How Data Improves the Employee Experience: Q+A

The Smart + Connected Workplace is about giving people the tools to move, think and feel better so they can engage like never before.

Today's Smart + Connected Workplace is more about experiences and less about devices. <u>Technology</u> is acting as our digital concierge or a helpful assistant, providing information to us when we need it. According to Brandon Buckingham, <u>Smart + Connected</u> director for Steelcase, this is a new workplace where technology enables better experiences that allow us to navigate place, time, resources and commitments seamlessly. At the same time, it offers the influencers of how space is used, planned for and acquired detailed information to inform their choices. And, as data is aggregated over time, it provides insights into key workplace issues like culture, innovation and engagement. Buckingham joined 360 to share how this backdrop of technology has evolved in just a few short years.

360: Technology is moving so fast. It seems like what was a promise not so long ago, is now reality. How would you describe the changes you've seen in just the last few years?

BB: The emergence of big data, AI, machine learning and IoT — all words that never were really part of our vernacular — are now staples that come up in every conversation around workplace strategy and engagement. There's always this question as it relates to space in particular: How do we make sure we're getting the most out of that space? And, how do we take the data that's there and a workplace enabled with technology to realize better experiences?

With the rise of mobile devices as well as technology infrastructure embedded in the workplace, there's a wide range of data streams that can help us improve the workplace. It's so different than what it was just five or six years ago. The challenge is—what do you do with all the data? Where's the most impactful place to start? Seeing the needs of the customer and the people using the space is the best way to uncover where value can be created with technology and data, and we are focused more than ever on user-centered solutions.

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360: The way you're able to harness data today gives companies an opportunity to give back to their people. How does the average person sees these benefits?

BB: It's easy to see the value that comes from creating a seamless work experience where people can find the resources they need, when they need them. The burden of having to find the best places to go, figure out how to get there, schedule meetings and notify others of those choices is significant. It's time consuming and adds complication to an already complex workday. With the devices people have access to, people can change the way work happens, how they feel at the end of the day and how they collaborate. Technology and data can help them find their way to spaces, create better startup experiences for collaboration, and give them prompts to move throughout the day— that has great potential to make a positive impact on their day-to-day experience.

360: What's driving this surge of embedded workplace technology?

BB: There's a number of forces coming together right now. It starts at home. We're all getting used to how AI-enabled assistants can help us with our daily lives. It no longer feels intrusive to ask a device to order something we need or tell us how to get somewhere. These breakthroughs were disruptive and have a lot of parallels to how we experience the workplace. It's only natural we would bring this comfort with technology to work with us and explore new ways to use data to make our day easier.

Analogous to AI, in some ways, is the fact that people, devices and ideas are more mobile than ever. How can we leverage mobility in ways that make a real impact? We know the workplace contributes to engagement and the types of amenities and resources people have access to play a part in that. If we can help people find the right tools and right spaces while they're moving from one activity to the next, we can help them be more productive and also add a delightful moment to their day.

360: Can you give us an example of what you mean by delight?

BB: Think about the benefits to having a digital concierge, something that gives you subtle digital nudges at just the right times throughout the day. Whether it's my smartwatch or phone that reminds me to do something or wish someone a happy birthday, it's a warm nudge that makes me think, "Wow that was helpful." Because we're comfortable with these kinds of interactions at home or at the gym, we also welcome them at work. An app that can gently remind you to stand at preset intervals during the day and pairs with your height-adjustable desk to automatically raise it to just the right level feels like a natural extension of our experience.

360: Turning data into actionable insights is what really matters. How are organizations able to harness the Smart + Connected Workplace to make better decisions?

BB: For someone who is planning space or making decisions about investments in space, there's tremendous value to understanding how people are using the workplace. How efficiently is space being used? Do behaviors change or shift throughout the year or during different seasons? What trends are becoming patterns over time? It's powerful objective information. If there's a project coming up, organizations can easily do a short-term occupancy measurement study and analysis to inform the project. They can also measure over time to make sure they're on top of what's next. It comes back to creating the best workplace for people. By understanding what's being used and what isn't, companies can create more of what people need and want to get their best work done.

360: How do you envision the future of the Smart + Connected Workplace?

BB: The future is about making technology the backdrop for better experiences. It's not about technology for technology's sake. It shouldn't be disruptive or intrusive. It's about using technology to create solutions for people at work. The future is about leaning into user-centeredness and creating a vision that brings these pieces of technology together in meaningful ways. It's the Smart + Connected ecosystem tightening its connections — digital signage, collaboration technology, mobile apps for wayfinding and wellbeing, and space monitoring and services.

In the near term, Wi-Fi-enabled wayfinding standards are coming as is 5G. Both are going to be really disruptive. The pace of change is great. It's an exciting journey and we will continue to explore what's next and how it will transform the experiences people have at work.

Explore more information about today's <u>Smart + Connected Workplace</u>.

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