Technology

Citrix Q+A: The Implications of IoT at Work

A smart workspace knows what you want to do and automatically does it for you.

Citrix works with organizations around the world to ensure the secure delivery of apps and data to any device on any network. As a result, the organization has spent decades researching and observing the changing workplace and how technology can help. 360 spoke to Steve Wilson, vice president of product for Citrix Cloud and IoT, about his team's perspective on how advancements in technology, the Internet of Things (IoT) and the Cloud impact the ways people work and their workplace.

360: How does Citrix view the way IoT and technology are changing the process of work?

Steve: IoT unlocks many exciting opportunities, because it helps connect people and things. The implications for business productivity are tremendous when we can integrate technology and the workplace to improve the experience for people at work.

At Citrix, we've been working with several of our customers on IoT projects as well using IoT technology in our own work environments. For example, we have rolled out smart conference rooms, which turn the average conference room into a smart workspace that knows what you want to do and automatically does it for you. It's simple for the user, but technologically very sophisticated.

The smart conference room bridges the physical devices in the room like screen, lighting and speakerphone with your existing IT infrastructure (such as Citrix XenApp, Microsoft Active Directory and Microsoft Exchange) to get multi-location meetings and presentations started much more quickly — eliminating all the repetitive and error-prone typical meeting start up procedures. We estimate we're saving between $50 and $100 in previously lost worker productivity for every meeting that incorporates this technology.

360: How does Citrix integrate technology and the work environment?

Steve: At Citrix, product design related to IoT is all about the user experience. We are building technology, but in the end, it is about bringing people contextually appropriate experiences to make their lives better. IoT is not an isolated thing or "a trend." IoT concepts are being integrated into all Citrix products. From a design perspective, design isn't limited to the screen in front of you. In fact, it is the culmination of all of the screens a human interacts with, whether it's a mobile device or laptop, and it is not static, but rather it moves with you. If you have to move from a large team meeting where you are reviewing a concept to a small group space where you are experimenting or prototyping that concept, you shouldn't lose access to your information or work tools. You should always be able to stay in flow and continue to make progress on your work.

360: How will IoT change the way people work in the office?

Steve: It's already changing the way we work today, but we'll see a more dramatic shift as we progress through what I call the fourth generation user interface. We're used to having a myriad of apps and accessing them through glass screens on our mobile devices or laptops. Now with the advance of IoT and progressive technology such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), these applications are going to interact with the physical environment in new ways. Technology is definitely changing the way we work in the office and the physical environments of our offices themselves.

We're already seeing an effort underway to measure how people use the office and what kinds of tools they need to do their best work. IoT embedded in the workplace can deliver immediate data about what rooms people are choosing and which ones stay empty. Do people want video conferencing or certain types of technology to do their work? When we start to understand what people need, we can create better workplaces and better tools to help them do their best work.

360: How do you see technology changing work processes for individuals?

Steve: The environment can start to use more and more context about users and their habits to accelerate productivity. Systems will use context about a user's identity, location and applications to offer tools and options before the end-user even thinks to request them. By leveraging IoT sensor data, network telemetry and machine learning you'll see your work environment anticipate user needs.

360: How can technology in the workplace improve collaboration?

Steve: It's clear that expertise doesn't just exist in an office, there's a vast array of work that happens outside of the physical workspace. There are statistics that showcase businesses are using an inordinate amount of technology to bring people "together" in the virtual sense – for example, video conferencing enables seamless work from locations across the world.

Flex work is on the rise, but that doesn't mean that these workers have to be isolated. Video conferencing, moving services to the Cloud, being able to access data and files through file sharing technology and the Cloud contribute to a more collaborative workspace. This is also affecting the physical space. We're seeing more open floor plan offices with sound proofed spaces and office IoT for full connectivity. There's a focus on technology-enabled human interaction between employees and virtual technology for immersive collaboration.

360: What do you see as the future of technology at work?

Steve: A workspace is no longer just a desk, computer and printer. The 21st Century workplace includes evolving interactions between people, technologies and spaces. Businesses are looking for help in creating a flexible, agile workspace to support work that will continuously adapt. Today's employees need a simple way to access all the apps, desktops, files and networks they depend on to be productive. IT needs a simple way to design, deploy and manage the conditions that grant contextual access. And businesses need a virtual perimeter around it all, locking the data in and the bad guys out.

For more information about how the role of the IT professional is changing and the impact on the work environment, read The Race to Digitize in 360 Magazine.

Steve Wilson is responsible for overall strategy, vision and product management for how Citrix moves product lines and customers to the cloud. Wilson’s team adds advanced analytics, artificial intelligence (AI) and IoT capabilities to the cloud offerings to create the most advanced cloud for powering company’s digital workspaces.