

## Member's Quarterly

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## Perspective

## The Workplace of Tomorrow

*It's all about tech, space and collaboration*

Our workplaces have changed so much in the last number of years that it is hard to imagine more changes coming. According to workplace and technology experts, the biggest changes may be just around the corner. Technological advances are leading the way and as we already see, they give many more people the capacity to work from home. As we shift to 5G networks and are able to live video stream in real time without lag or delay, that is the equivalent of moving from dial-up to Wi-Fi.

So, let's start there. How will technology change tomorrow's workplace?

**Technology leads the way**

There are so many new developments in technology that it's hard to keep up. Smart phones and laptops have made work and communication possible from anywhere and digital whiteboards and multimedia platforms are changing the way we present, discuss ideas and develop new products and services. Email is almost over as a means of business communication as it is replaced by messaging apps and handheld devices with smart screen touch. We are able to access any person or file at any time of night or day from anywhere in the world.

All this technology is simple to learn and operate. There are few moving pieces to break down and all memory is stored in a cloud circling the planet. Think about videoconferencing like Zoom which has killed the telephone call, let alone teleconferencing. Why just talk when you can see and work together on a screen, sharing docs through Dropbox or Google? We no longer even have to type or keyboard. We can swipe our screens which will soon be able to recognize our voice and talk back.

**Space is no longer the final frontier**

The office isn't what it used to be- if there is even an office. More employees are working remotely and as the pandemic revealed, they can be just as effective and productive from their home office as their office location. This has already resulted in companies reducing their physical presence and moving at the very least to a hybrid or split workforce that will need much less office space. The space that remains will likely be shared,

open-concept and may even be part-time cubicles that can be booked when a remote worker wants to work from a fully equipped office.

There's also no need for infrastructure downtown like expansive telephone systems or IT facilities. All of that can be outsourced remotely to the cloud. The help desk can be located anywhere, even in an IT employee's basement. If there is space downtown, it will likely be an open space where employees can meet in person to brainstorm and hold team bonding sessions. One creative idea that some organizations have tried is to forget about office space and instead create office cafes and garden spaces where employees can connect and work individually or as a team in a much more relaxed environment.

**Collaboration is the whole point**

The whole point of many of these innovations is to create a positive environment for team collaboration. There are specific team collaboration tools like Cisco Webex Teams which are a full suite of office technologies from video and digital whiteboards to messaging apps to file sharing. These all work together to allow people to communicate faster and more effectively. They allow leading edge organizations to transform the world of business. As we move further into the future, technologies like AI, AR and virtual reality will only increase the powers of these collaborative tools.

Employees will be able to connect on their virtual desktop to any device, access team meetings and collaborate in real time, or download all the sessions and work at their own pace later. All this is done from the safety and security of their home or office. Managers won't be left out and all of the information and work can be easily monitored and measured from wherever they choose to work as well.

Welcome to the office of the future- it's going to be a very exciting ride!

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