



Offices would be better places to work if they were more like cars

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Richard Andrews

Director at Inspiration Office (Pty) Ltd

Offices would be much better places to work if they were more like cars says the Managing Director of a leading office consultancy.

"New car models are often embedded with technologies that make driving easier, safer and more fun."

"Sensors tell drivers if there is a truck in their blind spot or if they are about to back into another car parking. Some cars allow drivers to safely take their hands off the wheel. Increasingly, more will be Wi-Fi enabled. The car doesn't just provide transportation anymore - it actually helps people be better drivers," said Richard Andrews, Managing

Director of Inspiration Office, an Africa-wide office space and furniture consultancy.

"So why can't we embed technology in the office to help people feel, work and think better?"

"A lot more people will drive a smart car to go to work in a dumb office. But this simply has to change and it will change."

People used to think that technology would make offices obsolete - but the opposite is happening. Technology will be embedded in offices so it actually helps people work better and makes the workplace even more relevant.

"It will help people cope with the sense of overwhelm they often feel as work has intensified and the pace of change has accelerated. It will also help organisations design the kinds of spaces that workers love to work in versus have to work in. Technology will be embedded in offices so it actually helps people work better and makes the workplace even more relevant."

Work is fundamentally more complex than ever before. Workers who used to be assigned to a single project team now find themselves juggling multiple teams and tasks, constantly switching from one set of tasks to another, transitioning from one work mode to the next and orchestrating their way through a maze of meetings. The constant focus-shifting wastes time and drains energy.

When it comes to technology workers are already familiar with such mobile phones, laptops and Wi-Fi, this has had the impact of freeing employees who used to be tethered to their desks.

"It's liberating - people have more choices about where and how to work."

But it has also caused information overload as data has multiplied exponentially. Additionally, increasing globalisation brings new ideas and team members from all over the world.

"For example, video-conferencing makes collaboration across time zones easier. But it also means that you can't just book one conference room for a meeting - now you need to book multiple spaces for your global team's video call. So collaboration improved, but meeting scheduling got more complicated.

Think about a conference room that can alert you before the meeting ends, to make sure you wrap up what you need to accomplish before the next group stands impatiently outside the door, waiting for you to get moving.

"What if it could also recognise you and bring up notes from your last team meeting and adjust the lighting levels you prefer?"

"And what if offices had a data stream that knew which rooms are always busy and which rooms no one seems to like? With this information, organisations can better understand what's working and what isn't."

Just as technology in today's cars is improving the driving experience, tomorrow's office will harness the power of emerging technologies.

"It will allow people to more easily navigate the complexity of work as well as help organisations create better work experiences for individuals and teams" Andrews concluded.