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WEBINAR SERIES
DESIGNING FOR A NEW
WORLD - POST COVID-19

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**HOW TECHNOLOGY
CAN INCREASE
WORKSPACE
PRODUCTIVITY**

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TALKING TECHNOLOGY

TECHNOLOGY CAN BE USED TO BRING ABOUT POSITIVE CHANGES AND IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY IN THE OFFICE IN THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

The seventh episode of Architect and Interiors India's webinar series on Designing for a New World - Post COVID-19 focused on the use of technology to bring about positive changes and improve productivity in the office. Held on October 30, 2020, and presented by CommScope India, it saw leading names in the industry speak on how one can ensure optimum results at the workplace by using

workspace designs that promote the same.

NEW VISTAS

Technological integration is benefiting companies by capitalising on industry needs such as improving employee engagement and generating increased productivity. Businesses of all sizes can benefit from putting proper software and hardware tools in place to help them face challenges and improve

1. Technology will be a key driver in new age offices in the post-pandemic world.



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results. Today's technology enhanced workforce can communicate instantly from anywhere in the world and access huge amount of cloud-based data at any time. COVID-19 has meant that, for the first time, the notions of work and place have decoupled.

Anupama Sharma, MD, Gensler, says, "Real estate is perhaps the second largest cost in a modern business and yet spaces are rarely optimised for cost, employee experience, productive working and environmental impacts. I think very little thought is really given to all these different aspects while designing workspaces. In the current scenario though, I think health considerations and employee well-being will only drive the way in which this return to office is likely to take place. And technology and wellness will become the key drivers of change in asset management and in real estate."

The question that will emerge is how to really balance density and space utilisation goals within the workspace while balancing the physical distance needs that have come about as a result of the pandemic.

TREND CHECK

New age office spaces in the post-pandemic world will be a virtual and digitised experience. The trend will be towards a modified repurposing of the workspace. There has been an expanded ecosystem of the work environment overall, where people are working not just from home, but from other locations as well. Companies are hence making significant investments in technology to enable virtual working, which has facilitated a newfound mobility. And this has created a hybrid work culture.

The second important trend is the necessity to maintain balance between working, creating a sense of community and aligning to the values of the company. And there needs to be a shift from focused work to other things in the workplace like collaboration, social interaction, mentoring and career development. Companies are doing both front end and back end investments that are helping people in their day-to-day working, as well as the backend technology investments that pertain to health and wellness and productivity of the workforce.

Rajat Malhotra, executive director & head of Engineering Operations - APAC, JLL, says, "Human interaction is the

2. The panel discussion helped to understand the role of technology at the modern workplace.

3. Anupama Sharma, MD, Gensler.

4. Rajat Malhotra, executive director & head of Engineering Operations - APAC, JLL.

5. Ashok Srinivasan, technical director, CommScope India.



6. Sameer Saxena, APAC head - Infrastructure & Initiatives, Marsh & McLennan Companies Inc.

7. Vistasp Bhagwagar, principal architect & MD, Architect Vistasp & Associates.

8. Piyush Joshi, VP & Workplace Services lead, India - North, NatWest Group.

9. Maintaining social distancing with new age designs.

10. The future of meetings in the new normal scenario.

11. Things to have on an office desk will include sanitisers and masks.



real productivity driver and while technology is a powerful enabler, the workspace is meant for collaboration and teamwork. Technology must not be intrusive, and the sector must evolve to increase bandwidth to support data collection and hybrid working.”

“This year people centricity, location independence and resilient delivery will drive how technology is used. There is a new terminology called IoB or Internet of Behaviours that captures digital dust or how people behave in a digital

world. Technologies like HVAC that can save energy by using automation and plug loads that can be enabled whenever you are coming into the workspace can save a lot of energy. And lighting is a key factor in measuring all the behaviors inside office space that helps you to measure and monitor the given space. The bottom line is that network is playing an important role as data is being secured and analysed, IT and facilities are converging and wired, and wireless options are converging,” opines Ashok Srinivasan, technical director, CommScope India. In the universally connected design, modern workspaces are seeing many things moved to the ceiling – energy meters, sensors and lighting.

INTEGRATING INTERFACES

The future of workspaces involves the employee booking a space to work online, booking a parking space online as well as booking meeting spaces online. This will largely rely on technology and how it can put everything together. Sameer Saxena, APAC head - Infrastructure & Initiatives, Marsh & McLennan Companies Inc., explains, “Organisations are adopting a technology wherein they are going to manage the way people are going to enter the office, who should



come in, when they should come in and the wellness part is also weaved in. Booking of spaces, meals, transportation and meeting room means technology is helping establish the digitised workspace today.”

DESIGNING HYBRID OFFICES

Space utilisation is all set to become more efficient as people book meeting spaces online. Vistasp Bhagwagar, principal architect & MD, Architect Vistasp & Associates, says, “What COVID has done is that it has taught us to be more productive. Technology is all about being mobile and it has allowed us to engage in aspects we never thought before. BYOD or bring your own device, work from anywhere or do it at your own place culture is what technology has brought about. Many offices we have done recently are ones where mobility is the key essence. Another truth is that technology-enabled does not mean glitzy, cutting-edge, smart-looking offices



but technology rather must be a silent partner. Technology enables productivity, but productivity does not depend only on technology. The real productivity is more to do with collaboration and offices must become hubs of social recreation and interaction.”

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY

There is a need to have an approach that integrates technology and collaboration to ensure it works well for the employees. Piyush Joshi, VP & Workplace Services lead, India - North, NatWest Group, opines, “The actual delivery happened because people already had a shared culture of value and a goal system because they have been working in those workspaces together. Technology must be seamless and integration between hardware and software is a must. There will be a need for a holistic solution that can collaborate and utilise technology to make employees feel safe and secure in the physical workspace.”

Technology really must be scalable to achieve the benefits of infrastructure upgrades of the future. ■

12. Technology is going to be a powerful enabler when it comes to workplace productivity.

13. Using technology effectively is important to ensure that productivity is maintained.