

Seminar Notes from Morgan Lovell Seminar

TRANSFORMING THE COST AND QUALITY OF YOUR WORKPLACE

Wednesday 19th October 2005

8.30am to 10.30am, IOD Hub, London

Chair

Andrew Bradley, MD Morgan Lovell London

Speakers

Philip Ross, MD, Cordless Group and co-author of 'Space to Work'

Susan Sulley, Facilities Manager, British Computer Society



TOWARDS THE COST-FREE OFFICE: DERIVING REVENUE FROM AND REDUCING COSTS OF YOUR OFFICE SPACE

Philip Ross, MD, Cordless Group and co-author of 'Space to Work'

“PCs will vanish from the workplace. Workers will carry most of their equipment with them and desks will be replaced with ‘benches’.”

What are we talking about?

It's about removing costs from the property portfolio by looking at how your employees operate – and realising the office is just one place where they work. Communications has a crucial role to play in this – and it will no longer be second rate outside the office, as it is now.

What will tomorrow's office be like?

PCs will vanish from the workplace. Workers will carry most of their equipment with them and desks will be replaced with 'benches' – not dominated by networked PCs.

The traditional PBX telephone system will also vanish – and transfer to the internet - while the handset will eventually transfer to the screen.

And to take it to the next phase, soon the mobile phone will be obsolete – and instead executives will carry converged technologies that will be a cross between a PC and a phone – and always be 'on'. These already exist and have been developed... it's just a matter of when and how fast they are introduced. This technology already has a name – PMGs or personal mobile gateways.

In buildings these will need single IP networks that will be completely wireless.

One significant change will also be the death of the keyboard as tablet-style portable PCs are introduced that can recognise handwriting using pens with memories and cameras at their nibs.

What will the worker of the future be like?

More like the 'corridor warriors' you see today – never at their desks.

When will this happen?

We've reached a 'tipping point'. This last happened in the 1880s when typewriters, elevators and phones transformed the way people did business and that's happening now – but this time it's the internet that will change everything, in a way few people realise. Traditionally we've been tied to our desks – although, as people are increasingly mobile, we are still trying to contact them at their now vacant workstations – but that's all about to change.

What's so wrong with the way we do things today?

Most offices take the 'cramming approach' and 'sweat the asset' through overcrowding the desks together that make some offices look like battery farms.

How will the internet change everything?

New software such as Bluetooth and recent-arrival Zigbee enable wireless working anywhere within a building and outside it, facilitating exchange and collaboration styles of working, all made possible by the internet. They will also enable buildings to be micro-managed from heating systems right down to a cat flap – and it's already happening. Philips is already installing Zigbee technology within its light bulbs.

The internet has also made the IP telephone a reality. Old telephone – networks will become redundant – and cabling within offices will become redundant – and you will be able to answer your 'landline' wherever you are in the world. All communications will be unified – fax, voice, mail – in one programme.

Are there positive cost implications?

One bank saved over £3.5 million in phone bills in a year by adopting IP telephony. But it's much more than just this – it's also about tracking assets (including people).

One sideline – building landlords will be able to charge tenants 'rent' to use their in-house IP networks to drive the personal mobile gateways.

Are there other benefits of all this?

High staff retention and job satisfaction. Smaller offices needed – instead they will be more like mini 'cities' with different 'areas'.

Final thought: "These changes are only around the corner – and they will have an enormous impact on how people work and therefore how buildings are designed and managed".

CASE STUDY: BUILDING A CHARITY'S STANDING – MOVING THE BRITISH COMPUTER SOCIETY TO A NEW OFFICE

Susan Sulley, Facilities Manager, British Computer Society

“We needed the fit out company to work with us well and ‘have that something extra’ and do it within budget – remember we are a charity.”

What is the British Computer Society?

Industry body for IT professionals founded in 1957 – has 50,000 members and used to have an HQ within a Grade II listed building on Mansfield Mews in Mayfair, central London.

Why did it need to move address?

The Mansfield Mews address could only hold meetings of up to 50 people – anything bigger had to be held outside the building. The property was also viewed by members as “stuffy and old fashioned”. Lease on existing building was about to come to an end.

Time to move – but where?

Saw eight buildings, selected two. Received input from various groups within the society. Consensus that it had to be a modern day building that could be either single or multi company occupancy and that would cost no more than £45 per sq ft to rent.

Two candidate locations were selected – and the winner was the Davidson Building which, although it looks the same as the old building from the outside is very different inside – with each floor dominated by an astounding central four-storey atrium. After trying to secure one of the higher floors, a lease was secured on the first floor. A specialist fit-out company was chosen (from a shortlist of three) and the design of the office took shape, the chosen company was Morgan Lovell. “We needed the fit out company to work with us well and ‘have that something extra’ and do it within budget – remember we are a charity.”



What was needed?

- Office for CEO
- Accommodation for four permanent and ten temporary staff
- Kitchen to cater for up to 100 guests/delegates/members
- 1 x meeting room for between 60 and 100 people
- 3 x meeting rooms for up to 30 people

And did we get it?

- We took a 7,380 sq ft blank canvas and we now have a flexible and striking meeting facility. The fit out took ten weeks and costs were agreed and stayed within budget and the project was on time.
- We can run the space with just three staff.
- The meeting rooms are both flexible and can be changed to offer a variety of combinations by using sliding partitions.
- Opened: 11 October 2004

What are the major features?

- Internet area
- Wi-fi area
- Storage space (hidden, for unused chairs etc.)
- Touchdown (or work) 'pods' for members (which turned out to be the most popular)



What were the snags?

- Lease negotiations were VERY difficult
- We were not allowed to fix anything to the cement ceiling.
- No painting was allowed
- The existing air conditioning was not adequate.

Biggest mistakes – and therefore lessons learned?

- We brought in the IT sub contractor too late – and this helped push back the opening date by a week.
- Install wi-fi during fit out, and not as a retro-fit as we did.

Does everyone like it?

- Members love it – utilisation of meeting rooms has risen from 30% at old address to 60%.
- Receiving a lot of repeat business solely through word of mouth.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: How do you encourage people to work away from their 'nest' desk?

A: Once they have tried flexible space rarely do they want to go back to their nests.

Q: Won't all this new technology be obsolete by the time it's been fitted?

A: That's what IT departments say, but it's the property team that need to understand what's happening – it is usually they who drive a change. Secondly, future proof your designs

Q: Isn't WIFI insecure – and will it ever be secure?

A: WIFI security problems are caused by incorrect configuration – but done properly they are more secure than a cable network.