TRENDING TOOLS

Technology can help in the future (Post-COVID) Workplace

By Brooke Smith

As businesses slow being to reopen, we'll eventually (once a vaccine is in place) get to a post-COVID-19 workplace. But that may not be completely back to normal, as many employees may have to or choose to continue working remotely.

According to the Global Workplace Analytics Work-From-Home Experience Survey in April 2020, 77% of the 3,000 employees interviewed want to continue working from home at least once a week, and 16% don't want to return to the office at all.

So with a workforce that's working from all ends of the earth and a smaller number in the workplace, the role of technology becomes even more important than it had already become in keeping employees safe and aware - and providing a holistic employee experience.

innerspace.io

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Real estate is an important aspect of any brick-and-mortar business. Companies want to know how employees are using (or not using) their space. And space costs a lot.

"Your biggest line item on your operating budget is your people and your real estate," says Cerys Goodall, President and COO of InnerSpace. "You want to get as many people into your space as possible and make sure they're productive and happy, that they're not walking around for 20 minutes trying to find a meeting room."

That's where InnerSpace can help. InnerSpace is software that measures the number of people in a building via Wi-Fi signal. "We look for the presence of a laptop or a smartphone, or an asset tag if we're tracking equipment," says Goodall. We're measuring that signal and extrapolating data to understand how people and things are moving inside a building."
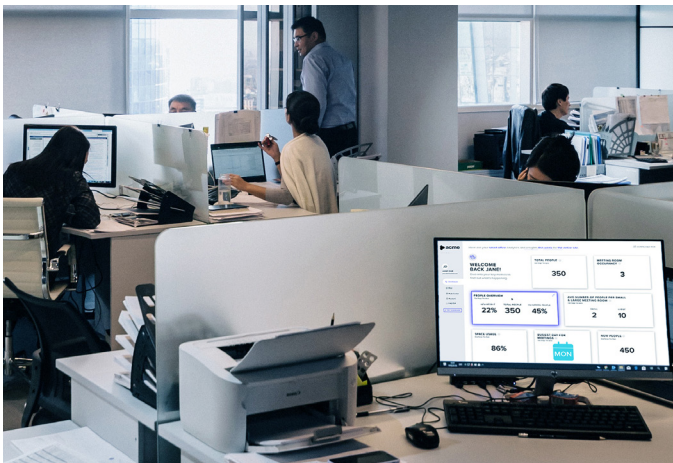
But while this may seem "Big Brother-is," Goodall assures InnerSpace doesn't store any personally identifiable information in its system. "We make sure people's privacy is protected," she says. "It's a passive system; it's just looking for smartphone signals. We're not tracking any individual person."

This kind of data will be useful as businesses begin to reopen and enforce physical distancing measures.

There aren't rule books or guidelines on what returning to work will look like, she says. Employers can put plans in place, but if there's no way to measure, it defeats the purpose, she adds. For example, if an employer decides to bring back 10% of its workforce. "What happens if all 10% sit in one area together? How are you going to know?"

And she adds, if there's second phase of the pandemic, this kind of technology is key - especially if there's an outbreak in your office. If an employee found out she had COVID-19, the software can indicate how many people she had contact with directly and indirectly. Similarly, if employees are working from home and need to go into the office, they can see how many people are already there through a webpage or mobile app. InnerSpace also offers digital signage within the building to present the same information.

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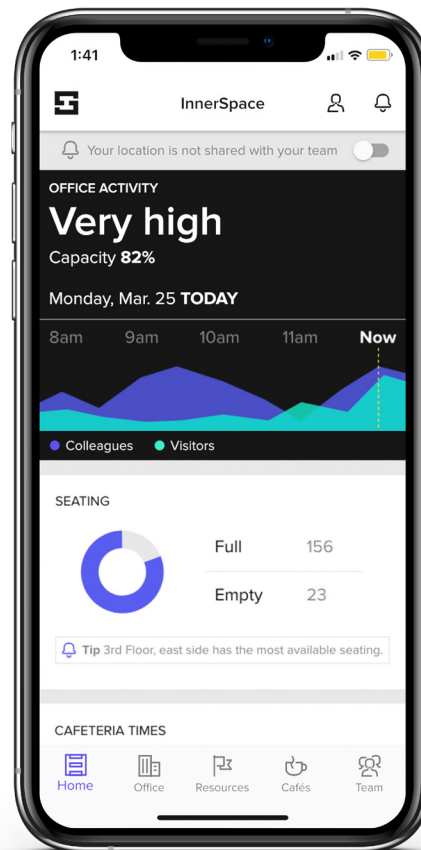
But the beauty of InnerSpace is that it's passive. "You don't have to download anything. It's always on," she says.

According to Goodall, it's this passivity that separates this technology from the new contact tracing apps that are emerging. "The challenge will be getting people to download it, adopt it and use it - and we know that's tricky," she says.

"If you're an employer, what you want is a passive system where people don't have to download one more thing onto their phone," she says. "You want your organization, as a community, to be participating for this to be effective."

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