Inside the
MODERN
WORKPLACE

How Technology is Helping Organisations
Create Better Environments For Workers

SAUTER

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INTRODUCTION

The modern workplace is transforming. Today, the world is increasingly digital, with interactions and experiences delivered to a variety of users across a range of locations and devices. With the impact of Covid-19, the role of the traditional office is fast giving way to an office-on-the-go model where employees work with corporate applications, data and services anytime, anywhere—and from any device.

All these dynamics are forcing companies to address a key question: What is the office of the future? It is perhaps an answerable question as it seems to be ever-evolving. What is clear, it will depend on the company, culture, type of work, where that work can be performed and overall wellness initiatives.

In this E-book, Sauter aims to begin the conversation revolving around the challenges building owners, occupiers and end-users face we consider a return to work and office strategies. Sauter is perfectly placed to help businesses evolve their office environment and deliver smart buildings that are more dynamic and customised to individual requirements. The increasing reality that people will work remotely from just about anywhere has put pressure on building owners and occupiers to provide a desirable environment and service. The traditional setup may not be enough, the workspace is enduring dramatic changes and altering the nature of work and what we once knew as 'the office'.

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UNDERSTANDING THE EVOLVING WORKPLACE

The unwelcome advent of Covid-19 has changed the way many of us live and work overnight. The unknowns currently are the evolution of the health and economic crises and what mindset changes will arise. One thing is certain, however - the world for 9-5 workers who used to operate full-time from offices has probably changed forever. To emerge successfully from the current pandemic, organisations will need to nurture their employees' digital, cognitive, social and emotional skills, as well as their adaptability and resilience.

Recent McKinsey[1] research found that 80 % of people questioned report that they enjoy working from home, 41 % say that they are more productive than before WFH and 28 % that they are as productive. Since every organisation and culture is different, employees react differently to working remotely. The article suggests these 4 steps to reimagining work and workplaces:

→ First, reconstruct how work is done by identifying the most important processes and involve employees in the process.

→ Second, decide which tasks have to be carried out in person and to what extent, then reclassify into segments from fully remote over hybrid to on-site only.

→ Third, redesign the physical and virtual workplace to support organisational priorities and adapt to the needs that were redefined in steps 1-2.

→ Fourth, take a fresh approach to how much and where space is required, thereby reducing real estate cost and gaining access to a wider range of talents.

People want to return to the office, perhaps not for the complete working week, but they value the role the office plays in their work dynamic. Their expectations of what the office represents may have changed though and the new dynamic and increase the flow of people will bring about operational and security challenges.

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# CREATING TOMORROW'S OFFICE, TODAY

What will tomorrow's office look like? As the nature of work becomes more flexible and communication more mobile, the office is turning into an increasingly complex—some would say even abstract—concept.

For retailers, the line between physical and digital diminished and led to the rise of the omnichannel retail experience. Retailers focused on creating personalized experiences through email, website, social and in-store activations. Understanding the behaviours of their shoppers and engaging them with a multichannel approach has been a key shift in the past decade. This has led to greater brand loyalty and increased store traffic. While the pandemic is straining the overall retail sector, the ability to shift back to a digital environment has helped to sustain some retailers during the pandemic, while those who relied on their physical retail presence over digital platforms are struggling to make it through this challenging market environment. The office will likely follow the same approach. Call it the omnichannel office.

While each business demands its unique blueprint for an ideal workspace, the following three building blocks are typically consistent across different industries looking to reimagine their "office of tomorrow." Depending on your line of business, you may have different demands and priorities. But even then, these can serve as thought starters as you build your office of the future.

Take Microsoft's APAC headquarters, for example. The tech giant built a glass-walled Innovation Factory in the middle of the office, creating a home for group ideation and hackathons. They also developed an Experience Zone, where part of the office doubles as a consumer-facing space that allows select visitors to experience their solutions first-hand.

The office is now expected to be a work-life experience; and keeping up with the digital culture plays a large part in this change, as does flexibility in terms of workflow and the physical space.
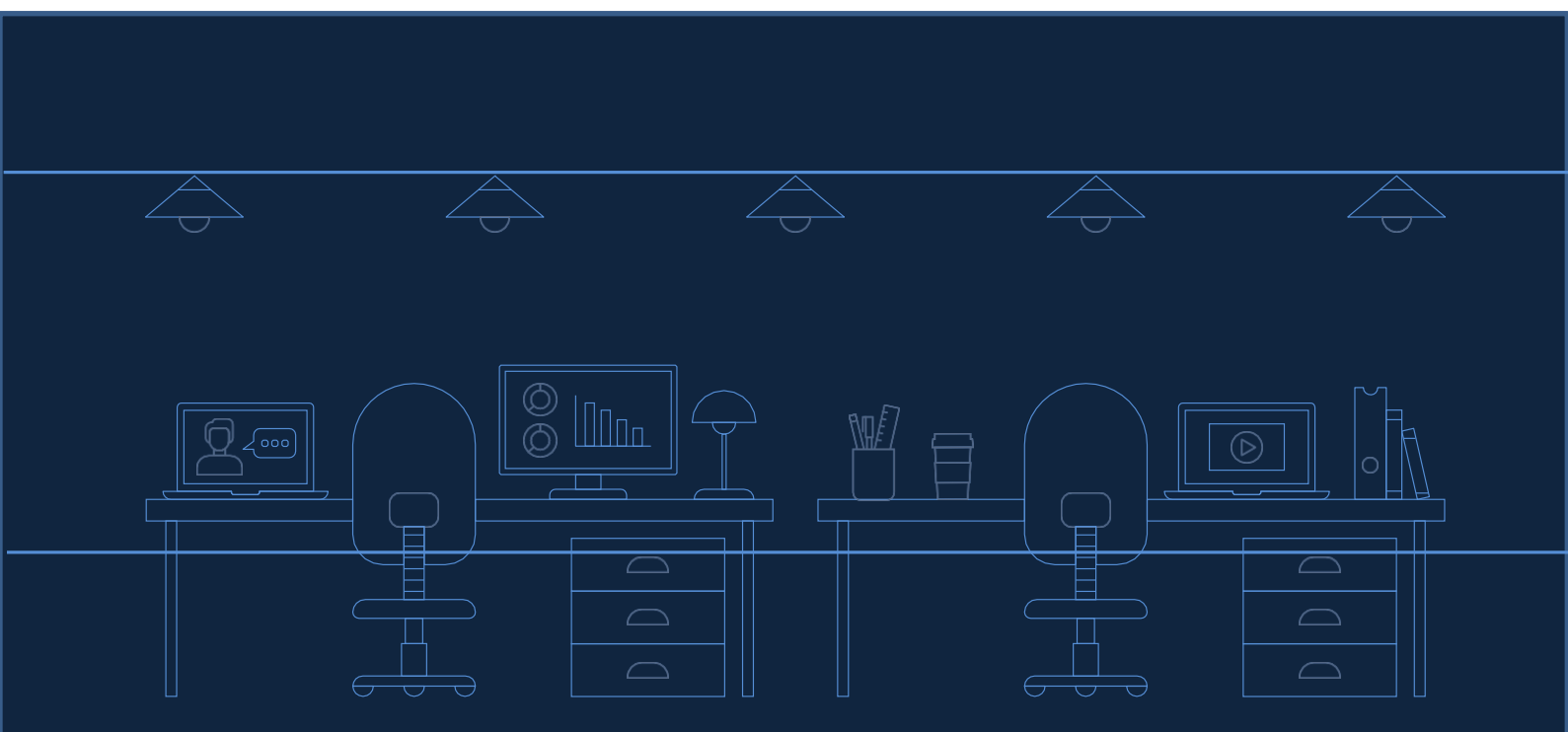
THINK SMART, INTEGRATE TECHNOLOGY

Objects connected to the internet (from light bulbs to coffee machines, to office chairs that analyse posture) facilitate work and improve the quality of the employee experience. They also enable activity data to be collected and data on how the workplace functions.

Smart buildings in themselves are a new revenue stream. But the cost of IoT implementation is frequently perceived as a barrier to its adoption and development, despite the cost-benefit analysis in the majority of cases presenting significant financial savings. Many smart offices are built from the ground up, so existing workplaces need to be retrofitted. And although there is an upfront investment or cost to retrofit an existing building, once installed, additions such as optimised lighting make running these spaces much more cost-effective to the building owner. As a result, offering lower fees to the customer for an enhanced experience will be able to make the offer even more appealing.
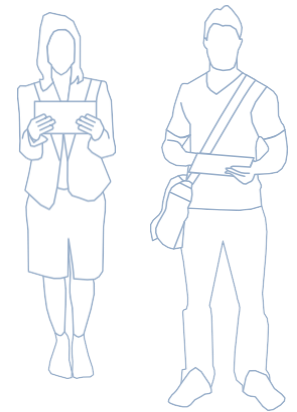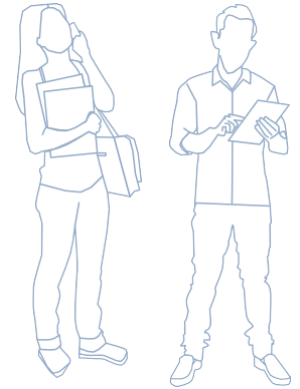
PUT THE EMPLOYEE FIRST

In the work environment, triggers such as malfunctioning office equipment, inadequate lighting, poorly designed workspaces or inhospitable room temperatures can make employees feel sluggish, tired, irritable and less productive. By allowing operatives to control heating, lighting, air quality, as well as generating the kind of data that helps to optimise workspaces, smart devices have a pivotal role in increasing the overall output of your business.

Smart technology can also have a positive impact on health. The Wellness Real Estate philosophy believes the right combination of technology and design in buildings can truly enhance the physical wellbeing of their occupants. Lighting, for example, is essential. Reduced contact with natural light can cause fatigue, headaches and even sleeping disorders. Smart lighting systems can adjust the colours and brightness levels to imitate sunlight

SUSTAINABILITY IS IMPORTANT

With sustainability the hot-button topic, businesses are constantly working to meet the demands of a growing ecologically conscious marketplace. And with 72% of office workers revealing that a sustainable environment is important to them, embracing this move has become a competitive necessity.

Through clever environmental design that optimises space, consumption and resources, smart offices can reduce the overall environmental impact and save money and resources along the way. From autonomous energy systems that shut off heating and lighting when rooms are vacant to systems that monitor and optimise the use of water and electricity, these offices can identify their most wasteful aspects and also lessen the pressure on the National Grid.
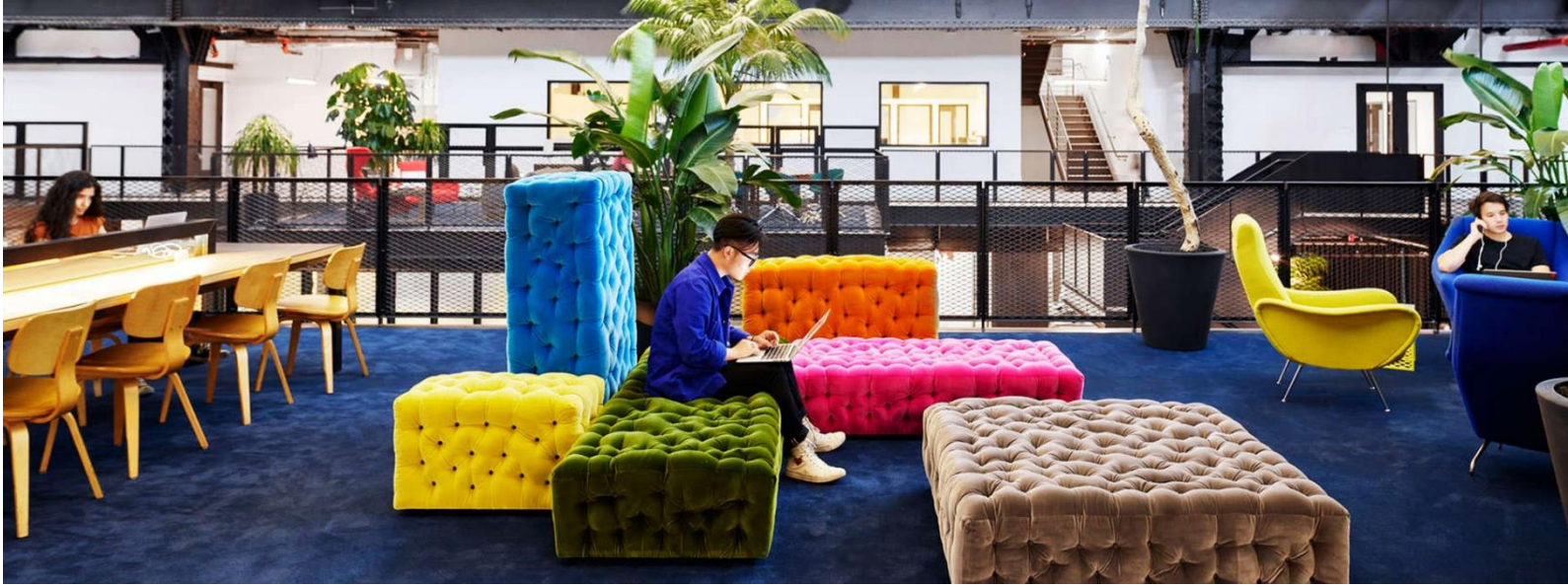
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INTRODUCING
SAUTER
SMART VISION

People are the largest investment of an organisation and as new technologies evolve to make their lives easier, safer and more comfortable, it is important to look at which technologies will create the biggest impact on your office. The efficient, ease of use and cost-effective nature of what defines a smart office is what will drive both its growth and normality in the workspace. IoT is forcing its way into our business lives and rather than waiting for the fad to pass by, it is imperative that companies keep up with the trend and innovate their working space, or they will risk falling behind.

Say hello to Sauter SmartVision.

SmartVision is a smart device enabled app designed to revolutionise automation in building controls for both residential and commercial spaces. The 'beauty' of the app is its user-friendly and operating system agnostic. We have found that the vast majority of businesses have existing systems to support it, the only installation needed is the app (ID) sensors which can be retrofitted. Due to this, SmartVision is seen as cost-effective for most existing clients. For new clients the ability to use a phone app to control your building systems is unmissable. It allows the building manager and occupier to be better connected. The app currently uses MQTT which means your building controls team can place QR codes in each room, which the occupier will scan to control the temperature, get room information, and other information like 'safe' routes during COVID, ventilation systems etc.

Recently, we have seen a big uptake in residential spaces but by applying QR codes across commercial buildings, we envisage this solution being a huge benefit for developments and occupiers going forward. One of the advantages of SmartVision is your ability to control your energy efficiency, whether that be energy usage or optimisation by identifying your energy weak spots. The landlord or occupier can set limits on energy usage. In terms of COVID, the app can also be used to monitor air quality, CO2 emissions and other aerosols.

Our next development of the app will leverage iBEACON technology, this will make the app more effective for office use and allow things like hot-seating, room occupancy numbers, coffee machine control etc. iBEACON means there will be no need to use QR codes. And most importantly, the app will have a 'feedback' feature where the occupants can give feedback on room climates and systems which allows the room climate to be adjusted by the occupier and in turn provide better a better work/living environment. The app will use data to improve satisfaction for the user.