CoreNet Global | HACKATHON

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A COVID-19 Virtual Ideation Experience

Team Topic and Number: Space Utilization, Team 15

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The modern workplace was designed to increase levels of interaction, engagement, fuel innovation and bring a sense of belonging to the humans who worked in it. It focused on designing a highly efficient floor plate that had a mix of cognitive *me* spaces to residential inspired *we* spaces, we were wired to bring in the concept of wellbeing - but never designed a space to mitigate the spread of a disease. Well in our defense, the economy expected a recession, a trade war but never a pandemic that would shut the world down.

Image our workplaces were F1 cars driving at high pace, and the safety call pulls out, you are now driving to conserve fuel and waiting to explode when the race restarts. The workplace once the safety car pulls out, is going to be so different - it has to help accelerate innovation at unpresented levels, faster deployment but with less fuel or in this case less capital.

3rd New space
Most of us have gained flexibility in when and where we work, we learnt to make the most of the digital tools to perform work and can now be productive almost anywhere. Now with almost 6 weeks at home, we may see a shift in time spent at the office and working remote at our homes or possibly a 3rd new space. A new wave of 3rd spaces available on demand in your neighborhood providing a cognitive, emotional & an ergonomic space will change RE's outlook on space, as Space as a service in lines of subscription models offered by Zoom, Adobe will encourage users to work closer to home.

Leasing strategies
Every organization has experienced lower revenue generation, is now projecting lower growth, margins are under threat, that puts all Capex investments under question. Every $ we invest is now questioned with respect to return on investment. With most leading organizations deciding to bring in their employees in a phased manner, workspaces are consuming more $ than they are generating. Our leasing strategies will take a completely new direction.

Short term leases, rental waivers, incentives to extend lease by landlords holding on to a frugal system in the short term are some of the trends we have witnessed in the now and near. Positive signs are the far isn't yet affected, but clients will build more efficient spaces.

Space as a service - Capex vs OpenX
Uncertainties are driving mid to small size expansions to seek managed office spaces. Imagine your Admin, F&B and RE functions are outsourced, it's almost the same experience with just one bill to pay every month. More importantly, you have the power to expand & contract in the short term and not having to invest on training / large conference spaces that remain unused 70% of the time.

Planning for the unknown
In the now, near and the far - we begin to design workplaces in which people have to be safe, *but also feel Safe*.

Social distancing & shaping human behavior
Social distancing is the New Normal, we have to make our people feel safe as they begin to occupy office spaces - new protocols, new disciplines, new hygiene etiquette provide *the administration an opportunity to control behaviors for the better*. Post terrorist attacks and potential threats to safety, we now endure long lines at airport checkpoints as our baggage is screened and shoes are removed yet, we continue to travel freely as safety protocols were put in place and one day, we will go back to the office feeling safer.

Workplace design

Now, Near & the Far
The now is a simple hack, helping the first wave of 30% be safe and feel safe at the workplace with divisions and geometric changes. However, in the Near and the Far, both RE & designers must focus more on Function and less the Form. The need to build high performance spaces, residential aesthetics has stretched the imagination of designers and the modular isn't modular, furniture & space components aren't organically evolving with change in business needs, culture, work types.

Smart & Connected Spaces
Leading organizations who want to be relevant in their domain, must invest on connected furniture that gives business leadership & RE data points on usage & behavior - most importantly to identify behavior that the organization would like to encourage and those it likes to discourage.

The workplace is a Theme park with limited space, high performing rides are positioned closer to most pathways to increase revenue & attract crowds and low performing rides keep moving behind and possibly perish when it ends up catering to less than 2% of its fanbase.

Building design and Shared spaces
The Fear, the Phobia will drive new behaviors - 50% occupancy in elevators, increased usage of stairs, lower occupation levels in shared café's & Gyms and these new behaviors will impact user experience and the economic sustainability of commercial establishments. If the rent isn't shared by your food courts, Café's & Gyms, expect either the rentals to go up or the quality of maintenance to drop below acceptable levels as builders drive new strategies to manage operating cost.

Our ideation resulted in 2 recommendations

A unified building communication system, that forces companies who wish to thrive in the workplace industry - HVAC, lighting, furniture, access control, meeting tech to work on a common platform that allows their devices to interconnect. The unified platform enables workspaces, campuses, buildings, cities, countries to be truly smart & develop strategies to perform at its highest level at the lowest cost, support real needs of the human who use these spaces and constantly provide great experience that allows new business models to thrive.

Our concept is inspired by Unified communication platform. IP phones were the central nervous system in office communication and they were quickly replaced by Spark, Teams, Zoom as the communication industry decided to work on a common platform enabling the systems to

integrate, become intelligent, offer better experience to both users & IT managers. While IP phones died, Cisco still has the largest enterprise connectivity market and is driving better volumes on smarter solutions than with physical devices. It's now time for a central authority to demand all organizations in the workplace to follow a common connectivity protocol that connects workplaces, campuses, cities, countries and the world on a common platform.

Imagine a workplace, that can proactively restrict number of users in each bay or floor ensuring the fire exit is always prepared to evacuate in case of emergency. Imagine a connected system tracking temperature of employees as they enter their workplace, with the power to deny entry to an employee who is reporting higher body temperature, if the system detects 100 users in a company and another 1000 within the community and another 3000 within the city, 100000 in the country and 1000000 globally, it knows its dealing with a situation that needs human intervention. Authorities can investigate if it's another pandemic that needs a shutdown or a viral fever that needs the health authorities to prepare for anti-biotics or even the leadership in organizations to advice employees to work from home.

In a more tangible way, connected furniture enables organisations to invest on fungible furniture that adapts to different work modes, collects data & directs facility managers to reconfigure the space to adapt to new behavior that's driving higher engagement, fostering collaboration and driving innovation. Technology can also help implement new protocols, sustain intended behavior, the upfront investment can save significant cost enabling an ROI in less than 3 to 4 years. Once a common protocol / platform is created economies of scale and competition will drive down cost of connected technology. Did we ever imagine that a voice-controlled assistant can manage lighting, ventilation, home entertainment at less than 80$ when just 24 months ago it costed homes in excess of 3000$ to setup home automation.

Empowering people to work

Teams, Spark, Zoom are innovating 10X since the pandemic to help users continue to drive innovation, share ideas and create social bonding on a virtual platform. To enable higher productivity and help people feel safe biologically, cognitively and emotionally, organisations must empower their employees to work from home and hybrid / 3rd spaces.

Coworking space providers must create a new enterprise model that allows corporations to subscribe working hours, enabling their employees to work closer to home yet be more productive. Business services like Microsoft, Cisco should experiment partnerships with coworking space operators to create these functional workspaces.

Covid has disrupted the way we work, changed the landscape of offices spaces forever. On the positive side it will help create improved and safer environments, reduce the stress of travel and create new business opportunities for real estate companies. Let the technology help RE understand how people are feeling!