

Article: WORKTECH 2015: Modern workplaces and challenges for the FM industry

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WORKTECH15: Modern workplaces and challenges for the FM industry

By [admin](#) on March 5, 2015 in [News](#)



The WORKTECH15 conference which took place on Wednesday 4 March 2015, explored the future of work and the workplace and raised the challenges Australian cities will face in the near future as technology and innovation overlay and coincide with community needs in built environments.

Concepts such as activity-based working, and the rise of WeWork – a provider of collaborative physical spaces and services for businesses – are challenging the traditional model of leasing and posing challenges in uncharted waters for facilities managers and commercial property landlords.

SMART BUILDINGS

Tony Armstrong, CBRE associate director, spoke on the Future of Work and the Workplace, touching on game changers which are rapidly transforming business structure and the way people work. High-performance workplaces exert more demands on buildings and infrastructure. Armstrong highlighted the issue of increasing building workloads in a world of ever-increasing reliance on technology. 'Smart' buildings are now built with facilities such as building-wide AV systems, smart heating/cooling and sensor lighting – amenities which tax building hardware and provide greater challenges to keep things running efficiently. An increasing reliance of software for these connected workspaces also mean that facilities managers are also expected to be clued in on technology advances and be equipped with the know-how to drive these applications.

A panel discussion on the changing nature of the end user expert with (pictured above, L-R) Associate Director CBRE Tony Armstrong; Group Executive Commercial Development Mirvac David Rolls; Sr. Design Strategist Microsoft Envisioning Harald Becker; Futurist and CEO UNGROUP Philip Ross; and chair of the panel, Michael Bleby from the Australian Financial Review delved further into the challenges the evolving building industry is facing.

CO-SHARING WORKSPACES

Another trend highlighted at the conference is the rise of activity-based working and the growing trend of co-sharing workspaces. Space and services providers such as WeWork will mean that facility managers in such co-working environments will have to consider the needs of multiple stakeholders when managing and maintaining spaces so as to meet the varied needs and demands of its occupants from multiple organisations. WeWork's concept of communal working spaces for multiple organisations has caught on in the United States, Europe and Israel.

CHALLENGING TRADITIONAL LEASING MODELS

David Rolls, Mirvac Group Executive, Commercial Development, pointed out that 80% of buildings in Australian cities are around 20 to 25 years old, thus restricting technology uptake in these spaces in an era where corporate and entrepreneurial communities have technological expectations which might not be able to be met by older buildings. The old landlord hierarchy is changing, especially for commercial spaces, and he suggested that a model such as WeWork could very well be the property sector's version of crowdsourced taxi application Uber, posing challenges to commercial landlords.

INTEGRATED SMART BUILDINGS

With a paradigm shift of office spaces as a place to both work and live, corporations such as Bankwest, NAB and Medibank are building bespoke workplaces designed to promote wellness, healthy living and activity-based working (ABW). ABW fitouts place an unprecedented demand on those who manage these facilities, as the level of support, information, reporting and maintenance have to be of a consistently high standard.. AMX presented a showcase of the audio-visual fitout for Bankwest Place in Perth. The bank's headquarters in Raine Square was designed for ABW and had 140 meeting rooms which were fully fitted with audio-visual capabilities with strong connectivity, centrally controlled by AMX's centralised resource management software. Graham Bennett, AMX Technology Director, said similarly, NAB's purpose-built building for a fully integrated and flexible working environment meant that 400 working spaces were required to be fitted out with connectivity and state of the art audio-visual facilities. Thus, proactivity of facility managers to respond to the needs of these organisations is also paramount in these newer integrated buildings.

MEDIBANK SETS AN EXAMPLE

Kylie Bishop, Medibank executive general manager – people and culture, presented the company's new 'healthy' tower at Docklands. A sustainable building designed promote wellness for its employees, it boasts sophisticated irrigation systems, energy efficiency and waste minimisation. Amenities like a communal parkland, cutting edge lighting that emulate natural light to enhance performance by adapting to the body's circadian rhythms are features added to facilitate efficient activity-based working.

The conference presented an exciting future for the evolution of facilities management solutions and it will be interesting to see how the FM community evolves to meet the demands of modern buildings and the needs of those who occupy them.

WORKTECH15 Melbourne is a forum for all those involved in the future of work and the workplace as well as real estate, technology and innovation. WORKTECH15 Melbourne attracted some of the biggest and brightest names to debate, discuss and divulge the latest thinking on the Future of Work and the Workplace. For full conference details, go to <http://www.unwired.eu.com/WORKTECH15/melbourne/index.php>.