameworks, and other techniques from earlier stages to fine-tune your message. Then test out the new improved version on a select audience.

You are now ready for Live Prototyping. This is putting your messages out on multiple screens and observing if people stop and look, if they follow the call-to-action, etc. Spot check the audience with brief questions about what did or did not further your goals (keep it to three questions max). Then iterate some more.

You'll also want feedback from various stakeholders. Getting them on board at this stage in the process might trigger a cascade of great new ideas, or simply confirm that you're on the right track. But the more people who feel like they are part of the process (the more humans you incorporate into your Human-centered Design), the more effective it will be. You should also have someone to champion your new initiatives, adding excitement and buzz to the deployment.

Also, make sure the people who will actually be running your system have some say. These are the people on the front lines, creating and scheduling your content on a daily basis. Give them a stake in the planning and testing stages to ensure they understand the goal, what works and what doesn't.

Your messages or campaigns are now ready to be launched. But the work isn't over. You should always be improving your communications by finding out how things are being received and what people respond to, even after you think you've finished. This will build on past successes and create better frameworks for future messaging. Measure, evaluate and adjust as needed.

By always keeping a human focus when designing your digital signage campaigns, you'll be more effective, and more appreciated by your audience. Digital signs may be electronic, but behind it all are people communicating with people – and that's essential to the success of your signage.

Communications in the Near Future

In the next few decades, as the Xers begin to retire and Millennials dominate the workforce, we will see more adoption of green technologies in buildings, more flexible workspace models, an enlarged Internet of Things (IoT), and smart offices that use little or no paper. Offices will transform to suit the employees' needs, and collaboration and flexibility will be so commonplace that companies that are not configured in these ways will fall behind.

Buildings will generate their own power and grow their own food. Workplaces will become more than simply places of toil but will encourage more productivity from the workforce by making work feel a lot more like home. And everyone and everything will be connected.

Other innovations currently in the works that may impact the future workplace include:

- **Wearable Computing** – Whether it's computers mixed with eyeglasses or something else, mobile and portable computing will become smaller and more integrated into everyday life. Things being worked on right now include smart contact lenses and microchip pills. Augmented and Virtual Reality – Digital environments will become more graphics-based and more immersive, either creating realistic wholly digital spaces, or allowing a technological interface that overlays digital content onto the real world.

- **Real Hands Free** – Instead of screens, the future will have projectors with touchable interfaces, allowing any surface to become a temporary screen (for example, Sony's prototype Xperia or Argodesign's Interactive Light). Voice-activated Virtual Personal Assistants, like Siri, Alexa, Cortana and Google Now, are already becoming common. The mouse will become a thing of the past. Visual computer navigation, which tracks where your eye looks, will also supplant the mouse (current devices being developed include Samsung's EyeCan+ and Tobii's EyeMobile).

- **3D Printing** – The ability to create any physical object you need, and then easily dispose of it when finished after a single use, will transform the way we think of objects, and ownership.

- **Teleworking** – Remote working will continue to grow as more companies see that it makes workers more productive and saves them money on office infrastructure. Improved telepresence technology will also allow people to essentially work as if they are physically in the office, interacting with computers and devices from their own home or car (which will drive itself).

- **Wellbeing is Key** – Nap rooms and relaxation areas have already been shown to make happier, harder-working employees. Innovations such as Biophilic Design, which incorporates natural elements such as live grass and natural light into the workspace, shows workers reporting a 15% increase in wellbeing, which translates into a 6% increase in productivity and a 15% increase in creativity. Devices such as Walk Stations, which are standing desks attached to a treadmill, have also shown that people who exercise just 20 minutes each workday are more creative and have better memory retention. And they don't have to take off work early to get to the gym, because the gym is there at work.

  Another idea a few companies are experimenting with is having 24-hour office hours. Some medical studies show that the 9-5 work period is actually not conducive to good health. As the concept of work becomes more task-oriented, it really won't matter when someone works on a task or project – just that it meets the deadline. Smaller, more streamlined offices that leverage technology effectively will allow workers to come in whenever they best like to work, and not be stressed because they have to get up earlier than they like or must pay for daycare for the kids.

- **Personalized Content** – Eventually, employees will have individualized apps on mobile computing devices that tailor content to what they specifically need and want. Each person will have what they need and only what they need – task lists, working files, social feeds, you name it.

As work becomes more like life and play, people will work more efficiently, and be happier and healthier.

In truth, the future is now, and it's time to embrace the changes that are here and on the way. Companies that fail to change with the times may find their market position severely challenged, passed by more flexible organizations that embrace changes in both processes and thinking.

Yes, there are financial benefits to modernizing your workplace. But it's really about people – the people who make up your organization and devote their time and energy to helping you succeed. Your company is your people. Modern workplaces make modern employees happier. And there's really no price tag you can put on that.
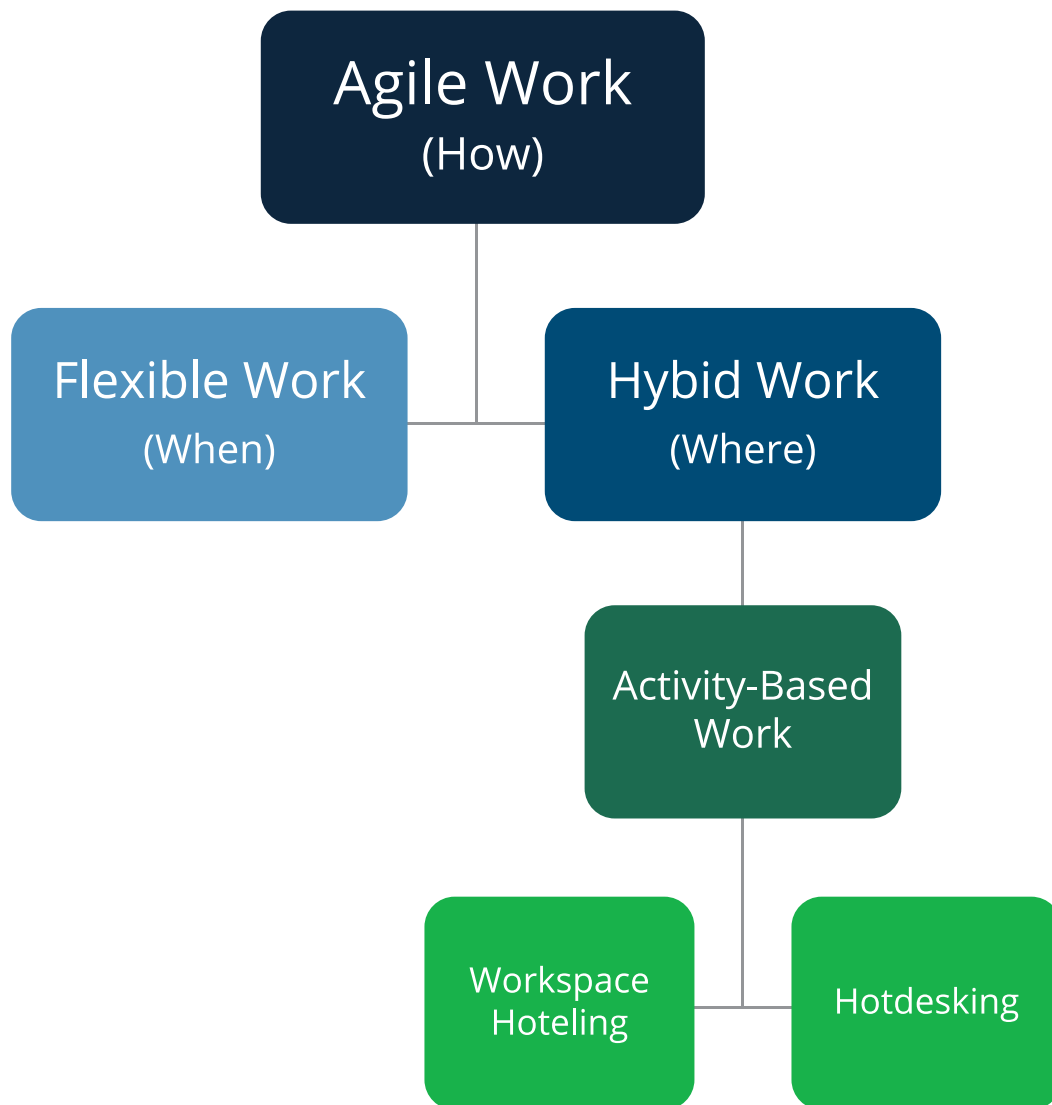
Activity-Based Working (ABW)

In today's rapidly evolving work landscape, traditional office setups are being challenged by new ways of working that prioritize flexibility, collaboration and employee empowerment. One approach that has gained significant traction is activity-based working (ABW). ABW is a dynamic work model that encourages employees to choose the most suitable space and tools for their specific tastes, tasks or activities, rather than being confined to assigned desks or cubicles.

By adopting ABW, organizations can create an environment that fosters agility, adaptability and employee well-being, ultimately leading to increased innovation and business success.

To understand the benefits of ABW, we'll give you some context and explore the benefits of agile work, flexible work, hybrid work, activity-based work, workspace hoteling and hotdesking to provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the advantages they offer in today's dynamic work environment.

In short, agile work is about the overall work experience and methodology – a top-level philosophy that encompasses all of these other terms and practices. Flexible work is about when people work. Hybrid work is about where people work, and activity-based working, workspace hoteling and hotdesking focus on how people use physical space.

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                    Agile Work
                      (How)
                        |
      +-----------------+-----------------+
      |                                   |
Flexible Work                       Hybid Work
   (When)                            (Where)
                                         |
                                  Activity-Based
                                      Work
                                         |
                              +----------+----------+
                              |                     |
                         Workspace             Hotdesking
                          Hoteling
```

WFH Policies

Be clear as to purpose

Define eligibility

Outline the approval process

Specify schedules

Define expectations

Provide tech & support

Agile Work

Agile work is a embraces a dynamic and flexible approach to work that emphasizes adaptability, responsiveness and collaboration. It involves breaking down projects into smaller, manageable tasks and encourages cross-functional teams to collaborate closely. This allows for iterative and incremental progress, which can be measured along the way.

There are several variations of what's called the Agile Methodology, which is based on iterative models of project management. This means teams have opportunities to reflect on what's happened so far, with an eye to identifying what has worked well, and which areas could use improvement or streamlining in the future. This way, they aren't constantly reinventing the wheel on each new project; they learn from previous work, and allow lessons learned to inform future decisions and ways of task completion. Agile work promotes continuous learning and improvement, enabling organizations to quickly respond to changing market demands.

By embracing agile work, organizations can harness the power of collaboration, adaptability and employee engagement, resulting in improved project outcomes and a competitive edge in today's fast-paced business landscape.

Flexible Work

Flexible work refers to a work arrangement that allows employees to have control over when, where and how they work. It recognizes that individuals have unique needs and preferences regarding their work schedule, location and work-life balance. Flexible work options can include alternative schedules, remote work, compressed workweeks and part-time arrangements, among others.

Offering flexible work options paired with an ABW environment creates a win-win situation where both employees and the organization reap the benefits.

Hybrid Work

Hybrid work is a work model that combines both remote work and on-site work. It provides employees with the flexibility to split their time between working remotely and working in a physical office or other designated workspaces. Hybrid work recognizes that certain tasks or activities may be better suited for remote work, while others may require in-person collaboration or access to specific resources.

Increased Employee Autonomy and Empowerment: Hybrid work empowers employees to make choices that best suit their work style and preferences. They have the autonomy to decide when and where they work, optimizing productivity and well-being. This sense of control over their work fosters motivation, engagement and a stronger sense of ownership.

Greater Talent Attraction and Retention: Offering hybrid work options can be a compelling factor for attracting and retaining top talent. Many employees value the flexibility and work-life balance that hybrid work provides. By embracing hybrid work, organizations can position themselves as progressive and adaptable employers, appealing to a broader talent pool and enhancing employee loyalty.

Cost Savings for Organizations: Hybrid work can lead to significant cost savings for organizations. By allowing employees to work remotely part of the time, organizations can reduce their office space requirements, leading to lower real estate and operational costs. Additionally, hybrid work can result in improved retention rates, reducing recruitment and training expenses associated with high turnover.

By implementing hybrid work and an ABW environment, organizations can leverage the best of both worlds – providing employees with the flexibility they desire while maintaining opportunities for in-person collaboration and fostering a sense of belonging within the organization.

ABW

Activity-based work (ABW) emphasizes providing employees with a range of workspaces and tools to choose from based on whatever activities they need to perform. Rather than being tied to assigned desks, employees have the freedom to select spaces that best suit their current tasks, whether it's a quiet area for focused work, a collaborative zone for brainstorming or a meeting room for team discussions. ABW recognizes that different activities require different environments and supports employees in optimizing their productivity and engagement.

Optimized Space Utilization: ABW maximizes the utilization of office space by eliminating the need for fixed assigned desks for every employee. Instead, workspaces are designed to accommodate a variety of activities and can be utilized by different individuals at different times. This flexibility in space usage promotes efficiency, reduces wasted space and allows organizations to make better use of their real estate.

Support for Diverse Work Styles and Preferences: ABW acknowledges that every employee has unique work preferences and styles, and caters to these individual differences by offering a range of workspaces and settings. Whether someone prefers a quiet corner to focus or a collaborative area to interact, ABW provides options that support different work styles. This inclusivity fosters employee satisfaction, engagement and a sense of belonging within the organization.

Encourages Collaboration and Cross-Functional Interactions: ABW promotes spontaneous collaboration and cross-functional interactions. Because employees have the flexibility to choose their workspaces, they are more likely to come into contact with colleagues from different teams or departments. This serendipitous interaction leads to knowledge sharing, idea generation and increased cross-pollination of skills and expertise, enhancing innovation and teamwork.

By embracing activity-based work, organizations can create a workplace that is adaptable, employee-forward and conducive to collaboration. Employees benefit from the ability to choose workspaces that support their tasks, while organizations gain from optimized space utilization, improved employee satisfaction and enhanced collaboration.

Workplace Hoteling

Workspace hoteling is an ABW practice where employees reserve workspaces on-demand, similar to booking hotel rooms for temporary use. It involves a centralized reservation system that allows employees to select and reserve workspaces based on their needs, whether it's a desk, a meeting room or a collaborative area. Workspace hoteling lets organizations optimize space utilization, accommodate varying work patterns and enhance flexibility for employees.

As with the general idea of an activity-based workplace, employees benefit from increased flexibility that fits their specific needs, as well as the needs of the project or tasks they're working on. The organization benefits from more efficient use of space and cost savings, since a more dynamic way of using space could also mean fewer spaces are needed, because there's no need to maintain a fixed ratio of desks to employees.

Reservation systems can also generate valuable data on space utilization patterns, popular workspaces and booking trends. This can provide organizations with actionable insights for space planning and optimization. By analyzing these trends, organizations can make informed decisions regarding workspace design, resource allocation and overall workplace strategy, ensuring that spaces align with employees' needs and preferences.

Workspace hoteling within an ABW environment empowers employees with flexibility and choice while enabling organizations to make the most efficient use of their spaces. It fosters a more agile and adaptable work environment, reduces real estate costs and provides data-driven insights for future planning.

Hotdesking

Hoteling and hotdesking are similar, but hoteling requires workspaces to be reserved in advance whereas hotdesking does not. Hotdesking is when employees don't have assigned or reserved desks at all, but instead choose an available workspace each day on a first-come, first-served basis. It involves a shared workspace setup where employees can select any unoccupied desk or workspace when they arrive at the office. In some cases, employees can reserve desks on-site, but they do not reserve them in advance like with workspace hoteling.

Hotdesking optimizes space utilization and promotes flexibility. This flexibility can lead to more collaboration and networking, as small groups or sub-teams assemble for a specific task, or part of a task. Employees can be more responsive to changing needs, whether that's a particular project or other work demands, or client engagements.

Again, the organization may find they no longer need as many desks or spaces as before, which saves multiple costs and allows for scaling the workforce without the need for additional physical space. Leveraging communication technologies, such as instant messaging and video conferencing platforms, can further augment communication and coordination among employees who may be working from different locations or changing workspaces frequently.

By embracing hotdesking as part of ABW, organizations can give employees even more flexibility in when and where they work. It optimizes space utilization, promotes agility and enhances the adoption of modern collaboration technologies.

Understanding the Agile Work Environment

As work-from-home (WFH) and the hybrid workplace continue to gain traction, there's lots of talk about how organizations can reconfigure their spaces to be more efficient and meet the challenges and requirements of the modern workforce. Lots of talk means lots of new terminology. One new term is Agile Work Environment or Agile Work, and it's thought that over 70% of US companies have adopted at least some elements of this framework.

The concept is to create workspaces that let people work how they want to. It's not dissimilar from another new term, flexible work, except flexible work focuses on the employee, while agile work focuses on the impacts on an organization. The general idea is that, since your workforce is dynamic, your facility should be as well.
It all starts with the Agile Manifesto.

The Agile Manifesto

Back in 1956, software engineer Herbert Bebington gave a symposium on the development of software SAGE, the Semi-Automatic Ground Environment, which was a system of computers that coordinated data from various radar sites and controlled NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defense Command (which was known as the North American Air Defense Command, or NAADC, back then).

The development process he described was dubbed the "waterfall model" in 1970 by Lockheed scientist Winston Royce. Basically, this is the breaking down of a project into linear sequential phases, where a phase is completed, and then handed down the line to the people working on the next part. This is mainly how software was developed for decades.

In 2001, a group of 17 software developers got together at a ski lodge in Utah and came up with a new system that outlined four values and 12 principles for their industry. They then wrote this up as the Agile Manifesto, which went online in February in multiple languages. The group, who called themselves the Agile Alliance, included people from eXtreme Programming, Scrum, Crystal, DSDM, the inventor of the wiki, strategists, writers and consultants.

The Agile Values are:

1 **Individuals and interactions** over processes and tools	**3** **Customer collaboration** over contract negotiation
2 **Working software** over comprehensive documentation	**4** **Responding to change** over following a plan

The Agile Principles are:

1. To satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software.

2. Welcoming changing requirements (even late in development), which leads to competitive advantage.

3. Delivering working software frequently using shorter timescales.

4. Developers and businesspeople must work together on a daily basis.

5. Projects are built around motivated individuals, who are given the environment and support they need.

6. Face-to-face conversation is the most efficient method of communication.

7. Working software is the primary measure of success.

8. Sustainable development is a byproduct of agile processes, and all stakeholders should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely.

9. Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design enhances agility.

10. Simplicity is essential – this is the art of maximizing the work not done.

11. The best work comes from self-organizing teams.

12. The team regularly reflects on how to be more effective and makes adjustments accordingly.

This was more of a mindset than a rigid framework, and many in the software industry took it on board. Everywhere it was widely embraced noticed that there was a change in emphasis, bringing the organizational culture to the forefront. This subtle shift enabled companies to adapt and innovate quickly in an ever-changing marketplace. It also started bleeding over into the way that physical workspaces were organized. For example, if face-to-face communication is preferred, perhaps smaller spaces could be created to facilitate quick meetings. From this came the idea of huddle spaces.

So, it wasn't long before some people in business started wondering if this agile framework could be applied in other ways.

Agile Space

Today, when someone uses the term Agile Work Environment, they mean a physical environment that is divided up into different areas, each of which has its own purpose. If people just need a quick chat, they can access a huddle space or a standup meeting table. If they need a brainstorming session, then there are meeting rooms equipped with whiteboards and comfortable chairs. If a videoconference needs to happen, there are also spaces with the necessary equipment to facilitate that.

The idea of an agile work environment is to create flow that moves from intense, focused work to informal meetings and sessions, then back to formal gatherings and so on. Because there's a multitude of types of spaces available, individuals can find an area that best complements their own style and preferences. While some people might like an open floorplan space, others find it to be too noisy and too busy. Those latter sorts can instead seek out a more isolated desk or office, where they can concentrate, free from distractions.

The fact is that around 45% of the space in any-sized office is unoccupied at any given moment. People are up and about, doing things away from their desks, a good portion of the day. One reason for this is that maybe their desk is not ideally suited to them, or people are on leave, or out sick. Today, with the hybrid office on the rise, even less physical space is being used.

Adopting agile work ideas helps to reallocate the space more efficiently. It also allows the entire staff to be better able to respond to sudden, unexpected challenges and changes. It's also very desirable for new talent.

Organizations that have agile work environments are better at attracting and retaining new, high-caliber employees, especially younger ones. Agility gives people more autonomy over their work habits, which in turn boosts self-esteem and buy-in in the company itself.

Agility means moving quickly and easily, but it also means understanding quickly and easily as well; it's about the mental as well as the physical. Portuguese poet and writer Fernando Pessoa once said, "Strength without agility is mere mass." Many of us have been in rigid work environments and felt that almost palpable "heaviness" in the air. By simply changing the way people can use the space, and creating policies that allow for individual preferences, a whole new mental space is created, one that is dynamic and robust yet also fluid, instead of sluggish and tedious.

Agile Infrastructure

An agile work environment is flexible, accessible and adjustable. The focus shifts from one of control to one of consensus.

Flexibility includes every aspect of the workspace, even furniture. One way to start adding agile elements is to use hotdesking. This is a simple system that allows people to book a work area on an at-will basis. Today, they feel like sitting here but maybe tomorrow, when they see fewer people around, they'll sit somewhere else so they can be closer to others. Or maybe they have something to do that requires a lot of concentration, so they'll book a desk far from the others, so they can focus.

Different kinds of desks and chairs can also be available for people to use as they wish. Maybe one person prefers a standing desk or likes to sit on a kneeling chair or a balance ball. Have these available at some workstations, so people can use what they want to. You might also have some desks or workstations that are mobile (on casters), so they can be physically moved to different areas as needed.

Equipment is another area that can get "agilized". Some people like two screens, others maybe even three; some like a screen that's in a portrait configuration, while others are used to a traditional landscape monitor. Someone working with graphics or video files might need a more powerful computer for those tasks, while another person who's working on spreadsheets can use their laptop.

Timing can also affect preferences. Sometimes, a person doesn't need to be at a desk at all in order to get the day's tasks done. Having laptops available, as well as comfortable couches and lounge chairs, would make it much more pleasant for that person, and probably make them more productive. There are also times when a person is between tasks, maybe waiting on a report to be emailed to them. While they wait, why make them sit at their desk killing time? Instead, have a relaxation lounge where they can recuperate in order to be fresh when it finally comes time to get working again.

"Agility means that you are faster than your competition. Agile time frames are measured in weeks and months, not years."

~ Michael Hugos, Agile systems architect

Benefits of an Agile Work Environment

Space management gets a real boost when working from an agile mindset. Empty or underused spaces can be repurposed, so every square foot has a purpose. Even something like the kitchen area needs to be planned out and optimized. If you have chairs and a table in there, make sure they can be moved if more people need to get into the kitchen at once (like at a holiday party or product launch).

Productivity and engagement, which go hand in hand, also go way up in agile environments. Only 9% of agile projects in software fail, compared to 29% that use the old waterfall model. Teams are, on average, 25% more productive, regardless of what they're working on. Output quality goes up, which also means higher profits and more growth. Because employees feel that their individual preferences are being taken into account, they feel more connected to the organization and their work.

An agile work environment promotes more movement and spontaneity. Most office workers spend four to five hours a day sitting at their desk. That's a lot of time and certainly not healthy (in fact, it works out to something like 67 sedentary days per year). By having more spaces of different varieties, you can inspire people to get away from their desks, move around, and confer with colleagues more often. This can also result in more cross-pollinating between teams and departments, which reinforces agile thinking.

Ultimately, an agile work environment saves money. Rent is often the highest expense after salaries. If you aren't using every bit of that space, then why are you paying for it? Plus, there's HVAC, lighting and so on, which are ongoing costs. Many companies lease furniture and equipment, which is another regular expenditure.

By optimizing your workplace for your specific employees, you might lure more people into the office. Just because people are working from home sometimes, doesn't mean that they're set up optimally there. If an employee can have a more pleasant time and do things more efficiently in the office, then they might be willing to pay the price of a commute. And with people coming in on their own schedules, having fixed-location workstations really doesn't make any sense. Shared workspaces are the only way to go.

Finally, by creating an agile work environment, you're doing a little future-proofing for your organization as well. No one predicted the COVID pandemic, and there will likely be events in the future that will also cause disruption, or at the very least large-scale changes, to the way things are done. A work environment that is only configured to do things one way isn't able to adjust to changing situations. An agile work environment, on the other hand, is set up for adaptability, able to change in short order. This means your organization is better prepared to face whatever challenges come its way.

Getting Started

In order to maximize spaces for the specific people working in them, and the specific projects they're working on, you need to have some way to measure the effectiveness of your set up. The very first thing you must do, though, is determine what needs to be measured, always keeping agile principles in mind.

One obvious metric is how people are using the workstations, equipment and spaces available to them. If there's the capability to reserve workstations and spaces in advance (office hoteling), are people taking advantage of it, or are they simply sitting in the same places day after day? If they aren't using it, why not?

People tend to fall into habits pretty quickly (we've all seen, for example, on the first day of a school term, students randomly choose a seat and then that becomes "their" seat for the entire semester). If people are just sitting in the same places, day after day, does this cause interruptions to the flow of work? If so, maybe staff need to be trained a bit more in the advantages of a hoteling set up. If not, maybe you don't need the hoteling system at all.

If it turns out that people work for a while but then find themselves spontaneously needing temporary reconfigurations (impromptu meetings and brainstorming sessions, for example), then maybe a hotdesking solution is better suited to your work environment.

Are people booking meeting rooms "just in case" they need them and then not actually using them? If so, maybe encourage them to use breakout spaces, meeting pods or informal meeting stand up tables instead. A meeting room that holds ten people that's only ever used by three is wasted space.

One way to find out what's going on in the work environment is to observe. Another is to simply ask people (just make sure there's no feeling that people might "get in trouble", or you won't get honest answers). Hoteling, hotdesking, meeting room signs and other space booking technologies also often have some sort of usage statistics as part of their software. This can be analyzed to see usage patterns, and adjustments can be made to optimize the work environment for everyone.

Becoming Agile

The basic framework of an agile project had six phases:

1. Plan
2. Design
3. Develop
4. Test
5. Deploy
6. Review

When translating these phases to physical spaces, follow the same flow. Plan out what you think will be the most agile work configuration, and make sure to talk to department heads and team leaders to get the most accurate information possible. Then design the layout, choosing items, technologies and systems to use and implement. Develop that plan by adjusting things to maximize agility and flexibility.

Then run a test, either with some senior staff (so they can see how it all works) or with employees. Take feedback on board and adjust again. Then deploy across your organization. But keep an eye on things, using analytics and feedback systems, to make any further adjustments as needed. A truly agile work environment can be reconfigured whenever that's most advantageous. Start thinking of the physical environment as a process, rather than a goal.

Obviously, agile work environment ideas are easier to implement when moving into a new space, perhaps part of a downsizing because your organization has gone hybrid and fewer people are in the office. But even the space you have right now is probably not being utilized to its fullest potential.

Got a room that's being used to store old printers and a broken photocopier? Junk that stuff and turn it into a break room, or a huddle space. For that matter, do you even need a photocopier anymore? Is it possible to go totally electronic with all documentation? If so, get rid of it and use the money you were spending on that for something else, like maybe a better coffee maker.

The Advantages of Flexible Work

One of the ways organizations are adjusting to modern expectations and needs is by adopting a flexible work arrangement (FWA), often just referred to as flexible work or flexible working. Like the idea of agile work, this is part of the Activity-Based Working (ABW) approach. Unlike agile work, which focuses on the organization, flexible work is all about the employee and the employee-experience.

History of Flexible Work

Pioneered in Germany in the 1960s, flexible work started being experimented with in the US, the UK and Canada in the 70s. Back then it was known as *flextime*, but the concept expanded beyond just which hours people are on the job.

Companies that used flextime let employees have a say in their own schedules. Instead of a rule that everyone comes in at 9am and leaves at 5pm, people could adjust on either end on that time range. For example, coming in at 11am and leaving at 7pm, or coming in at 8am and leaving at 4pm. Provided the employee worked their full 8 hours and were in the facility during "core" hours (usually 11am to 3pm), they could decide when they stopped and started.

Most companies that used flextime also had what were called "bandwidth" hours, meaning that there were hard stops at either end of the time range (usually no one could come in earlier than 5:30am or stay later than 7:30pm). So, while there were clear restrictions, there were far fewer than the traditional 9-5 system, which came out of the Industrial Revolution and factory production work.

Flextime enabled employees to strike a better work-life balance. If their children got home from school at 4pm, a parent on flextime could also be home when they arrived. People could coordinate with public transportation schedules or avoid rush hour traffic to shorten their commutes or adjust on the fly as things came up in their lives.

Expanding Flexible Work

It wasn't long before a new aspect was added – that of *flexplace*. This let people decide where they worked, again with clear boundaries in place. Sometimes this meant that an employee could work at different offices of branches if it was feasible for their tasks, or even work remotely, from home or elsewhere.

And then came *flexbenefits*. Instead of the organization offering a series of benefits that were predetermined, employees had a choice of several to choose from. One person might want medical insurance that includes dental, a life insurance policy, and a retirement plan. Another might want medical care but not need dental, opting instead to have the company pay for their gym membership and childcare.

Over time, the range of benefits offered to people expanded to include paid vacations, amusement park tickets, salary bonuses, smartwatches, enrollment in programs like Weight Watchers or therapy sessions, donations to a charity the employee chooses, elder support, prenatal support, extra tutoring for children, and more.

Today, organizations also sometimes offer to help someone set up and optimize their home office (if there's a remote work or hybrid system in place), decarbonize people's homes or make them more energy efficient, assist with e-waste (disposing of old computers, phones, and other electronics in a sustainable and ethical way), supply fitness equipment or ergonomic accessories, provide immigration assistance, supplement transportation costs and a whole host of other options.

Nixing the Naysayers

Detractors have sometimes called all these flex-options "buffet benefits", as if a buffet is somehow low-class and beneath a respectable business. But that's actually not a bad metaphor – like a buffet, there's a range of options (a broad selection, but not unlimited) and people can choose the ones they prefer.

All this turned out to be successful and quite popular with employees, as should be clear since today more and more organizations offer some form of flextime, flexplace and/or flexbenefits. In fact, since so many places now offer various flex-options, this can be a dealbreaker for many younger workers.

People who've been working longer might be skeptical of these new types of systems, but that's probably because they haven't tried them before. Almost no one who has experienced flexible work complains about it.

If you have any holdouts, a good way to get people on board is to use your intranet and digital signage system to promote various aspects of your flexible work options. A series of short messages, each highlighting a single element, can highlight the benefits and serve as regular reminders of what's possible. You might even poll employees to see what sorts of things they'd prefer to have available to them. This creates a two-way dialogue instead of just rules being handed down from management.

Benefits of Flexible Work

Adoption of flexible alternatives has become more widespread over the past 40 years, because there are clear benefits for both employees and employers.

Work-Life Balance

This tops every list of benefits of flexible work. People have more control over their day-to-day lives, which makes them feel empowered, healthier and happier. Employees with options can better manage and blend their lives and work to meet their needs. It also shows that their employer trusts them and doesn't need to micromanage when or where they work.

The United Kingdom has really embraced flexible working. More than half of all companies, regardless of which industry, use flexible work patterns, and almost three-fourths of managers say they support the idea. 40% of British employees say they would choose flexible options over extra salary. The stats are similar for the United States and Canada.

In the US, some companies now offer the option for people to work a compressed week of four 10-hour days per week instead of five 8-hour days. Others have adopted what's called a 9/80 work schedule, which is working nine hours M-Th and eight hours on Friday, but taking every other Friday off entirely. It still works out the same number of work hours per month as five 8-hour days, week in and week out.

Increased Job Satisfaction

Flexible work also leads to higher productivity. People are less stressed, which medical studies show means they are less likely to suffer health problems as a result of their work. The WHO says that almost three-quarters of a million people die worldwide each year due to heart disease or stroke that is directly linked to working too much (defined as 55 hours or more per week).

Flexible work also holds the employer a bit accountable. Since hours are being tracked so closely, the employee is far less likely to be overworked without some sort of compensation.

When people have less on their minds, like "Oh, I have to go get the kids" or "When will I find time for my doctor's appointment?", they can focus on their work more. And the employer becomes, not an impediment to things going on in their lives, but an enabler and partner. This creates more buy-in to the organization and fosters a greater sense of loyalty. This higher job satisfaction leads in turn to higher retention rates.

Interestingly, some early studies in Europe have suggested that flexible work might be a positive variable in closing the gender pay gap, since compensation can take many forms and balance out inequity in salary.

Time & Cost Savings

When people can have a long weekend, or work remotely at least part of the time, they are obviously commuting less. The average commute time in the US is 26 minutes each way, or almost an hour every day. That's the national average – in some locations it's far more (in New Jersey it's 59 minutes total and in Idaho it's over 60). That's quite a bit of time, and if that can get reduced by even one-fifth, that's a lot of time savings. The national average for commuting is 225 hours per year or a bit over five full work weeks, so working only four days a week cuts that down significantly.

Less commuting also saves people money. The average US commuter spends $8,466 per year just on going to and from work. That's around 7% of the average salary, though high-income figures skew that, so in practice, for most people, it's more like 15%. Again, a four-day work week saves employees $2116 per year, or $176 per month.

There are larger effects of commuting as well. While cars are getting more fuel-efficient all the time, it's estimated that a single medium-sized car emits 3.9 tons of carbon every year just during commutes. That's per car, and 74% of commuters drive alone in their vehicle.

A few forward-thinking companies have started experimenting with subsidies and other incentives to encourage their employees to carpool. If just 5% of the American workforce did this, it would eliminate almost 21 million tons of carbon per year. A four-day work week, remote and hybrid work options all reduce commuting, with all the negative health, financial and ecological effects similarly reduced.

Childcare is another cost facing employees. Reducing the number of days or hours a person has to work each week can mean they spend less on childcare and get to spend more time with their family as well.

Less Absenteeism

Companies using remote and hybrid models are starting to find there's less tardiness and absenteeism. If someone is feeling a bit ill, they won't want to come into the office because of the commute and also because they don't want to get their co-workers sick (coming in to work while sick is known as presenteeism and can lead to an illness ripping through a workforce). So, a day of productivity may be lost. But if that employee isn't bed-ridden, they can do some work from home, so productivity is not lost, and no one else catches the bug.

Types of Flexible Work

Some of these have already been briefly mentioned, but a list is a convenient way to see several possibilities in one place.

- **Flextime** – Employees have some leeway as to when they work. Some employers have also started offering unlimited paid time off (PTO), provided all tasks are completed in a timely manner. There may be core hours, when people must be in the office, as well as bandwidth hours that have clear time cutoffs at the beginning and end of the workday.
- **Remote Work** – Employees still work their full schedule, but from outside the office.

- **Hybrid Work** – Employees work some of the time from home, and sometimes in the office.

- **Compressed Week** – Employees still work 40 hours but can adjust how much they work each day, so they can have a long weekend from time to time, or a day off midweek.

- **Annualized Hours** – The employee and employer work out in advance a maximum number of hours for a certain period of time (like a month or even a year). Provided it's feasible, the employee can then work those hours however they choose.

- **Flexplace** – Employees have options as to where they work. Usually, this means working at least part of the time remotely, though it could also include working at a subsidiary or branch office closer to home.

- **Job Sharing** – One fulltime position (and its requisite hours) is split between two or more employees. The people sharing the job decide who works when and where.

- **Work Sharing** – If an organization has to cut costs and is considering downsizing and layoffs, one option is that many positions get a slight reduction in hours instead of a few being eliminated.

- **Phased Retirement** – As an employee begins to approach retirement age, an agreement is struck that the worker starts reducing their hours slowly, phasing out in a gradual manner. This allows more time for training a replacement, restructuring processes and redistributing tasks.

These are just some of the more common forms flexible work can take. If an organization is committed to the principles flexible work expresses, then almost any sort of arrangement can be agreed upon. Adding flexbenefits to a compensation package is another way to give employees a say in their relationship with their employer.

There are benefits to both employees and employers in adopting at least some aspects of flexible work. And many employment scenarios really don't need a person to be physically present 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. This is just a habit, and a habit it's about time we started to break. There are more and more organizations of all kinds using flexible work to everyone's advantage.

"We need to take a more flexible approach to both the workplace and the work we do; one that provides us both the physical and cognitive space to harness the incredible power, insight and experience we offer, but focused not on the individual processes but instead on the overall outcomes our organisations are seeking to achieve."

~ David Coplin, Microsoft UK

10 TIPS FOR FLEXIBLE OFFICES

1 ACCOMMODATE DIFFERENT WORK STYLES
Promote flexibility and choice by designating different areas and types of workspaces for brainstorming sessions, team meetings and individual work.

2 OFFER ALTERNATIVE WORKSPACES
Cater to different preferences with standing desks, collaboration pods, or outdoor seating areas, letting employees choose the environment that's best for them.

3 PRIORITIZE ERGONOMICS
Ensure workspaces are designed for comfort and safety. Provide standing desks, adjustable chairs and monitor risers to promote employee well-being and productivity.

4 INTRODUCE DESK NEIGHBORHOODS
Organize desks in groups based on departments, teams or projects to foster a sense of community and promote collaboration among team members.

5 ENCOURAGE DYNAMIC SEATING
Ask people to experiment with different seating arrangements for increased cross-departmental cooperation, knowledge sharing and spontaneous idea exchange.

6 PROMOTE WELLBEING WITH QUIET ZONES
Offer areas where employees can focus on tasks without disruptions. Clearly communicate and enforce guidelines regarding noise levels and distractions.

7 ALLOCATE SPACE FOR AD HOC MEETINGS
Set aside areas specifically for ad hoc meetings or impromptu discussions to promote creativity and encourage spontaneous collaboration.

8 DON'T OVERLOOK ACCESSIBILITY
Use universal design principles to create spaces that are accessible and usable by all individuals, regardless of their abilities or challenges.

9 ENABLE HYBRID TOOLS
Offer technologies to facilitate seamless collaboration between in-office and remote employees. At home and in-office experiences should mirror each other.

10 ENCOURAGE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY
Emphasize the importance of keeping shared areas tidy, returning equipment to designated areas and reporting any maintenance issues promptly.

11 Ways the Hybrid Workplace Affects Internal Comms

With the hybrid workplace becoming the norm, it's more important than ever to have an effective and engaging communications strategy. More people are working from home more often, so employees and managers have had to adopt new methods of connecting and communicating.

- 74% of U.S. companies use or plan to implement a permanent hybrid work model. (Source: PwC)

- 55% of employees want to work remotely at least three days a week. (Source: Gartner)

- 59% of employees are more likely to choose an employer that offers remote work opportunities over one that doesn't. (Source: FlexJobs)

- Employees who work from home at least two days a week are 13% more productive than those who work from the office five days a week. (Source: Gartner)

Here are some of the ways that the hybrid workplace is affecting internal communications in the near future:

1. Internal Communications Elevated

It's been a longtime struggle to convince the c-suite that the internal communications role is as crucial to success as any other business operation. Investment and inclusion have often been elusive, but 2020 changed that. The rapid move to a remote and hybrid workforce put internal comms in the spotlight.

Suddenly, IC professionals have a seat at the table, being included in business strategy, and receiving long-requested budgets for staff, technology and training. But it's not all celebration – with this more visible role workloads have skyrocketed, and accountability is at the forefront (more on that later).

Internal comms is increasingly strategizing not only with executives, but also with IT, HR and front-line managers. Everyone has recognized that they are all targeting the same audiences, and that their messages can blend, overlap and reinforce each other. These teams are now working together to coordinate, prioritize and plan messaging campaigns and calendars to the great benefit of employees who used to get separate, sometimes conflicting, communications.

2. Focus on Employee Experience

Employee experience is the journey an employee has with the organization from onboarding through retirement, and it encompasses the workplace, relationships and wellbeing. HR has been focusing on employee experience for a few years now, but recently internal communications teams are taking up the reigns.

The hybrid workplace offers a new employee experience. It's increasingly remote and increasingly digital, which presents both challenges and opportunities. A positive employee experience demands constant care. It's as much about culture as it is day-to-day tasks. It should be organic, holistic and carry over into every interaction and communication.

Effective internal communication and a good employee experience lets everyone – whether in the office or out – fully participate, develop and succeed.

3. Mobile-first Communications

Millennials and Gen Z account for a little over a third of today's workforce. These workers are extremely tech-savvy and mobile-dependent. Communicators who want to reach and engage them will need to adopt mobile tech solutions that match their habits and preferences.

Many organizations have either launched or expanded their digital communications in 2020, deploying enterprise messaging apps like Teams, as well as collaboration apps, chat bots and other mobile-friendly tools. Intranets were redesigned to be responsive, everyone got a crash course in videoconferencing etiquette, and internal comms expanded the number of channels it had to manage.

Moving forward, those channels need to be streamlined, optimized and fully adopted by the hybrid workforce. It's no longer enough to post the same message you'd put in an email on your intranet, digital signage or messaging app. For one thing, information has to be organized and searchable.

It's estimated that employees spend on average 2.5 hours a day searching for the information they need. That wasted time doesn't just stifle productivity, it frustrates employees and decreases their trust, interest and engagement with communications.

4. Technology Adoption

With the rapid deployment of mobile-first and work-from-home technologies, a lot of organizations and employees have been operating in crisis mode. Now that the hybrid workplace is a certainty, it's time to invest in fully adopting those tools.

The first step will be streamlining and consolidating. Organizations will land on a single platform or the fewest number of apps to serve their goals. In many cases, people have had up to a dozen different digital communication tools they're trying to learn, use and maintain. Companies need to find what works and downsize to that. It's guaranteed that apps will expand their features in the future, so successful adoption of the current version is essential so that rolling out updates goes smoothly.

Technology budgets will start to include services to train employees on new tech and tools – not just the buttons and features, but best practices, policies and how they can ask questions and provide feedback. Communicators will need to lead in adopting modern technologies to effectively support rolling it out to the organization at large.

An essential component of effective communications for a remote workforce is delivering content how, where and when they want it. Messaging will need to be tailored to the audience and the channel. A one-size-fits-all approach won't work.

5. More Visual Communication

Visual communication goes hand-in-hand with digital. As communicators adopt more mobile and online channels, visuals will grow in importance.

People notice and engage with visuals more than they do with text. Intranets, messaging apps, digital signs and other digital channels are designed with visual communications in mind. Internal comms will be focusing more on delivering attention-getting photos, infographics, videos and other visual content. Audio will also gain popularity with more internal podcasts and video streams.

With YouTube the second most popular search engine in the world, video will be more relevant than ever. Everyone has a camera in their pocket and audiences are familiar with, and receptive to, lower production values. In fact, many employees consider informal videos to be more personal and trustworthy.

Every message should be examined to see if it can be presented visually versus text. If something requires lengthy copy, design a visual hook or summary and let people link out to the text. Better yet, tell a story with a staggered campaign.

6. Focus on Employee Recognition

With fewer people coming together physically, it's crucial to prioritize employee recognition. Communicators will need to build processes and plans for recognition into their digital channels. If they don't already have them, organizations will need to put peer-to-peer recognition funnels in place, and create a calendar for simple things like anniversaries and birthdays.

Recognition should be on both the macro and micro level. Employees need meaningful feedback and recognition from managers, but they also crave public recognition in front of their peers. All of this helps employees feel more connected to their workmates and the organization. Be sure to call out employee achievements across channels, with a priority on the channels that the person being recognized prefers.

7. Democratized Communications

The days of top-down communications are waning. People want the employee experience to mirror their personal styles of communicating. Things like messaging apps and social media offer everyone a place to start and participate in conversations. Internal comms teams will need to build in commenting, emojis, message boards and chat to keep employees engaged and satisfied.

Although there will always be some centralized communications coming from HQ, more content will be sourced from employees. Lateral communications between peers will also take on elevated importance in the hybrid workplace, providing connection and empowerment for remote workers.

Organizations should encourage employees to contribute to different channels directly or submit media for distribution. Be sure to publish policies and have feedback levers in place to measure employee satisfaction with the content contribution process.

8. Wellbeing Takes Center Stage

Wellbeing, both physical and mental, has been in the spotlight since the outbreak of COVID-19. However, the resulting workplace changes have had their own health effects.

A employee culture survey by Gartner found that "employees who are moderately stressed underperform those who aren't by 5% — reducing a $1 billion top line by $32.5 million at an average company. Highly stressed employees impact revenue even more." Their later study found that 29% of people who worked fulltime from home reported burnout very often or always.

Information gives people a sense of security, safety and control. Effective messaging that keeps employees informed, educated, updated and engaged is key to their wellbeing. In addition, communicators can promote wellbeing values, tips and resources to support the corporate message. Tell your employees you care about their health, wellness and work/life balance.

9. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

According to dei.extension.org: *Diversity is the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective. Populations that have been-and remain- underrepresented among practitioners in the field and marginalized in the broader society.*

Equity is promoting justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.

Inclusion is an outcome to ensure those that are diverse actually feel and/or are welcomed. Inclusion outcomes are met when you, your institution, and your program are truly inviting to all. To the degree to which diverse individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making processes and development opportunities within an organization or group.

Social issues cannot be ignored. Modern employees expect transparency and activism from their employer. At a minimum, they expect a workplace culture of respect and inclusion. IC professionals will have to start exploring how internal communication strategies can address these issues if they don't already, and at a minimum, need to advertise the organization's values and expectations for employees' behavior toward others.

Younger generations are deeply invested in these topics. Organizations that have built a diverse, equal and inclusive place will promote those topics in the communications calendar. Those that haven't started building DEI into the employee experience will want to start now.

10. Emphasizing Sustainability

Another topic that's important to the modern workforce is sustainability. Modern employees don't just want to know how they fit into their team, they want to know how their team fits into the company, and how the company fits into the local community and the world at large.

The Cone Communications Millennial Employee Study found that 64% of Millennials won't take a job if their employee doesn't have a strong corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy, and 83% would be more loyal to a company that helps them contribute to social and environmental issues (vs. 70% U.S. average).

A study by WeSpire found that Gen-Z is "The first generation to prioritize purpose over salary. They read Mission Statements and Values documents to select where they work and want their employer's values to match their values. They expect consistency and authenticity and will call you out, often publicly, if they don't see it. They will leave companies they believe are hiding or putting too much spin on bad news, ignoring their negative environmental or social impacts, or that have toxic workplace cultures."

Many organizations already have sustainability initiatives in place, and those that don't likely will within the next few years. Whether it's donating to carbon-neutral initiatives, volunteering and activism or a simply recycling program, internal communicators will need to include those programs in their messaging.

Internal comms can use campaigns to educate employees about what the organization is doing, but also how they can help. It's always better to provide specific action that motivates employees rather than vague jargon. The goal for companies who are serious about CSR is buy-in and participation, not just greenwashing.

11. Data-Driven Communications

Methods to deliver real-time data will continue to gain traction. In the hybrid workplace, it's crucial to keep everyone on the same page since they aren't working alongside one another. Publishing metrics and KPIs ensures that each employee knows the goal and how much progress they've made at any given time. It also gives more weight to your communications and provides transparency.

We're used to having information at our fingertips, so internal communications have to be just as timely. Integrating existing data sources like dashboards and data visualizations into communication channels can offer up information at a glance without staff having to create messages from scratch.

Timely collection and analysis of IC performance data will be vital to successful employee engagement. It's not enough to just measure how many messages were sent, or even how many were received. That's just measuring reach. Teams need to measure employee understanding and satisfaction, as well as behavior change and business outcomes. As organizations employ more apps and digital channels, each one will need to be measured and monitored regularly for quick adjustments to strategy.

And now that communication pros have the c-suite's ear, executives will be looking for solid analytics and employee feedback about campaigns. The higher the investment in internal communications, the more accountability IC has for measurable results for both employee engagement and employee experience.

Visual Communications in the Hybrid Workplace

As the modern workforce continues to evolve, so does the concept of the traditional office environment. In recent years, the rise of the hybrid office has gained significant momentum, offering a flexible and adaptive approach to work.

This combines the benefits of remote work and in-person collaboration, allowing employees to divide their time between working remotely and being present in a physical office space. This new way of working brings numerous advantages for both employees and organizations alike.

However, communications in the hybrid office must be retooled for people to thrive in this new model.

Advantages of a Hybrid Office

There are many advantages to a hybrid office. For employees, the flexibility to work remotely provides a better work-life balance, reduces commute time and expense, and allows them to design their work environment to suit their individual needs. On the other hand, organizations benefit from increased employee satisfaction, improved productivity, and the ability to attract and retain top talent from a wider geographical pool.

The structure of a hybrid office can vary depending on the organization's needs and goals. It may involve employees working on rotational schedules, where they alternate between remote and on-site work. Alternatively, it can adopt a flexible work hours model, allowing individuals to choose when they work remotely or come to the office. Some organizations even embrace a remote-first approach, where remote work is the default and on-site work is only scheduled for specific purposes.

The rise of the hybrid office model brings several advantages for both employees and organizations, creating a win-win situation for all stakeholders involved.

More Flexibility: A hybrid office offers employees the freedom to structure their workdays in a way that suits their individual needs. They have the flexibility to work when and where they want, giving them more independence and agency over their work schedule, processes and environment.

Increased Productivity: Studies have shown that employees working in a hybrid office tend to be more productive. They can take advantage of remote work environments to focus and tackle complex tasks while leveraging in-person collaboration for teamwork, brainstorming and problem-solving.

Hybrid Office Savings for Employers

Up to **30%** reduction in office costs

Up to **20%** reduction in furniture costs

Up to **15%** reduction in IT costs

Up to **10%** reduction in energy costs

Up to **5%** reduction in cleaning costs

Improved Work-Life Balance: The flexibility of a hybrid office allows employees to better integrate their personal and professional lives. They can avoid long commutes, spend more time with family, and engage in activities that contribute to their overall wellbeing, leading to higher job satisfaction and reduced burnout.

Cost Savings: Both employees and organizations experience cost savings with a hybrid office setup. Employees save money on transportation, meals and work attire, while organizations can reduce office space requirements and associated expenses, such as utilities and maintenance.

Talent Acquisition and Retention: Embracing a hybrid office model also expands the talent pool for organizations. It enables them to attract and retain top talent from different geographical locations, as well as accommodate diverse work preferences and individual needs. This can enhance diversity and inclusion efforts within the organization.

By leveraging the advantages of a hybrid office, organizations can create a work environment that promotes flexibility, productivity, work-life balance and talent attraction, ultimately leading to a more engaged and satisfied workforce.

Benefits of Visual Communications in the Hybrid Office

To make the most of the hybrid office setup, effective communication and connectivity are crucial. This is where visual communications come into play. Visual communication tools bridge the gap between remote and on-site teams, ensuring clear and consistent messaging across the organization. While traditional communication channels (such as emails and instant messaging) are valuable, they often lack the impact and engagement that visual content brings.

Consistent Communications: One essential tool in visual communications for the hybrid office is digital signage. Modern digital signage software has the capability to create and deliver dynamic content to screens in the office, and to HTML5 playlists on the web, enabling organizations to share announcements, company updates and essential information in a visually appealing manner. This ensures that all employees, regardless of their location, receive consistent and engaging communication, fostering a sense of connection and involvement.

Collaborative Culture: In addition to consistent communication, communication tools also play a significant role in building and nurturing a strong organizational culture in the hybrid office. Remote work can sometimes lead to feelings of isolation, but with the right tools, employees can feel more included and collaborate effectively. Video conferencing, virtual whiteboards and digital collaboration platforms promote teamwork, creativity, and a sense of belonging among remote and in-office employees.

Schedule Visibility: Moreover, visual communication tools can help showcase employee presence and availability. By leveraging digital signage integrated with shared calendars, organizations can display who is in or out of the office, allowing for transparent coordination and efficient collaboration. This visibility fosters a sense of belonging, and enables teams to easily identify and connect with the right people at the right time.

Space Management: Optimizing space management in the hybrid office is another critical aspect. With varying schedules and remote work options, efficiently managing office space becomes a challenge. Digital room signs can display real-time schedules and reservation options for meeting rooms and shared workspaces, simplifying the space booking process and minimizing conflicts. Additionally, digital desk signs can indicate reservation status and desk availability, and personalize the workspace experience for employees using office hoteling.

New technologies are being developed all the time, many of which will continue to simplify space booking in the hybrid office, leading to wider adoption. For example, Visix has developed Choros, an AR space booking platform that uses no hardware and no apps. People can book desks, meeting rooms, lockers or any other shared space or asset in moments using the camera on their own mobile device.

The hybrid office is a new paradigm in the modern workplace, offering flexibility and benefits for both employees and organizations. Visual communications play a vital role in enhancing collaboration, building a strong culture and optimizing space management within the hybrid office environment. By leveraging dynamic content, showcasing employee presence, and streamlining space bookings, organizations can maximize connectivity, engagement, and productivity in this evolving work landscape.

Visual Communication Tools for the Hybrid Office

In the hybrid office, building a strong organizational culture and fostering meaningful connections among employees is crucial. Visual communication tools play a significant role in facilitating collaboration, promoting teamwork, and creating a sense of belonging among remote and in-office employees.

Centralized Scheduling: Organizations can employ a centralized scheduling system and encourage employees to share their calendars. By sharing employee availability and location, remote and in-office employees can easily identify colleagues who are physically present and available for in-person collaboration. This transparency eliminates confusion, saves time and promotes efficient coordination.

Video Conferencing: Video conferencing platforms enable face-to-face communication, allowing employees to see and interact with each other despite being geographically dispersed. Video calls promote visual cues, non-verbal communication and build stronger relationships among team members.

Virtual Whiteboards: Virtual whiteboards allow employees to brainstorm, share ideas and work together on projects in real-time. These tools enhance creativity, teamwork and problem-solving abilities, irrespective of employees' physical locations.

Collaboration Platforms: There are now platforms that combine multiple visual communication tools like videoconferencing, chat, file sharing and more. Employees can use enterprise-level collaboration and project management platforms to work seamlessly together, leveraging their unique skills and perspectives.

Work Signals: Visual tools also let employees communicate their availability and preferences more effectively. For example, employees can use status indicators or virtual "do not disturb" signs to indicate their focus time or preferred communication methods, fostering a respectful and productive work environment.

Resource Management: By creating and maintaining a cloud or network-based library of resources, employees can more readily find the tools they need, whether in the office or working remotely. An intuitive, searchable index is essential to streamline access and workflows.

Team Building: Using in-house or online tools for interactive presentations, virtual games and other engagement activities, organizations can bring remote and in-office employees together, fostering a sense of camaraderie and team spirit.

Digital Signage: Consistent communications in the hybrid office become more essential because the workforce is more distributed. Tools like digital signage systems can deliver organizational announcements and data visualizations to keep everyone updated, no matter where they work.

By utilizing a suite of visual communication tools, organizations can foster connection, collaboration and a strong sense of culture and engagement in the hybrid office. These tools promote effective teamwork, break down communication barriers and ensure that all employees, regardless of their location, feel connected, valued and included in the organizational culture.

Digital Signage for the Hybrid Office

In the hybrid office, where employees are distributed across various locations, effective communication becomes paramount. While communication channels such as email, instant messaging and video conferencing are essential, they often lack the impact and engagement that visual content brings.

Digital signage can play a vital role in ensuring clear and consistent messaging across remote and on-site teams. Visual messaging is more attention-grabbing, memorable, and can convey information quickly and effectively. It transcends language barriers, engages employees visually and helps reinforce key messages.

Digital signage is a powerful tool for visual communications in the hybrid office. It allows organizations to create and deliver dynamic content to both in-office screens and off-site displays and mobiles, enabling them to share a wide range of information in an engaging and visually appealing manner.

- It's Dynamic and Engaging: Digital signs let organizations display a variety of content, including videos, images, animations and real-time data. This dynamic approach captures employees' attention, increases information retention and fosters engagement.

- It's Consistent: Digital Signage that publishes visual content to websites ensures that all employees, regardless of their location, receive consistent communication. Important announcements, company updates and critical information can be broadcast simultaneously to both remote and on-site employees, minimizing information gaps and fostering a sense of unity.

- It's Targeted: Organizations can target specific messages to different departments, teams or locations. This flexibility allows for personalized communication tailored to the specific needs and interests of different employee groups, enhancing relevance and engagement.

- It Can Be Updated Quickly: Real-time data, such as KPIs, weather updates, news feeds or social media content can be configured to update automatically as changes occur. This feature keeps employees informed and connected with the latest information, fostering a sense of connectedness and situational awareness.

By leveraging digital signage with both large-screen and web publishing capabilities, organizations can effectively communicate important information, reinforce company values and culture, and ensure consistent messaging across the hybrid workforce. This approach enhances engagement, reduces information gaps, and strengthens the overall connection and alignment among remote and in-office employees.

Adapting to the Hybrid Office

The advantages of a hybrid office make it an appealing model for both employees and organizations. However, effective communication and connectivity are paramount in ensuring its success.

Visual communication tools play a crucial role in bridging the gap between remote and on-site teams, fostering clear and consistent messaging. Moreover, these tools contribute to building a strong organizational culture and fostering collaboration. Regardless of whether you employ all of these technologies or just some of them, visual communications in the hybrid office can help foster a strong organizational culture and create a cohesive and thriving work environment in the evolving landscape of the modern workplace.

Rethinking Communications for Virtual Engagement

The "internal" in internal communications refers to within the whole organization, not just a particular room or building. With at least some employees working remotely, it becomes even more important to reinforce culture and policies, motivate people and let them feel connected. The goal is to connect everyone inside and outside the office with the same mission and messaging. And although this blog is focused on virtual engagement, your strategy should be equally weighted for both on-site and off-site employees.

Omni-channel Opportunities

Omni-channel employee communications, sometimes called multi-channel communications, strive to give the same experience to an employee across all communication platforms. It's about consistent messaging and branding on all platforms. For internal communications, it might encompass messaging for face-to-face meetings, town halls, videoconferences, email, business communication platforms, intranets, social media, printed posters and digital signs.

Start thinking outside the traditional push model and use any and all communication channels at your disposal to encourage virtual engagement and interaction. Since more people will be using mobiles on the job, interactive content that lets people click, comment and share will get more participation than in the past. And because people aren't working side-by-side as much, easy feedback systems will be even more important.

The trick is to balance engagement with workload. The fear of every communicator is that with more channels available, they'll have to work up separate campaigns and creative for all of them. That's not necessarily so. You will have to discern what works best where, but then you can streamline workflows. This is where visual communications come in handy. For example, a visual that advertises an event (if created at the correct size) could be used for digital signs, social media, intranets, websites, chats and even emails and PowerPoint presentations. If you have the right CMS, you can actually schedule it across multiple channels from one place.

The key is to work out the campaign goals, create assets that you can repurpose across channels, and direct everyone on those channels with a single, measurable call to action. It could be a button click to a registration form, a QR code for a download or just a URL to a webpage with more information. Even if you have to tailor your message a bit for different channels, it's all the same message inspiring the same desired behavior. And it gives the audience the choice to interact the way they want.

If you're using virtual engagement correctly, you may find that your employees are interacting more than they did when they were all in the office every day. This is partly because remote employees may be a bit starved for that feeling of inclusion. And interactions that aren't face-to-face give shier people a bit of cover. Not everyone is an extrovert, after all. Maybe some people have always wanted to interact more but felt they couldn't.

Rethinking "Local"

Although we're all using new buzzwords like "virtual engagement", "remote workforce" and "work from home", the fact is that we're talking about digital communications. And digital communications have been a priority since websites and mobiles took over the world. So, this isn't a completely new animal. It's just that the audience for those digital communications has grown, and is predicted to keep growing.

Localization is also a known concept in communications. It's ensuring that messaging is tailored to the localized audience through content, imagery, language, tone and more. With the growth of the virtual audience, localization will become even more important. Remote employees may be spread far and wide, so you'll need to pick which content is most relevant and engaging for which audiences. And that might mean getting more granular with your channels.

The good news is that tools like digital signage and enterprise messaging apps let you segment your audiences as much as you want. You can send different messages, playlists or campaigns to selected screens, playlists, webpages or Teams groups to target only those people who care about that content. If your support team says that want weekly CSAT figures, but accounts receivable doesn't care about that, then only send that data to the salesforce. Of course, you'll always have some broad messaging for the whole company, and that's important too. Some crossover promotes unity.

A larger remote workforce may also require new types of content. In addition to regular workaday communications, like "Town hall meeting Friday at 11am", toss in other things like wellness tips for WFH, and even messages that are just fun. Share a music playlist and get others to contribute. Ask people where their dream vacation is, or they prefer cats or dogs, or the perfect pumpkin pie recipe.

People might need a schedule of who's working in-office and who's working remotely on any given day. With more office hoteling, the current number of people in a facility may need to be tracked and there might even be check-in procedures that need to be advertised.

You may want to work more employee-created content into your strategy. Employee spotlights can help introduce remote employees to other workers who've never see them in the office. Videos or pictures of people's home offices can give their coworkers an idea of where they spend their time, and photos of pets are always a hit.

Two critical content types for virtual engagement are employee recognition and transparency. Kudos can still happen one-on-one via videoconference with a manager, but for most employees, a shout-out across your internal channels will make them feel more appreciated and connected. And building and maintaining trust through transparency is even more important when workers are remote, since they may feel a bit out of the loop. You've got to honest and open, always, or people will simply go elsewhere.

The goal is always to get people involved and interacting. Ask questions through surveys and polls, get and give feedback, share metrics on progress towards goals and find ways to spur participation. When people are all taking part in the same thing, they feel connected, even if they're miles apart.

Keep People Connected When Working from Home

With an increasing number of people working from home these days, stress seems to be on the rise. One of the reasons for this is that, while many tasks can be done remotely, there's a social aspect to actually going into an office that's missing when operating from home, and it can be hard to keep people connected.

Sure, teachers may teach classes online and office workers may have videoconferences, but it's not really the same thing. In the workplace, there's chit chat and personal conversations happen during meetings, in hallways and break rooms, and people go to lunch together. People socialize and unwind, swap stories and get a much-needed battery recharge with face-to-face communication.

But when you're working from home, all that is missing. Humans are social creatures, and need that sense of belonging and camaraderie in order to function at their best. If part of successfully working out of a home office is mimicking the at-work experience as much as possible, how can technology be used to help foster this more abstract aspect of the workplace?

There are a few ways to continue to foster the sense of teamwork and belonging, even while people remain far apart. Some are things administrators can do, while others are things at-home workers can do on their own. Try to build more interactive ways of communicating. Just pushing information out to people can be wearing and make them feel like they're at the end of the communications chain instead of a part of it. Make it more of an "us" experience than a "me and also you" one.

Accentuate the Positive

Get the idea out there that this distance working situation is kind of great. Focus on the positive aspects of the WFH culture. It's modern! It's exciting! It's the future! People have more flexibility. No more wasted commute time. And yes, casual attire. At the very least, your unbridled optimism will act as a counterbalance to all the grumbling, and it might even help some people cope with things a bit better.

Be Chatty

There's a good chance your online work is more than just documents and meetings in the cloud. You're probably in touch with your colleagues all day long via multiple communications platforms.

Consider using an instant messaging system instead of email. Email feels like push communications, a "message from on high". Chat interfaces feel more, well, chatty. Even though the exact same information is imparted, a chat is more informal and more like the experience of talking face to face.

Meet & Greet

When scheduling online meetings, regardless of which platform you're using, add 10 minutes to the beginning or end of the agenda so people can socialize. This mimics what would happen if everyone were meeting up in the real world. People naturally spend a little time catching up, going over what they did on the weekend, telling that new joke they heard, comparing sports scores and so on.

Stay positive

Use chat

Be social

Use cameras

Have fun

Leverage intranets

Future-proof

Enable chat during your online sessions. When people feel they have less control and less autonomy because information is just being pushed at them, it's alienating. Just like people might ask questions or make a comment on the side in real life, let them do that while interacting online.

Obviously, if people start abusing the chat, causing distractions or derailing the purpose of the virtual gathering, you'll have need to clarify its purpose and maybe even disable it. But give everyone a little leeway here. Or, if your software allows it, maybe you can just mute the troublemakers. You can always try it again once people have seen how the ability to chat helps create a sense of togetherness and spontaneity.

Encourage people to participate by asking everyone for feedback. For those who are soft-spoken or shy, let them use chat or submit questions and topics in advance. You can even just call someone out for a job well done. The goal is for everyone to feel they've participated in some way at least once each session.

Get Some Face Time
One simple way to keep people connected is to let them see each other. Move away from conference calls and use videoconferencing every time. Require everyone to use their cameras. Seeing people's faces is psychologically beneficial. And encourage everyone to dress appropriately. Since people are at home, it's very tempting for them to just sit around in their bathrobe all day. This has the psychological effect of blurring the line between work or school life and home life, which is a major cause of stress. People need to groom and dress as if they were actually meeting in person so they can feel that difference.

Also, think about meeting more often than you would if everyone weren't working remotely. Departments should come together at least once per week, and some teams may even have daily check-ins for just 10 minutes or so. This can create a sense of togetherness and make sure that everyone gets a chance to contribute and have their voice heard.

Have town hall type meetings every two weeks or so. This lets people not only see and interact with their colleagues but gives them valuable insight into the state of things. Transparency breeds trust and lessens stress, so be open and honest about the current situation. This also gives you a chance to get feedback on how working from home is going for people and solicit ideas for improving things as you go.

Play Together
Hold a few virtual events that aren't work related. They're a way to encourage people to socialize even if they can't be in the same room together. Make them optional, though. Nobody wants "Big Brother" telling them how to spend their free time. This should be an opportunity, not a requirement.

These can be as simple as an online bingo game or a trivia quiz. Two rounds of bingo only take around 15 minutes. Or you can go further. Have costume contests or holiday parties. Find out what your team is interested in and do that. You can even have a set a weekly time slot where employees volunteer to lead some fun activity of their own. It's always better to have activities led by all levels of the organization, not just managers.

Whatever you do, make sure to gamify things. Have prizes or points or something to encourage people to participate. Be sure to post the winners on your intranet page to further recognize and reinforce participation.

10 TIPS FOR ENGAGING REMOTE WORKERS

1 GET THE RIGHT COLLABORATION TOOLS. This means right for your organization and your people. This will be the main way everyone is interacting, so make sure you have all the features you need without extraneous stuff. If people hate using the platform, that just makes remote work harder. Ask people what they need and want, and then test drive one or two options before making a final choice.

2 GIVE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY A RETHINK. Use an omni-channel approach and craft consistent messages across a range of platforms so people can engage in the way they prefer. It needs to be easy for people to access information, interact and share, and provide feedback. Revisit your success measures to match up to your new strategy.

3 HAVE A CLEAR WFH POLICY. Including the "why" as well as the "what" will go a long way toward preventing confusion and misunderstandings. Work from existing policies for in-office workers (dress code, hours, etc.) and build on any additional conditions for WFH.

4 MANAGERS NEED TO BE EDUCATED. If you have some old-fashioned mindsets, they may not be enthusiastic about WFH and could communicate the wrong attitude to employees. Make sure your C-suite and team leaders understand the benefits for both your workforce and your organization.

5 MAKE SURE GOALS ARE CLEARLY DEFINED. Giving people an outline of tasks of targets lets them know exactly what's expected and what's coming next. And as they check items off the list, they feel a sense of accomplishment.

6 ALWAYS GIVE A CONTEXT AND REASONING. Answer the five Ws. Letting people see behind the curtain makes them feel more in control and more connected, and it also builds trust: because you trust them, they will trust you in turn.

7 COMMUNICATE MORE SUCCINCTLY BUT MORE OFTEN. Shorter messaging can use an informal tone, which mimics face-to-face interactions. One key element here is to deliver communications regularly but not overwhelm recipients with too many, too often.

8 SIMULATE TOGETHERNESS. It's easy to start feeling isolated and cut off when working remotely, so do whatever you can to let people feel like they belong to something. Use video whenever possible, since seeing people (even on screen) fosters a sense of connection.

9 ENCOURAGE GROWTH. Offer some sort of training and skills acquisition package to keep workers engaged and evolving. Recognizing achievements as people learn new skills and even micro-kudos can also motivate employees.

10 BE SOCIABLE. While it's a good idea to have some fun activities, social get-togethers need to appeal to everyone. Ask your audience what they'd like to do. Socializing should always be optional and online whenever possible so more people can participate.

The fact is that plenty of folks like the people they work with. You may find that, since there's no overhead to consider (no space to rent, no drinks or food to buy, etc.), that you can have more of these sorts of social events online than you could otherwise. All people need to do is turn on their webcams and have fun enjoying one another's company.

Leverage Your Intranet

An intranet or similar online portal like SharePoint is already a virtual gathering place, so make it more social. Talk to whoever runs it and see if it can become more interactive. Many platforms include various tools, like comments and polls, to make things more fun and encourage engagement. Sometimes it's just a matter of turning on a feature or two.

Ask everyone to change their browser homepage to the intranet (or online LMS or whatever you are using), so it's the first thing they see as they start their day. There should be a post at least once a day if not a couple of times a day. If people used to get their info from digital signage in your facility, embed those playlists in your webpage for a sense of continuity. It might even be a good idea to allow people to make their own posts (subject to approval, of course). These posts could be text, but also picture and videos.

Keeping people's spirits up is as essential as keeping people connected in a widespread work-from-home culture. In addition to posts about business of the business (like, "Staff Meeting on Monday at 3pm"), fold in some WFH tips from time to time. This could be anything from suggestions on what equipment to use or how to organize a home workspace to advice on how to make the work-from-home experience less stressful and more productive.

All work and no play, as we know, blunts people's enthusiasm. Post some fun stuff like music playlists, videos that may be relevant or interesting, amusing pictures, trivia questions or surveys. Personalize things by asking people their favorite food, or dream vacation, or what they're watching or reading these days. You can even ask people to submit pictures of their home offices, families and pets – everyone loves seeing animal pictures. Ask people to contribute their own song lists, or movie or book recommendations. What about recipes? Everyone needs to eat.

Some folks are a little shyer than others, and in person they might not speak up and contribute as much as more outgoing people. But an online forum gives them emotional cover as well as time to develop their answers and contributions. The interesting thing is that by leveraging online portals properly, you can sometimes get more interaction among the team than would occur in a face-to-face environment.

Focus on the Future

Just because everyone is operating from home right now doesn't mean they aren't still part of the team. Modern technology allows us an unprecedented opportunity to experiment with different forms of interaction, and new tools to keep people connected are being developed every day. Who knows? You just might discover that some of the practices and methods you experiment with are valuable enough to keep, even when some people go back to the office.

The Benefits of Office Hoteling

In today's dynamic work environment, traditional office setups are going through significant transformations. One emerging concept gaining traction is office hoteling, which offers a flexible and efficient approach to workspace utilization.

What is Office Hoteling?

Office hoteling is a system that allows employees to reserve and utilize workspaces on an as-needed basis, rather than being assigned a fixed desk or office. This approach promotes mobility and flexibility, encourages collaboration and reduces costs.

In office settings, there's more than one kind of hoteling. Workspace hoteling refers to the practice of reserving and utilizing different types of workspaces, such as private offices, meeting rooms or collaborative areas, based on the specific requirements of tasks or projects. This is often one aspect of activity-based working strategies. Desk hoteling focuses specifically on the reservation and use of individual workstations or desks within a shared workspace environment.

Why Use Office Hoteling?

Office hoteling helps make space usage more efficient. Traditional office setups often result in underutilized or unoccupied workstations, wasting valuable resources and driving up costs. By adopting hoteling practices, organizations can optimize space allocation, reducing the number of unused workstations and minimizing real estate expenses. This is particularly valuable in today's remote and hybrid work models, where the workforce is often decentralized.

By enabling employees to work in different areas and interact with various teams, the barriers of corporate silos and departmental boundaries are broken down and there are more opportunities for collaboration and networking. This leads to enhanced cross-functional communication, knowledge sharing and innovative thinking.

Benefits of Office Hoteling

Office hoteling offers a range of benefits that transform the traditional office environment into a dynamic, flexible and collaborative workspace that's right in line with modern needs and expectations. The importance of scheduling platforms and displaying bookings cannot be underestimated, as they provide the foundation for seamless reservation processes, optimal space utilization and data-driven decision-making. As the modern workplace continues to evolve, embracing office hoteling practices can unlock new possibilities for productivity, employee satisfaction and cost efficiency.

Flexibility and Freedom

The benefits of office hoteling are multifaceted and impact both employees and organizations in several ways. One key advantage is the freedom it offers employees with the ability to change things on an as-needed basis and choose a workspace that aligns with their specific needs. Instead of being tied to a fixed desk or office, employees can select a workspace based on factors like the nature of their tasks, privacy requirements or collaborative needs. This autonomy promotes a sense of empowerment and personalization, allowing employees to create an environment that best supports their work style and preferences.

Additionally, office hoteling eliminates territoriality and hierarchies that can arise in fixed desk assignments. Employees no longer feel confined to a particular space, and the emphasis shifts from "my desk" to "our workspace." This fosters a more egalitarian work culture where employees can freely interact and collaborate with colleagues, irrespective of their positions or departments. Breaking down these barriers can lead to improved cross-functional communication, knowledge sharing and a stronger sense of unity within the organization.

Efficient Space Utilization

Optimizing the way spaces are used is another key benefit of office hoteling. Traditional office setups often suffer from underutilized or unoccupied workstations, which nonetheless cost money. With office hoteling, organizations can be much more efficient.

Hoteling not only eliminates the inefficiencies associated with empty desks but also minimizes the need for excess office space. This, in turn, leads to cost savings in terms of real estate expenses, infrastructure, technology and maintenance. Fewer people on-site at any given time means less office space is needed.

Office hoteling lets organizations adapt to changing workforce dynamics by ensuring that space is efficiently allocated to those who need it, when they need it. This flexibility enables a better balance between remote work and in-office collaboration, making the most of available resources.

Improved Collaboration and Networking

By breaking away from the confines of fixed desk assignments, employees have the opportunity to work in different areas and interact with diverse teams. When employees are no longer tied to specific departments or seats, it becomes easier for them to collaborate with colleagues outside of their immediate circles. This can encourage the sharing of ideas, expertise and different perspectives, which in turn leads to more innovative thinking and problem-solving.

Office hoteling also encourages spontaneous collaboration and unplanned encounters. When employees move around the workspace and have the flexibility to choose their work area, they're more likely to interact with colleagues from different teams or departments. This can result in serendipitous conversations, new connections and the formation of valuable professional relationships that may not have occurred in a traditional office setup.

Scheduling Platforms are Everything

To effectively implement and manage office hoteling, scheduling platforms play a crucial role. These streamline the booking process, providing employees with an intuitive way to reserve workspaces and resources. Real-time visibility into workspace availability enables optimal space allocation, avoiding conflicts and double bookings. Scheduling platforms also provide valuable data and analytics, empowering organizations to make data-driven decisions for future space planning and resource optimization.

Streamlined Booking Processes

One of the key elements in successfully implementing office hoteling is the presence of a user-friendly scheduling platform. These space booking solutions make it easy and efficient for employees to reserve workspaces and resources. With just a few clicks, employees can view the availability of different workspaces, choose a suitable option and make their reservations.

These platforms often offer features such as search filters, interactive floor plans and real-time availability updates, making it simpler for employees to find and secure the workspace they need. This process saves time and eliminates the frustrations associated with manual or outdated booking systems, which in turn leads to greater adoption and satisfaction.

Optimal Space Allocation and Utilization

Scheduling platforms for office hoteling provide real-time visibility into workspace availability, enabling organizations to optimize space allocation and utilization. By having a clear overview of which workspaces are occupied and when, organizations can ensure that resources are allocated efficiently.

With these platforms, employees can easily see which workspaces are available for booking at any given time. This transparency empowers them to make informed decisions and choose workspaces that align with their requirements. Additionally, scheduling platforms often incorporate features such as automatic release of unoccupied workspaces if not claimed within a specified period. This functionality prevents unnecessary blockage of workspaces, and encourages fair and efficient utilization.

Data-Driven Decision-Making

Scheduling platforms not only facilitate the booking process but also provide valuable data and analytics that can inform decision-making related to office hoteling. By capturing and analyzing usage patterns and trends, organizations can gain insights into how their spaces are being used.

With the ability to track workspace bookings, management can proactively address potential issues such as overcrowding or underutilization of certain areas. They can see metrics and analytics that reveal workspace occupancy rates, peak usage times and popular areas within the office. Having visibility into these patterns allows them to optimize the office layout, rearrange workspaces or implement measures to balance resource allocation.

Additionally, data collected through scheduling platforms can contribute to long-term space planning and optimization strategies. By understanding how different workspaces are utilized and which areas are in high demand, organizations can make data-driven decisions about future office layouts, investment in specific amenities or resources, and even potential changes to the overall workplace footprint to optimize the overall workplace experience.

## Showcase Bookings on Digital Signage

Transparency in coworker availability allows employees to easily view when their colleagues have booked workspaces. This visibility promotes collaboration and facilitates coordination among team members. For example, if employees know that their team members will be working in a particular area, they can plan to utilize adjacent workspaces, enabling seamless communication and fostering a sense of camaraderie.

In-office and out-of-office schedules can be shown on digital signage throughout your facility. That way, employees can easily view the availability of their coworkers, so they can be near people they need to work with, or just people they personally like.

Bookings can be pulled from your scheduling platform, and will automatically update as changes are made throughout the day. You can also show event and meeting schedules for rooms, or display a list of desk reservations to let everyone know where their coworkers are sitting that day.

Showcasing bookings on digital signs can also encourage more social connections within the workplace, which is crucial when trying to motivate a dispersed workforce.

When employees see where their coworkers are working, it creates opportunities for spontaneous interactions, impromptu discussions and the exchange of ideas. This can lead to increased networking, knowledge sharing and the formation of a stronger corporate culture.
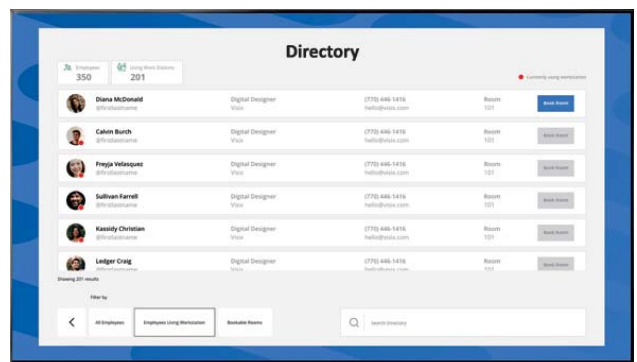
8 BENEFITS OF OFFICE HOTELING

WITH ELECTRONIC PAPER SIGNS

1 LOWERS OVERHEAD COSTS
The average organizational cost of one desk is $10,000 a year, which needlessly wastes resources and costs the organization money. Office hoteling reduces real estate overhead by allocating workspace efficiently.

2 ENCOURAGES MOBILITY
Studies show some employees, like salespeople, spend as little as 30% of their time physically in the office. Hoteling accommodates a mobile workforce and promotes a telecommuting environment.

3 REDUCES DESK VACANCY
Studies show that physical desks are only used 45-50% of the time. Employees may be in meetings, temporarily working in other departments, on training courses, traveling, on holiday or ill. Hoteling improves desk utilization and reduces vacancy.

4 PROVIDES FLEXIBILITY
Different employees may need different kinds of workspaces at different times for different tasks. Hoteling provides greater flexibility in where and when they work.

5 SAVES MONEY
Reducing the number of desks cuts down on energy consumption, dedicated phone and IT equipment, furniture and other resources for permanent stations.

6 FOSTERS COLLABORATION
Hoteling and huddle spaces foster more collaboration and teamwork. This increases productivity, employee satisfaction, and improves talent acquisition and retention.

7 REPLACES PAPER SCHEDULES
Electronic paper room signs replace ugly, wasteful paper notices and desk calendars to provide a modern, self-updating space scheduling system.

8 UNIFIES SPACE MANAGEMENT
Hoteling with electronic room signs lets you use a central scheduling app (Exchange, Google Calendar) to reserve places. This unifies your space management efforts.

Start Office Hoteling Today

As the modern workplace adapts to today's realities, the benefits of office hoteling become clearer for both employees and the organization as a whole.

Not only does office hoteling provide real bottom-line savings for most organizations, but it's also often a deal breaker for potential employees evaluating job offers. Today's workers are demanding more flexibility in when and where they work, so office hoteling has become a must-have in order to attract and retain top talent. And it's not just about new hires, existing employees are also looking for modern solutions for work-life balance, and office hoteling can help lower absentee rates.

By providing more freedom and optimizing space utilization, organizations can transform the traditional office environment into a dynamic, flexible and collaborative workspace. By leveraging the advantages of office hoteling, organizations can create a workplace that fosters higher productivity, more innovation and lasting employee satisfaction – all while saving costs.

5 Reasons to Use Room Signs

One of the most powerful tools you can use for efficient space utilization is digital room signs. Whether it's an office, healthcare facility, conference center, college campus or K-12 school district. Rooms signs are integrative, efficient, extensible, economical and environmentally friendly.

1. Integrative
Room signs bring your calendar right to your door, and your door to your calendar. They integrate easily with existing scheduling programs (such as Microsoft Exchange, Google Calendars, EMS, 25Live, Amadeus, etc.) and bilateral scheduling means that changes made at the room sign immediately update into your calendar system, and vice versa.

Room signs easily mount on the wall, glass or cubicles. And smaller models, such as E Ink signs, are wireless and can be moved around at will, which makes them perfect for office hoteling and shared spaces. These signs let you turn any area into a meeting space for a limited time and are very affordable at just a few hundred dollars each.

2. Efficient
Some room signs are interactive to let you book right at the sign, with the calendar system being updated from there. What gets scheduled in one place shows up in both places, so there's no chance of double bookings. You can also check-in, start, extend and stop a meeting right there at the sign.

You can see the whole schedule for each room, or an overview of all available spaces. Whether someone wants to book a space for a meeting a week from now, or in 15 minutes, all the information is available and up to date. Also, there's a permanent record of what happens, so you can track meetings and make adjustments accordingly for more efficient room usage.

For example, Marketing Team A keeps scheduling room 17 for one hour every week. But a quick look at the usage stats shows that only three or four people ever check-in, and they only use it for 30 minutes. You can then suggest a smaller room or different schedule, so the room is used to its fullest potential.

Room signs allow system-wide efficiencies. Availability lights on the sides of room signs also make it quite easy to find an available room as needed – green means the room is open, and red means the room is in use, so people can see open rooms at a glance down the hallway. And a quick glance at a room sign tells you everything that's scheduled for that location, making finding your meeting fast and easy.

3. Extensible

Room signs are screens, and so are extensions of your existing digital signage system. People wrapped up in meetings all day don't have to miss important announcements or alerts, and specific rooms can be targeted with specific messages that are relevant to the people using that room.

And you can increase room sign usage by advertising them on your regular digital signs – you can even feature short videos showing how easy they are to use. You can also add wayfinding capabilities and integrate mobile tools with QR codes and SMS. Anything you can show on a digital sign, you can also show on a room sign. Also, you can start off with just a few room signs, and then expand as needed.

4. Economical

Room signs can be a very affordable way to outfit all your rooms. With electronic paper signs costing just a few hundred dollars and virtually no infrastructure needs, you can update your office at very little outlay. Power over Ethernet Plus (PoE+) for interactive models lets network cables also carry power using a network switch or injector, further reducing your cabling needs and cash outlay.

Digital room signs also eliminate expensive and wasteful printing costs, as well as the staff time that was spent designing, printing, distributing and removing printed signs.

5. Environmental

They can also reduce your power usage. E Ink signs use very little power – they only draw power when they change an image, and the batteries have enough charge for around 10,000 updates - that's three years' use on average.

Room signs and good booking practices can help you streamline your existing spaces right now, increasing space utilization and making the entire process more people friendly. They are a fast and affordable way to maximize your rooms' usage and make everyone's lives a little easier. This increases employee satisfaction and improves the employee experience. Plus, all your rooms can be combined into a single space management system.

Interactive Room Signs

Touchscreen room signs can help with a lot of these issues. These are mounted next to meeting rooms, and the first noticeable feature is that rooms currently vacant show a green availability light on the room sign, while those in use show a red light – you see at a glance which rooms are open or occupied.

The screen can show the room number, the current schedule of bookings for that room and whatever resources are available (projector, whiteboard, etc.). If a resource is absent, or doesn't work, you can touch the appropriate icon on the screen, and an email is sent to a designated recipient (office manager, etc.) informing them there's a problem. That particular resource is shown as unavailable until the maintenance has been carried out.

Since interactive room signs integrate with your calendaring software, any bookings or changes made in the software are instantly reflected on the room sign. But you can also book rooms right at the sign itself, with the information being sent to the scheduling software. If the room you want is already booked, that room sign shows you other rooms that are currently free.

These room signs also let the organization track room usage in real-time. Once it's time for the meeting, you can start the meeting by touching an icon on the screen, as well as end it when you're finished. A meeting can also be extended or canceled with a simple touch as well. This can help with visibility into usage trends, so you can better streamline your booking guidelines.

CONNECT
TOUCHSCREEN | POE | ANALYTICS

Connect gives you a centralized solution to manage room signs from an admin console, while pulling schedule data from your own calendar app.
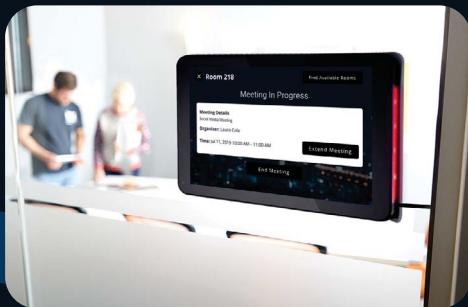
Show schedules outside each room and let people book space on the go. You'll see room availability at a glance with side lights that shine green when the room is available and red when it's not.
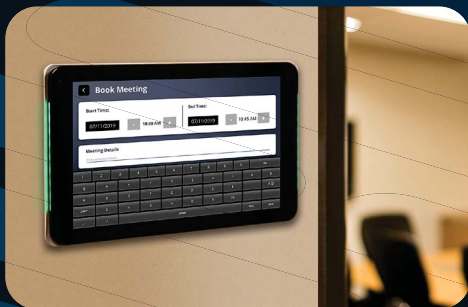
- Book, start, extend, end or cancel meetings right at the room sign
- Group room signs or publish to individual units
- Customize backgrounds, fonts, colors and more
- Show room number and AV resource icons
- Report room resource issues right at the sign
- Use analytics to track room usage, booking requests and resources
- Power via POE network switch, injector, or DC power supply
- Surface mount included, optional glass mounting kit

Connect's interactive screen lets you schedule space right at the room sign. If a room is booked, you can see available rooms at the press of a button. You can also require a PIN to prevent unauthorized access to room booking and administrative functions.

Take control of your meeting rooms with a feature-rich, cost-effective room management solution.
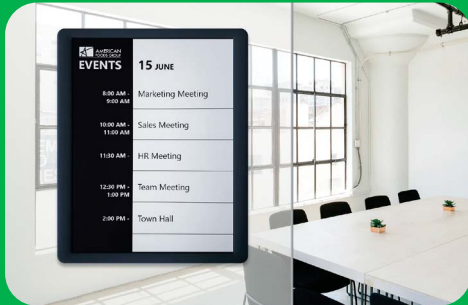
LEARN MORE:
www.visix.com/connect-conference-room-signs

visix®

EPAPER SIGNS
AFFORDABLE | VERSATILE | SUSTAINABLE

Our paperwhite signs (EPS) are the most cost-effective option to display schedules outside your shared spaces.

These compact displays don't require any cabling, so they can be placed virtually anywhere. Easily mount them in outside meeting rooms, classrooms, training rooms or any other space you reserve. You can also attach them to desks or cubicles used for workspace hoteling.

- Lightweight, wireless and battery-powered
- Choose from three available sizes
- Use in portrait or landscape orientation
- Publish schedules & bookings from your own calendars
- Updated wirelessly via RF communication
- Use as digital name plates for offices, desks, etc.
- Select from a range of ready-made templates or customize your onscreen layouts
- Use black and red ink for screen data, logos, QR tags and other onscreen elements
- Order custom faceplates to match your brand or décor
- Pair with our Choros booking platform for a sustainable space booking solution

EPS signs use E Ink technology for a bright display, and RF updates are designed to minimize battery usage. A sign's batteries are only activated when information changes, so batteries last up to three years or 10,000 updates.
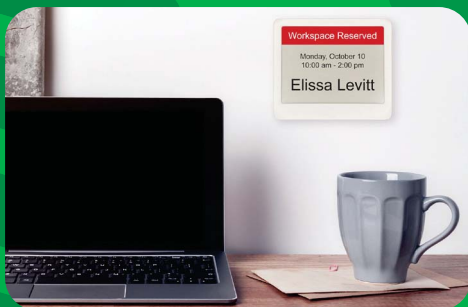
Save on hardware, infrastructure and energy bills with our epaper room and desk signs for any shared space.

LEARN MORE:
www.visix.com/electronic-paper-room-signs

visix®

If you like, your room signs can be protected with an administrative PIN, so only authorized personnel have access. Your logo can be displayed, or that of a visiting company that is using your space or are your guests. The displays are also additional real estate for your digital signage playlists or any other image you'd like to display, like "turn off phones", Wi-Fi passwords and more.

Many room signs let you run one Ethernet cable to the room sign to supply both power and data. And the signs can be surface-mounted or recessed, and even mounted on glass, so you can use them outside a variety of shared spaces.

Analytics for interactive room signs can help you increase efficiencies in space management, as well as measure and monitor how those spaces are used. You can then use this data to manipulate and increase efficiencies even further, leading to lower overhead costs and greater user satisfaction.

Electronic Paper Room & Desk Signs

Terms like electronic "paper" or "ink" might seem like a misnomer at first. Electronic paper, or e-paper, is not a substance, but a display device. The most well-known devices are probably Amazon's Kindle e-readers, but e-paper is also used in room signs for space management and digital signage.

Electronic paper signs are the most cost-effective option to display current schedules outside your shared spaces – an inexpensive, wireless and battery-operated solution for space management.

Epaper signs give you:

- An economical choice for displaying schedules
- Wireless and battery-powered room signs
- Easy integration with calendar apps
- Real-time schedules for shared spaces
- Black and red ink for screen data, logos, etc.
- Easy workspace management for office hoteling
- Resources to save time, money and waste by replacing printed schedules

EPS room signs show data from most event management systems, so you can publish room schedules and event data from your current scheduling app. Calendar changes are delivered to room signs throughout the day without any user intervention, so you don't have to "push" out updates manually.

EPS room signs are updated wirelessly via RF communication designed to minimize battery usage. A sign's batteries are only activated when information changes, which allows batteries to last up to three years or 10,000 updates.

Paper-white signs use E Ink technology for a bright display background with low reflectivity and high readability and allow for both black and red colors on screen.

These compact displays can be placed virtually anywhere because they don't require any cabling. Easily mount them outside meeting rooms, classrooms, training rooms or any other space you reserve. You can also attach them to desks or cubicles used for workspace hoteling.

Epaper Desk Signs

Small but mighty, epaper desk signs offer the most flexible solution to meet the challenges of managing shared spaces. Great for hoteling, hotdesking or other coworking spaces in hybrid offices.

They're small and lightweight, energy efficient and ecologically sound, they use no cables of any kind and have flexible mounting options. Once they're set up (a simple procedure), they sync with your calendar app and update signs in a flash. After that, the signs will automatically update with the latest bookings and screen data. And since epaper desk signs only use power when they update, you won't have to change batteries for years.

- Show desk availability and upcoming reservations right at the workspace
- Easily mount on desks, workstations, partitions, walls and glass
- Affordable, wireless and battery-powered for three years or more
- Display QR codes to let people book and check in at the sign
- Black, red and white ink for onscreen text, logos, QR codes, etc.

Hotdesking Pros, Cons & Tips

Remote work and the hybrid office have kickstarted many conversations about how organizations can better utilize their spaces. One system people are trying out is hotdesking, which used to be called "non-reservation-based hoteling" before someone borrowed a term from the Navy (hot racking, when the same bunks, or "racks", would be used by different sailors working different shifts), making it much friendlier.

As the more cumbersome term says, however, it is a variant of office hoteling. The difference is in the "non-reservation" part. Office hoteling lets people reserve workstations, rooms and other spaces in advance (like one reserves a room in a hotel before traveling). Hotdesking is more spontaneous, with people claiming areas at the moment, on an as-needed basis. It's more akin to arriving somewhere and popping into a hotel to see if they have a room (except the answer is almost always "yes").

Hotdesking was pioneered by an IBM business unit in Chicago back in 1993, and has since spread to many different sectors and industries. IWG gives us these stats:

- 35% of U.S. companies use hotdesking or office hoteling.
- 67% of employees who use hotdesking or office hoteling say it has improved their productivity.
- 58% of employees who use hotdesking or office hoteling say it has improved their work-life balance.
- 29% of employees who use hotdesking or office hoteling say they have experienced some negative effects, such as difficulty finding a space to work, feeling isolated, or having to share equipment.

Hotdesking Examples

One of the main advantages of hotdesking is that it's convenient, especially in a flexible work environment. A person shows up to the office, discovers others from their team are also there, decides they want to sit near them, and then claims a nearby workstation. Or maybe that person came in today because they need some time alone to work on an intensive project, so they claim a space further away, with a promise to have lunch together. This sort of decision would have been more cumbersome in an office hoteling situation. It's only with hotdesking that people can adjust immediately to a situation.

Hotdesking is also great for employees who have several projects going on at once and need a certain workstation with certain equipment, but only for a short while. For example, Sinead has been asked to edit a video, a task that will only take a day or two but is not part of her regular duties. So, she needs a work area that has good screens and a powerful enough computer that is also far enough away from others that she won't get distracted. So, she can hotdesk in a media suite, and then hotdesk somewhere else for her other work.

Or maybe Jerome just gotten a call that a client's stopping by HQ for a quick project update. Fortunately for him, his employer has what's sometimes called a touchdown space. (A touchdown space is typically a laptop-centric, informal space for employees to accomplish quick meetings or tasks.) Hotdesking lets Jerome grab a space without having to run around, finding out who has that room booked and trying to get them to change their location, or ending up stuck in a broom closet while he goes over the project's progress with his clients.

Sometimes, a whole area is reserved as a sort of permanent hotdesking zone, kitted out for certain types of tasks. This is known as an activity center. This is not unlike the idea of office neighborhoods, which some organizations are having remarkable success with. Office neighborhoods group workstations for people engaged in similar tasks or on the same team into little sub-units of each floor.

Hotdesking Benefits

Hotdesking is very flexible, which is something more and more organizations are starting to prioritize. A hybrid office situation means that people come in only some of the time, performing the rest of their tasks at home. Why make them spend time logging in to a calendar, searching through available workstations, trying to remember each spot's advantages and disadvantages, and then booking it before they start their commute? What if suddenly Grandma says she'll take the kids to the zoo today, and the employee decides this is a good chance to go into work and see everyone? Hotdesking is the perfect solution.

Increased Collaboration

Hotdesking works for hybrid offices and organizations that are back to 100% in-office work. Using a system like hotdesking encourages collaboration, as people can sit near others who are working on the same tasks or projects. Cross-functional interactions can also give fresh perspectives on issues that come up. The old idea of claiming a space and making it yours forever encourages siloing, which is not agile at all. In that system, people would need to book a meeting room in order to brainstorm, which can stifle creativity and inspiration.

Less Clutter

Since people can potentially sit anywhere with hotdesking, work areas tend to be tidier. No more seventeen photos of cats cluttering up the desktop, and drawers with ancient, half-eaten snacks. Everyone is on the go, or potentially on the go, all the time, so they tend to work leaner. Some companies that use hotdesking have even found that this sort of lightweight in-office footprint can help people focus more on the tasks at hand, which improves overall productivity and satisfaction.

Decreased Expenses

Hotdesking in a hybrid office probably means the organization can get rid of some of their workspaces or repurpose them for other uses. A 100-person office no longer needs 100 desks. Since real estate costs constitute a major business expense (second only to salaries), an organization might downsize to a smaller space. If on the first floor of your building, only 10 out of 40 workstations or offices are being used at the same time, and the same is true for the second floor, you could eliminate an entire floor, consolidating your departments or renting it out to another company.

Maybe some of the work areas can be turned into huddle spaces, or relaxation zones, or an in-house library with relevant literature and documents. Or put up a digital sign to keep everyone informed and further increase engagement. If you're leasing furniture and equipment, reducing the number of workstations is another cost savings.

Data-Driven Decisions

Because hotdesking requires people to book spaces in your calendar system, you can use analytics to get some serious insight into how spaces are being used. Do people tend to prefer one part of the floor because the light is better there in the summer? Well, that's interesting to know, and maybe you can get better lighting for the other areas. That's just one example of what you can adjust when you have hard data driving your decision making.

You could also look at load times (when more people are in the office) to adjust environmental controls that can lead to cost savings and a greener footprint. Some companies are also using IoT solutions, where each workstation and room sort of "talks" to the overall scheduling system, keeping current data and usage stats up to date.

Talent Retention

Hotdesking is also modern. Not in the sense of trying to be trendy, but because today's employees want options like this, and sometimes even expect it. Having hotdesking available likely means it'll be easier to attract quality applicants and get them to stay on the job longer.

More flexibility also means more agility, and as things change, your employees can change right along with them with very little lag time. It might seem odd to some stalwarts who are used to older ways of doing things, but it really isn't too difficult to bring them around.

Hotdesking Best Practices

Best practices for hotdesking involve a lot of different disciplines – interior design, furniture, technology, software, policies and training. First, you have to find space booking solutions that make sense for your organization. A lot of hotdesking's success will come from how you roll it out to your workforce, so it's crucial to get feedback from employees every step of the way.

1. **Get a scheduling system in place if you don't already have one.** A good calendar system is crucial – one that is easily accessible, can handle all of your bookable spaces in one place and is easily integrated into your daily operations.

2. **Find out how many people are likely to be in the office on a given day.** Do this by actual headcounts for each weekday for at least a month. Each weekday may be different, and even monthly and seasonal differences can impact the tallies.

3. **Survey your people to find out what type of spaces they need to do their best work.** Make sure they think past their individual projects and tasks to things like team collaboration and huddle spaces, chill out and quiet zones, even meeting rooms and lunchrooms. And don't forget about public spaces for visitors.

4. **Figure out what amenities and equipment each workstation or room needs.** Once you know what type of spaces you need, and for how many people, you'll need to kit them out for success. This is another area where employee surveys can help, but you'll need to speak to individuals to find out what they use each day and get totals from there.

5. **Determine standard booking intervals.** Decide if you want to let people book a desk for the entire day, in four-hour blocks or in hourly increments. Policies for booking meeting rooms and team spaces might be different. Match your policies to what's most productive.

6. **Have a map of work areas available.** This map could go up on a dedicated digital sign and could even be coded to show which spaces are booked or available, so people can see at a glance what's open and what's not. A QR code on the screen could route to quick booking options.

7. **Consider availability lights.** If you can mount lights showing green (open) or red (busy) at desks and meeting rooms, that will let people see what's being used at a glance. (One caveat – availability lights only show the current status of a space. So, if it's open now but booked in an hour, someone will have to move.

8. **Set up analytics and what you want to measure.** Once you roll out your new hoteling spaces and policies, you'll need to constantly monitor and measure to make sure employees are satisfied and that the organization is reaping the expected benefits.

Once you have your hotdesking ready to go, it's time to get people excited. There'll probably be at least some initial skepticism, but once people understand the new benefits they'll get that they can't get from a traditional set up, most will be on board.

Let people experiment with it for a while. Solicit feedback and adjust as needed. Expand your policies or compile a best practices guide for employees, using insights gathered from their own experiences. Your best resource to adopt, evolve and improve your hotdesking system is the people who use it every day.

Choros BYOD Space Booking

Choros gives you all the features of room signs without any hardware, cabling or apps. Use your own smartphone to see if a space is available, see the schedule, book it, find available rooms and much more. You don't have to download or log into anything. Booking space has never been easier. No room signs to buy and install. No apps to download. No hassle.

Installing room signs throughout an organization takes money, time and infrastructure. With Choros AR space booking platform, you get all the functionality of a room sign without having to buy hardware or worry about how to provide power and network to shared spaces.

Simply set up your spaces in the cloud-based platform, then place QR codes near meeting rooms, desks and other shared places to let people quickly scan to book. Choros overlays options in the camera view using native AR support for smartphone cameras, so you don't have to coax employees to download any apps or install any software.

Because Choros uses AR tech, space booking is faster than in any software system. It also gives users an immersive experience using a contactless solution. And because there are no room signs or cabling, it saves you significant screen and installation costs, and supports sustainability efforts.

For the user, it couldn't be easier. A person just chooses a shared space or resource, scans the QR code, and books right there using the AR interface. For the admin side of things, spaces and resources need to be defined, then added to the system, and finally organized in a way that matches your organizational structure.

- Get all the features of a room sign without the expense
- No special hardware required; no apps to download
- Let people book spaces using their own device (BYOD)
- Uses native AR smartphone tech and simple QR codes
- See availability, schedules, capacity, amenities and more
- Book, extend and end reservations on your smartphone
- Search for and book other available spaces on the spot
- Eliminate slow webpage and app authentication services
- Integrates seamlessly with Office 365 to avoid double bookings
- Reduce waste and energy consumption for sustainability

CHOROS
BYOD | NO APP | SCAN TO BOOK

Fast, contactless space booking on your own phone for meeting rooms and other shared spaces. No room signs to buy and install. No apps to download. No hassle.

Choros gives you all the features of room signs without any hardware, cabling or apps. Use your smartphone to see if a space is available, see the schedule, book it, find available rooms and more. And you don't have to download or log into anything.

- Let people book spaces using their own device (BYOD)
- Uses native AR smartphone tech and simple QR codes
- See availability, schedules, capacity, amenities & more
- Book, extend and end reservations on your phone
- Search for and book other available spaces on the spot
- Easily integrates with your own calendars
- Great for meeting rooms, desks, lockers, parking – any shared space
- Affordable licensing and a cloud-hosted dashboard to manage spaces
- Ultra-low-power availability lights available
- Reduce waste and energy consumption for sustainability

There's no limit to the number or type of spaces you can manage in Choros. Add as many as you like along with their location, capacity, accessibility and amenities.

Get Choros for a scalable, user-friendly BYOD space booking solution.

*Patent pending

LEARN MORE:
www.visix.com/space-booking

visix®

QR Codes for More Active Communications

In 2022, it's estimated there were about 89 million QR codes scanned in the United States, and that number is expected to increase to near 100 million by 2025.

Evolved from barcodes, QR codes (or QR tags, if you prefer) started off in the auto industry to track machine parts, but now are often used as a quick way to connect to web URLs using camera-enabled mobile devices. They're basically just a graphic form of a URL link.

As countless industries have begun to adopt them, more uses for QR codes are being developed all the time. And they can be very useful in visual communications on digital signage.

As the use of QR codes becomes more widespread, people are finding numerous creative ways to integrate them. In addition to facilitating contactless payment systems and product tracing, they've been used in print books and magazines, business cards, posters and flyers, on banknotes, x-rays and MRI scans, pet collars, birthday cakes and many more things.

Some more outlandish uses have included QR codes on jewelry, on cocktail napkins, on the soles of beach sandals and flip flops (they leave an impression of the QR code in the sand), mowed into the grass of sports fields, as temporary tattoos and even written in edible squid ink on a plate at a high-end restaurant.

Despite some chatter back in 2011 that the QR code was "dead", more and more companies are beginning to see their potential. While interfaces may eventually evolve as technology progresses and Web 3.0 comes online, QR codes are certainly going to be part of the way people access what organizations are offering for a long time to come.

QR Codes for Communications

People tasked with internal communications are discovering that QR codes are a perfect way to push the omni-channel strategy. One simple white square with a pattern can be used to route employees to any online resources, regardless of if they're in the office, on the factory floor, working from home or another remote location.

And a QR code doesn't have to go to a webpage; it can link to an intranet, a message playlist, a social media account, an app or anything at all that can be accessed using the web. It's all about giving people a shortcut to get the information they want and the communications you want to put in front of them.

One example is to use QR codes to replace mass emails. For example, instead of sending out an email newsletter, you can provide a dynamic QR code so people can simply access your most current newsletter or feed whenever they want. Put that QR code on a webpage, an intranet page, or even something physical, like a business card or a drink koozie. In fact, any swag at all can get a QR code slapped on it, sending people to your newsletter, product promotions or any other online resource.

QR Codes for Digital Signage

Digital signs are a perfect place to use QR codes since they're both all about digital communications. And digital signage content is always more effective when it includes some sort of call to action. Modern audiences recognize a QR code as a clear prompt, so it is its own call to action right there in your message. Because they don't take up much space, your screen real estate and content designs aren't taken up by long URLs or cumbersome instructions. And since it's easy to track how many people use a QR code if it routes to a dedicated landing page, your ROI is built in.

Companies can use QR codes to point people to internal communications, like benefits enrollment, open positions and changes to internal policies. Health and safety can also get a boost using them, with codes pointing to OSHA policies, wellness tips, green initiatives and so on. QR Codes can support training as well. For example, if there's an incident on the factory floor, digital signs can show a QR code that takes people to a training video that reminds them of proper methods.

QR codes also give you a quick way to survey employees more often. An onscreen message with a dynamic QR code to a quick poll that changes weekly is a terrific way to get feedback on a variety of topics, and is more engaging for your audience because it's active. A quick scan can take employees to a quick survey or questionnaire, and because it's so fast and easy, more people are likely to participate.

QR codes also allow for location-specific updates, making sure people aren't overwhelmed with information that isn't relevant to them. For external audiences, they can provide a quick way to further the effectiveness of advertisements and visitor information.

And when it comes to interactive wayfinding, a QR code can let someone take the full map with them when they walk away from the screen. In fact, any interactive project can be hosted on the web and grabbed using a QR code, not just maps but directories, event schedules, menu boards and more.

QR Codes for Space Management

QR codes are also useful for space booking. Rooms, desks, huddle spaces and the like can be reserved using a QR code that links to whatever reservation or calendaring system is already being used. If your organization uses digital meeting room signs, you can include a QR code on the screen to let people learn more about the room, like capacity, amenities and such.

Organizations can even use QR codes as a sort of virtual timecard, tracking when people are physically in the office or not, letting them get a clearer picture of how rooms and other spaces are actually being used, so they can make adjustments as needed.

New products, like Visix's Choros AR space booking platform, take things a step further: by scanning a QR code, an augmented reality interface opens up on the user's camera app, overlaying what the lens sees with the room schedule and availability. You can also preview what's inside (furniture, technology, etc.). And it doesn't just have to be rooms – anything can be managed with a simple QR code sticker, so you can make lockers, bicycles, parking spaces or the ping pong table bookable – literally anything at all.

How to Make a QR Code

The web is littered with scores of QR generator website and products, ranging from better-known applications like Canva and Bitly to sites like QR Tiger and Beaconstac. Many of these platforms allow you to make either static or dynamic codes, and some even include analytics to track scans.

A static code is one that links to a specific URL forever. If that URL changes, then a new code must be generated. A dynamic QR code creates one code, but the URL it points to can be changed as many times as you like. If that's something that's likely to happen, it might be worth it to use a paid service like uQR.me that can organize your codes into projects and folders. This is perfect for large facilities that reconfigure their internal spaces or directories often, or any environment where items are in flux, like a restaurant or a warehouse. The changes are made on the back end, while the QR code remains the same.

QR codes also have some flexibility when it comes to design. You can use different colors and even different shapes. Logos and other brand identifiers can be incorporated into them, or a QR code can be embedded in a design. There are myriad design possibilities, depending on the provider and how customized you want your QR code to look.

When using a QR generator app, you can often download a PNG or vector format. A vector is more flexible and scales up to any size you need, giving you maximum control over the QR image for use in a variety of cases – printed swag and posters, stickers or plaques for hotdesking, or of course, digital signage content. One thing to watch out for, however, is making the code too small. Read our best practices below for some quick tips.

Best Practices for Creating QR Codes

Remember that the primary reason to use a QR code is to make things easier for your target audience. If it's not convenient, then no one will use it.

1 **Dynamic over Static**
As we said above, dynamic QR codes offer more flexibility for long-term campaigns. If you're going to print posters or give out t shirts at a trade show, make sure you can change the destination of your QR on the back end, so your audience is always routed to current offers and information.

2 **Short and Sweet**
QR codes are pretty high capacity; one QR code can store 4296 characters. Many URLs are around 60 characters, but some can run into hundreds of characters. If you have to manage a lot of URLs, using a URL shortener to get that down to 20 characters or so before generating the code can make keeping track of everything much easier. It also reduces the risk of redirect and cross-linking errors.

3 **The 1 for 1 Rule**
You also need to make sure your codes aren't too small. The general rule of thumb is to make the QR code one inch in size for every one foot away the user will be when they scan it. Of course, once you reach the one-foot zone, you can shrink it a bit since people can easily zoom in. Conversely, don't make it too big, unless you purposely want people to stand far away to scan it.

4 **Mobile-Friendly**
Since people will be using their phones to scan the QR code, make sure the web destination they go to is optimized for mobile. People will stop using your codes if the first time they do, they end up on a webpage or online PDF that's difficult to read on small screens. And if you want to track the success of your campaign or message, use a URL unique to that online destination, so you can see how many people visit by using tools like Google Analytics.

5 **Test Before Sharing**
Before making your QR code available to employees, visitors or anyone else, test it yourself. It's a lot easier to make adjustments before you "go live". The code needs to be scanned by a QR code reader (usually included with a smartphone's camera app). Try it out on a variety of the most popular smartphone types (iPhone, Android, etc.), and try it more than once. Scanning a code one time doesn't really give you enough information to work with. Scan it multiple times, to make sure it can handle the traffic load you hope it will get.

Common problems include:

- The QR code is low-res, blurry or crooked
- An image or logo used in the center is too big and interferes with the data modules in the code
- The background is too dark, or the contrast between the code's data and background isn't high enough
- Not having enough space around the QR code (this "quiet zone" is a necessary part of a working QR code)
- A QR code against a busy background can confuse the optical scanner (like on transparent glass)

Schedule Maintenance

If you're using dynamic QR codes, be sure to regularly check the destination URLs to make sure they're current. As promotions or messages become outdated, be sure to route old QRs to something of interest. Even hitting your website or intranet homepage is a better user experience than getting a "404 Not Found" error.

QR codes are easy to use and implement, incredibly cheap (sometimes free) and already have a lot of analytics built in. Creating them takes mere moments, and they're extremely flexible since they can link to anything. Most important, they make your communications active, thereby driving participation and engagement, and improving the brand experience for your audience.

Best Practices for Office Neighborhoods

A powerful concept in the realm of workplace design and culture that's redefining the traditional office setup is office neighborhoods. In today's dynamic business landscape where collaboration, innovation and employee well-being are paramount, creating well-designed office neighborhoods has become essential for organizations aiming to foster a thriving and productive work environment.

What are Office Neighborhoods?

Office neighborhoods can be defined as designated areas within an office space that group employees based on their roles, functions or project teams. These neighborhoods provide a sense of identity, community and belonging, enabling employees to collaborate more effectively, communicate seamlessly and engage with their work and colleagues in a meaningful way.

Benefits of Office Neighborhoods

It's such a simple concept, but experience has shown that incorporating the idea of office neighborhoods into an organization's space utilization planning leads to numerous benefits, both tangible and more ephemeral.

Increased collaboration and communication

Office neighborhoods promote a collaborative work culture by bringing together employees who share similar roles or work on related projects. This proximity facilitates spontaneous interactions, brainstorming sessions and informal knowledge sharing. By breaking down silos and encouraging cross-functional collaboration, office neighborhoods enhance communication channels, and foster a sense of unity and shared purpose among team members.

Enhanced employee engagement and productivity

When employees are part of a well-designed office neighborhood, they experience a stronger connection to their work and colleagues. This sense of belonging and engagement leads to increased motivation, productivity and job satisfaction. Office neighborhoods provide a supportive environment that encourages employees to collaborate, contribute ideas and take ownership of their work, ultimately driving both individual and team performance.

Improved work-life balance

By designing neighborhoods that prioritize comfort, ergonomics and access to natural light, organizations can create environments that contribute to employee happiness, reduced stress levels and enhanced work-life balance. Incorporating spaces like quiet zones, relaxation areas and wellness spaces, organizations can create environments that prioritize employee health and happiness. This lets employees recharge, de-stress and find moments of respite within the office, leading to increased focus, creativity and overall well-being.

Fostering a sense of community and belonging

Clustering individuals with shared interests, skills or project objectives lets organizations create smaller, more intimate communities within the larger office environment. This sense of belonging fosters stronger relationships, camaraderie and a supportive network that can positively impact employee morale, collaboration and retention. People begin to psychologically identify with their neighborhood, giving them a sense of having a personal stake in outcomes.

Efficient space utilization and cost optimization

Implementing office neighborhoods allows organizations to optimize space utilization. By strategically grouping people together, organizations can eliminate wasted space and reduce the need for excess real estate. This approach maximizes space efficiency, leading to cost savings and allowing for a more agile and adaptable workspace that can easily accommodate changing business needs.

Best Practices for Creating Office Neighborhoods

Creating office neighborhoods that are conducive to collaboration, engagement and productivity requires careful consideration of various aspects of space design, technology integration and employee experience. Implementing best practices becomes crucial to ensure their successful integration within an organization.

Space Design, Layout and Collaboration

At its core, the concept of office neighborhoods is all about the space people use to accomplish their goals.

Empower employees
Involve employees in the design process of office neighborhoods by soliciting their input and feedback. Conduct surveys or focus groups to understand their preferences and needs. Empowering employees to have a say in the design decisions fosters a sense of ownership and helps create spaces that align with their work styles and requirements.

Define functional zones
To create effective office neighborhoods, start by identifying the different functions and teams that will be part of each neighborhood. This could involve grouping employees based on their roles, departments or project teams, or cross-pollinating areas with multidiscipline groups. By clearly defining these functional zones, you can allocate appropriate spaces and resources to support their specific needs.

Consider flexible and adaptable spaces
Flexibility is key in office neighborhood design. Incorporate modular furniture and movable partitions to allow for easy reconfiguration of the space as team sizes and requirements change. This flexibility enables agility and fosters inventiveness within neighborhoods and the organization as a whole.

Create shared spaces and common areas
Designate areas within office neighborhoods that encourage interaction and collaboration among employees from different teams. These shared spaces can include breakout zones, communal lounges or cafeterias. Furnish these areas with collaborative furniture, whiteboards and digital displays to facilitate brainstorming sessions, informal meetings and knowledge sharing.

Designate collaborative zones
Allocate specific areas within the office neighborhoods that are dedicated to teamwork and collaboration. Collaboration zones and huddle rooms can be equipped with shared project boards, team workstations and even puzzles to inspire new ideas. These spaces foster a collaborative mindset and provide the necessary resources for effective collaboration.

Provide amenities and recreational areas
Offer amenities within or near office neighborhoods to encourage social interactions and provide opportunities for casual interactions. Consider including kitchenettes, coffee stations, lounges or game rooms. These spaces allow employees to connect with colleagues in a more informal setting to strengthen personal and professional relationships.

Encourage informal spontaneity
Design office neighborhoods to have open and inviting spaces that encourage impromptu conversations and knowledge sharing. Consider adding seating areas or standing tables in corridors or central locations. These informal meeting spots facilitate chance encounters, foster relationships and promote the spontaneous sharing of ideas.

Foster open and transparent communication
Establish a culture of open and transparent communication within office neighborhoods. Encourage frequent and clear communication among team members and across different teams. This can be facilitated through regular team meetings, shared communication channels and digital signage messaging for important announcements and updates.

Well-being and Comfort
Ensure that office neighborhoods are ergonomically designed to support employee well-being and comfort.

Optimize natural light and ventilation
Maximize the use of natural light by positioning work areas and common spaces near windows. Natural light has been shown to improve mood, well-being and productivity. Additionally, ensure proper ventilation and air circulation to create a comfortable and healthy environment for your employees.

Incorporate comfortable and ergonomic furniture
Employee comfort and well-being are crucial. Provide adjustable desks, chairs and ergonomic accessories to promote good posture and reduce the risk of musculoskeletal issues. Consider incorporating standing desks, ergonomic keyboards and monitor stands to accommodate different work preferences. And don't forget to provide accessible spaces, technologies and amenities tailored to those with disabilities.

Offer chill out areas
Incorporate spaces for relaxation and recharging. Integrate spaces within office neighborhoods where employees can take short breaks and just relax. Designate areas with comfortable seating, soothing lighting or even nature-inspired elements. These spaces allow employees to unwind, clear their minds and rejuvenate, contributing to improved focus and overall well-being.

Smart Technologies
Use modern technology tools to help create the perfect office neighborhood with more opportunities for communications and the free flow of ideas.

Implement smart office solutions
Leverage technology to enhance office neighborhoods. Implement smart office solutions such as occupancy sensors, automated lighting and temperature controls to optimize energy usage and improve the overall employee experience. These technologies also provide valuable data for space utilization analysis and planning.

12 WAYS TO **STREAMLINE** SPACE BOOKING

1. **USE A CENTRALIZED SYSTEM:** Establish a central booking or calendar system for all rooms, desks and other shared spaces. Make sure it easily integrates with external schedule display and booking tools.

2. **INVEST IN SMART TECH:** Explore smart technologies and software solutions. From BYOD booking on smartphones to digital signage, these tools simplify booking and provide real-time availability updates.

3. **UTILIZE OFFICE HOTELING:** Let people reserve desks or workstations for short timespans using a calendar or reservation system. This guarantees them a workspace, even if they don't have a permanent desk.

4. **EMBRACE HOTDESKING:** Allow employees to choose an available desk or workspace based on their needs for the day, without a reservation in advance. Encourage employees to arrive early to secure their spot.

5. **CREATE RESERVATION TIME BLOCKS:** Establish default time blocks in 15-minute increments for space reservations to optimize resource allocation and avoid long bookings for short meetings.

6. **ESTABLISH PRIORITY-BASED BOOKING:** Support critical tasks with priority bookings. Define criteria, such as seniority, project urgency or departmental requirements, to maintain fairness and productivity.

7. **PROMOTE SHARED CALENDARS:** Encourage employees to share their digital calendars, enabling others to see their availability and book meetings accordingly. This transparency minimizes booking conflicts.

8. **IMPLEMENT REMINDERS:** Send automated reminders to confirm space bookings, helping to reduce no-shows and optimize resource utilization.

9. **ESTABLISH BOOKING POLICIES:** Develop and communicate clear guidelines to maintain fairness and avoid conflicts. Establish rules on booking duration, cancellation policies and amenities for shared spaces.

10. **PROVIDE TRAINING:** Ensure everyone is trained on your reservation system, booking tools, and the tech and amenities in each space so they can be comfortable and efficient wherever they're working.

11. **LEVERAGE ANALYTICS:** Gain insights into space booking and utilization trends and occupancy rates, and identify areas that require adjustment, such as reworking layouts or allocating more resources to high-demand spaces.

12. **FOSTER A CULTURE OF FEEDBACK & ADAPTATION:** Regularly gather feedback from employees regarding the spaces you offer and the space booking process. Create channels for suggestions and improvements.

Provide digital communication tools
Equip office neighborhoods with digital collaboration tools and platforms that enable real-time communication and information sharing. These tools can include video conferencing systems, instant messaging platforms and collaborative project management software. These tools facilitate seamless communication and information sharing among team members, especially for teams who have members working remotely.

Ensure reliable and fast Wi-Fi connectivity
A robust and reliable Wi-Fi network is essential for seamless connectivity and productivity within office neighborhoods. Ensure sufficient bandwidth and coverage to support the needs of employees working on various tasks and using different devices.

Utilize smart scheduling and booking systems
Implement smart scheduling and space booking systems for shared areas within office neighborhoods. These systems streamline the process of reserving meeting rooms, desks, collab areas and shared resources, making it easier for teams to coordinate and optimize space utilization.

Plan for flexibility
In agile work environments that use flexible seating, you might consider employing hotdesking or office hoteling policies. These let people book different spaces or desks on a day-by-day basis. Offering hotdesking or hoteling within predetermined office neighborhoods can ensure that team members or whole teams can come together when they need to.

Ongoing Maintenance and Evaluation
As with any business-critical system, it's not enough to simply set it up and forget about it. Office neighborhoods need constant updating and adjustment to continually improve the employee experience.

Regularly assess and evaluate office neighborhoods
Continuously assess the effectiveness of office neighborhoods by gathering feedback from employees and monitoring key performance indicators. Conduct surveys or hold focus groups to gauge employee satisfaction and productivity within their office neighborhoods and teams. Use this feedback to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments.

Maintain cleanliness and functionality
Ensure regular maintenance and cleaning of office neighborhoods to create a clean and inviting environment. Regularly inspect furniture, equipment and amenities to ensure they're functioning properly. Promptly address any maintenance issues to provide employees with a comfortable and functional workspace and consider updating your décor and amenities every six months.

By implementing these best practices for office neighborhoods, organizations can create vibrant and dynamic workplaces that support collaboration, inspire creativity and provide employees with a sense of purpose and belonging. Office neighborhoods contribute to a positive work environment where employees can thrive, resulting in increased employee satisfaction and overall organizational success.

The Value of Communications Analytics

If you're managing communications for your organization, you've no doubt already heard about, or dabbled in, analytics. Even so, a lot of traditional wisdom is that it's all about email open stats and correlating responses from that annual survey. Communications analytics can and should go much, much further.

Diving into data analysis can seem intimidating at first, especially to those who dedicate their time to thinking about mission, outreach and crafting the best messaging to engage and motivate people. Collecting and crunching a bunch of numbers can seem like a real drag compared to focusing on creative. But most likely, you already have a lot of meaningful data at your disposal, and a simple shift in your mindset can be the first step to approaching analytics as an essential and helpful tool to measure and improve the important work you're already doing.

What is "analytics"?

An often-quoted definition from Wikipedia says analytics is *the discovery, interpretation, and communication of meaningful patterns in data*. However, when talking about communications analytics, we like the definition on Dictionary.com better: *the patterns and other meaningful information gathered from the analysis of data*.

The key in both of these definitions is "meaningful." Communications can be seen as somewhat abstract, especially by the C-suite. And, although the disciplines of internal communications and marketing are well-defined, a lot of folks tasked with communications aren't formally trained. (This is especially true with digital signage managers.) Oftentimes, messages are pushed out without any clear call to action, so there's no data collected, so no meaningful analysis can happen.

It's been a longstanding challenge for organizations to quantify if they are communicating well. Are we connecting with the right audience(s)? Are we communicating at the right time, with the right medium? Are we communicating often enough? Are our messages received and understood? Are our communications reinforcing our mission and other messaging? Are we working efficiently?

Communications analytics can help answer these questions. By defining what you want to measure, collecting good data and understanding how to analyze that information, you can finetune your strategy and workflows for more impact.

> *"At its very core, data tells us what we need to do next. Data exposes inefficiencies and disadvantages. It reveals truths about our habits and what we might do next. It opens windows into opportunity, while offering a glimpse into the future. Data shines a light on what's possible and has the power to make it a reality. But only if you use it in the right way."*
>
> *~ Martyn Etherington, Forbes*

Why you need communications analytics

Without communications analytics, you don't know if what you're doing is working. It's that simple. Simple, but not effortless. It takes planning and continuous data collection, analysis and adjustment. That's usually why people don't do it. They either don't know how to get started, or they don't believe they have the time for it.

The disconnect here is that communications analytics aren't looked at in the same light as other business metrics. And they should be. Would you pay a sales rep without measuring their sales? Would you run advertising campaigns and never look at whether or not they worked? Would you pay for a website and never look to see how many people visit?

Communications analytics are as important a metric as any other. Maybe more so, since it's about engaging and motivating people you rely on for your business, whether that's employees, customers, students or visitors. It's been proven time and again that effective communication leads to more satisfied employees and clients, higher productivity and retention, and a better audience experience.

Diving into your communications data can help you identify strengths and weaknesses of workflows and messaging. It will show trends you can adapt to and opportunities you can exploit for higher engagement.

- Measure the effectiveness of individual messages and campaigns
- Learn which platforms are most successful
- See which copywriting and designs work best
- Streamline workflows by working from a baseline
- Justify effort and expense with real-world results

Basically, if you don't know where you are, how can you get where you're going? If you're publishing messages on any medium, you can't make informed decisions or optimize your communications without proper analytics. The good news is that digital platforms usually give you at least basic metrics you can track over time.

What to measure

First off, the collection of meaningful information has to happen. As we've said before, you care about what you measure. Meaning, if you measure the number of emails delivered, that's what you'll work toward – delivering more emails. But do any of those emails get opened, read or clicked? That's what you really want to know.

The first step for your communications analytics is deciding what you care about so you can measure that. Qualitative data is less common than quantitative data in most digital platforms' analytics, so this can take some workshopping. It's important to look at what data you can easily collect as you outline your goals. You don't want to come up with a wish list that means your small business will have to buy $100K of custom software to track data.

In a lot of cases, you may already have the data collection in place, but just aren't using it. For example, if you have Google Analytics set up for your website or intranet, and you prompt people to go to a webpage in one of your communications, you can see traffic to the page in the Google Analytics dashboard. If you use a URL maker, a lot of them can give you stats on clickthroughs. You don't want to let the various platforms you use dictate what you measure, but look over what's available before you go reinventing the wheel.

Another great quote is from Peter Drucker who once said, "what gets measured, gets managed." Tracking workflows and workloads often gets overlooked, so be sure to set measurement objectives for how efficient your teams, processes and platforms are performing.

Analytics for digital signage

Digital signage is just one subset of communications, but it's one of the most common areas where measurement and analytics get ignored. It suffers from a "set it and forget it" mentality, with event schedules and weather showing up on screens alongside the occasional announcement and no one tracking whether or not people are actually engaging with the screens.

Just like any other messaging platform, you want to track what's being shown on your screens, who's contributing and how effective those messages are. Our AxisTV Signage Suite software has cloud-based analytics to help our clients easily answer key deployment management questions:

- How many times did a message play over a certain time period?

- Who are my power users based on content submissions?

- Who might need more training based on lack of submissions? (My power users can likely help.)

- Where is our digital signage being utilized the most, based on playlist submissions?

- What playlists need more content?

- Are we responding quick enough to content that's been submitted for approval?

- Is most of the content getting approved instead of disapproved?

With the built-in analytics, you can work to train your software users and streamline workflows. You can also track playback, which is especially important in a retail setting or if you need to report back to other departments about their onscreen campaigns.

What to do with the data

Once you've defined what you're going to measure and have collected data, it's time to crunch some numbers. Look for patterns, compare performance to previous time periods and find any outliers that might point to surges or dips in engagement. It will likely take a bit of time to refine your data and how you collate it to measure success against goals. And you'll need a few months of data before you can see any meaningful trends. But once you get a baseline, you can build up data over time to see what's working and what isn't.

The key will be to adjust versus overhaul. Always be sure to make one change at a time so you can link that action to any changes that show up in your analytics. If you change too many things at once, you won't know what caused a deviation in your data.

Once you're all set, share your communications analytics with your team, your C-suite and your employees. For too long, managers have hoarded data as top-secret information only they should have access to. In many cases, they're afraid that other stakeholders can't parse the stats or don't have enough context to understand the findings. That's true of raw data, so find a way to present progress and trends that's engaging and informative.

Use visuals and graphs with trendlines. Give the context. Celebrate successes and explain what you're doing to address any shortfalls. Transparency is extremely important to today's workforce, students and customers, so find a way to present your data it in a way that everyone can understand and be excited about.

Meaningful information: that's what communication is all about and that's what communications analytics will give you. And as technology advances, so will the ways we're able to measure interactions and engagement with our messaging. But until we have an AI to do all of this for us, getting your goals and stats set up in a framework that gives you actionable intelligence is just as important as any other business process.

Shaping the Future of Work

Activity-based working (ABW) is revolutionizing the modern workplace by offering employees greater autonomy, flexibility and choice in how, when and where they work.

Agile work methodology, with its emphasis on providing employees with a range of workspaces and tools based on their activities, offers numerous benefits. It promotes collaboration, adaptability and innovation by allowing teams to easily co-locate and work together. This flexibility enables employees to achieve a better work-life balance, enhance their productivity and focus and reduce commuting and associated costs.

Moreover, agile work aligns perfectly with the evolving needs and preferences of the modern workforce. It acknowledges that different tasks require different environments and work styles and provides employees with the freedom to personalize their workspaces accordingly. This autonomy leads to higher job satisfaction, engagement and overall employee well-being.

Additionally, embracing workspace hoteling and hotdesking within a hybrid framework optimizes space utilization, reduces costs, and fosters collaboration and networking among employees. These practices, combined with advanced collaboration and communication technologies, enable organizations to create a dynamic, responsive and efficient work environment while benefiting from significant cost savings and a greater talent pool.

The future of work is evolving rapidly, and embracing agile processes is a strategic move for organizations to stay ahead in this changing landscape. By understanding and implementing agile work, flexible work, hybrid work, workspace hoteling and hotdesking, organizations can shape a workplace that is employee-centric, adaptable and future-proof.

How to Get Started

We're here to answer any questions you have. Our team is happy to schedule a call to discuss your specific digital signage and space management needs.

Visix.com/Contact   SalesTeam@Visix.com   800.572.4935

www.visix.com | 800.572.4935