

This latest report in the **WORK_IT** series examines how new technology is helping us overcome common workplace frustrations and improving employee experience.



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WORK_IT: TECHNOLOGY | WORKPLACE | JOBS

BETTERING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

All companies would like to believe that their employees enjoy the workplace provided to them. However, the reality is that frustrations are commonplace. Many of these irritations, such as a lack of parking spaces or gaining access to the office, begin before employees even physically enter their place of work. Others, such as poor connectivity and difficulty in booking meeting rooms, can blight an entire working day.

By recognising and taking steps to resolve common workplace frustrations, companies can increase employee satisfaction and have a healthier, happier and more productive workforce. Many of these steps can be accomplished by utilising new workplace technology, which is expediting the speed at which people can work, communicate and get things done.

CBRE Research has identified a series of common frustrations that can occur over the course of a typical working day. This report provides numerous examples of the technology that can be used to overcome them.

HENRY: A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FRUSTRATED EMPLOYEE

8.38 am: Henry arrives by car at his office building but can't find a place to park. He spends 10 minutes driving around the office carpark before giving up and finding a space on a street nearby.

Not a great start to the day!

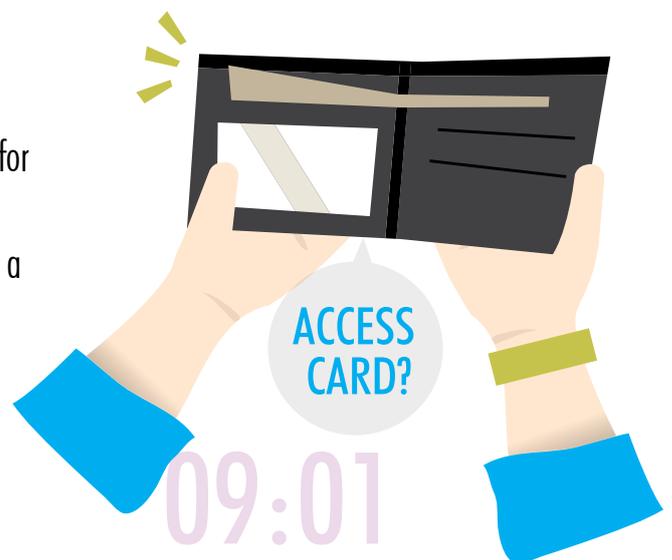


Parking can be a major frustration for employees across major cities in Asia Pacific, especially at large corporate campuses with huge lots, or in CBDs where spaces are more limited and

usually very expensive. Smart parking systems, which use sensors to identify empty spaces and enable users to check availability on their mobile phones prior to arrival, can provide a solution.

9.01 am: Henry finally arrives in his building lobby but has forgotten his access card. He spends several minutes waiting for a colleague who works on the same floor to let him inside. Upon arriving at the office, he spends a few minutes sourcing a temporary replacement card so he can use the bathroom, printer and other amenities.

It's not going well at all!



Badge and card reading technology is a common feature of the modern office environment but many employees find it inconvenient to carry cards around and often misplace them.

Some companies have enabled staff to use Bluetooth-enabled smartphones to enter and gain access to different areas of the office.

9.36 am: Henry finally enters his office - which has a desk sharing format - but all the desks in his team's area are occupied by visiting colleagues as another department is hosting a regional workshop. ***So far so bad!***



Many companies have shifted to activity-based work environments featuring unassigned desks and a variety of different workspaces suited to different tasks. While this office format brings with it a multitude of benefits such as improved collaboration between teams and better space efficiency, it can occasionally be difficult for employees to find spaces that suit them when they want them.

Intelligent wayfinding tools that use space utilisation tracking technology can ascertain which desks or spaces are currently occupied or vacant. Employees can use apps on their smartphones to instantly find out where vacant spaces are and to get to them quickly. Other related innovations include pre-booking systems allowing employees to plan their space requirements in advance.

10.35 am: Henry would like to set up a meeting with his colleagues and members of another department. He spends five minutes checking everyone's schedule on the shared calendar before finding a time that they are all available. He then emails them to check and confirm they are available but must wait for a few hours before they all respond. He spends additional time finding and booking a meeting room able to accommodate them all and then drafting and emailing a meeting invitation. ***What a pain!***



Forward looking companies are already utilising virtual assistants and other software programmes to tackle a wide range of tasks such as scheduling meetings, events and other appointments.

These programmes can also keep track of progress, thereby removing the need for back and forth emails and other low value and time-consuming tasks.

11:51 am: Henry has a causal catch-up meeting with a client in the canteen area of his company's office. He brings his laptop as he would like to refer to a presentation during his discussion.

After sitting down with his client, Henry finds that the Wi-Fi connection to his laptop is no longer working and other programmes are not responding. He spends a few minutes restarting his computer, logging in and opening the presentation before commencing his client meeting.

So troublesome!

Ensuring consistent and high-quality connectivity throughout the workplace is critical to enabling a truly mobile workforce. Some companies are addressing these issues by introducing technology such as Chromecast, which allows employees to stream data wirelessly from laptops, notebooks,

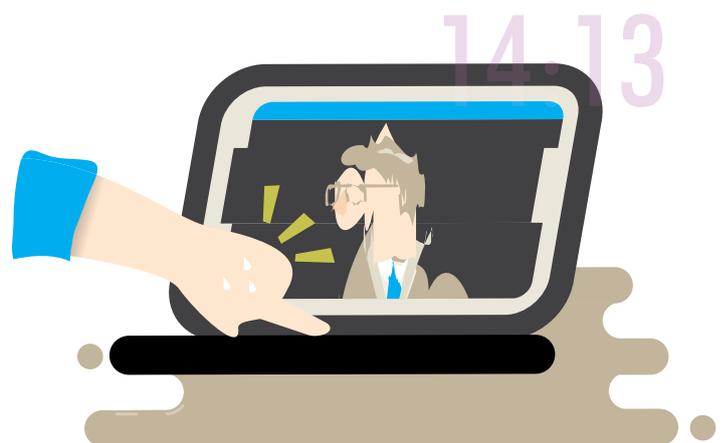


tablet and mobile devices to other displays. Li-Fi – a light-based signal that can provide an internet connection 100 times faster than Wi-Fi – is another innovation suitable for open plan workplaces, although its transmission is restricted by walls.

14.13 pm: Henry is hosting a conference call with several participants from different locations around the region. He'd like to refer to a presentation and other documents during the call but that simply isn't possible as some are travelling and are dialing in using their mobile phones, while others are at home with noisy children in the background.

The quality of the line is poor and a few participants lose their connection and have to dial in again. Henry is forced to end the call early and reschedule.

How annoying!



Workplace technology for meetings is a regular source of annoyance, especially when it involves connecting people in multiple locations. Time is frequently wasted on waiting for all parties to dial-in; setting up shared screens; and re-connecting dropped calls. In response to these challenges, some companies are introducing high-definition voice technology embedded in mobile phones that can improve sound quality and minimise background noise.

Other new communications tools include cloud technology that can seamlessly transfer phone lines from one device to another. Technology can also help meetings be conducted more smoothly via the use of wireless projectors enabling presenters to project their content to the display by mobile apps. The next generation of meeting technology is set to advance well beyond traditional conference and audio calls and is eventually likely to involve the use of holograms allowing communication with life-size images of real people.

17.00 pm: Henry is sitting in a meeting room ready to conduct an annual review appraisal with one of his team. He feels very cold but there is no way to turn down the air-conditioning as it is centrally controlled.

He leaves the room and goes back to his desk to get his jacket, causing the start of the meeting to be delayed, and shivers through the next 30 minutes.

Time to go home!

An office that is either too hot or too cold can distract employees and negatively impact productivity. Most staff are unable to control the temperature in their workspace or meeting room and must rely on facilities staff, who can

sometimes take time to respond or implement necessary changes. A few companies enable employees to control the temperature within reasonable bounds via a mobile app connected to their building's air-conditioning systems.



Figure 1: SUMMARY OF AVAILABLE WORKPLACE TECHNOLOGY CAPABLE OF ENHANCING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

	Technology used	Experience enhanced
Smart parking systems	Smart sensors Mobile phone apps	Simplifying the process of securing parking spaces
Smartphone access control systems	Bluetooth, Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) and/or Near Frequency Communication (NFC)	Access to the office
Intelligent indoor wayfinding	Beacon technology Mobile phone apps	Indoor navigation and securing desks, rooms and workspace
Desk booking system	Sensors Mobile phone apps	Efficient booking of desks
Virtual assistant	Artificial Intelligence	Tackling routine and tedious administrative tasks
Li-Fi	Visible light communication / High speed light transmission	Improving internet connectivity
Wireless projectors	Wi-Fi Mobile phone apps	Quick and easy sharing of content anywhere and anytime
Holograms	Augmented reality	Virtual face-to-face meeting experience
Light and temperature control apps	Internet of Things / Sensors Mobile phone apps	Customising the workplace environment to users' preferences and working requirements

Source: CBRE Research, September 2017.

CONCLUSION

Employees in all professions need to be equipped with the best and most suitable tools if they are to be efficient, productive and successful. Harnessing the latest workplace technology enables employees to perform their tasks quicker and easier and can make a huge difference to the employee experience. While standalone measures will bring some positive benefits, CBRE Research believes companies must adopt a holistic approach towards workplace technology. Only then will they create a workplace where their employees can excel.

The next report in the Work_IT series will evaluate different types of workplace technology based on their usability and maturity. To this end CBRE Research has developed the Workplace Innovation Technology Segments (WITS) model – an invaluable framework for corporate real estate staff seeking to identify appropriate technology for use in their workplace.

CBRE GLOBAL RESEARCH

This report was prepared by CBRE Asia Pacific Research Team, which forms part of CBRE Global Research – a network of preeminent researchers who collaborate to provide real estate market research and econometric forecasting to real estate investors and occupiers around the globe. For more information regarding this research report, please contact:

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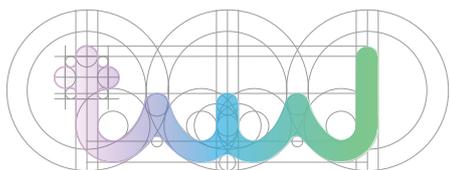
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As technology exerts a greater influence on all aspects of our lives, this report series examines the various dimensions and impacts of technological change in the workplace.

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