

No.1/June '10

**MEDIA
PLANET**

MODERN OFFICE

3

STEPS

**TO MAKING
THE MOST OF YOUR
WORK SPACE**

A time for
change?
Why there is
more to going
green than you
think

See hear...
The UK's top
visual and audio
conferencing
experts share
their best
tips for
success



INNOVATE YOUR COMPANY THROUGH ITS WORK SPACE

Utilise your assets: Your comprehensive guide to a more productive and
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CHALLENGES

Paul Bartlett, Chairman of the Office Productivity Network, says that we are gearing up for a decade of sustained change in all aspects of the workplace – so flexibility is key.

A good day at the office?

This is a particularly testing time to assess what makes a modern office. The current financial crisis and the imperative across the developed world to reduce public sector debt will place unprecedented pressure on corporate property professionals to reduce costs. We are also experiencing rapid changes in workstyles, agility and expectation of what the workplace provides, particularly from younger workers.

Technology has already revolutionised communications and the pace of development shows no signs of slowing. But, for the foreseeable future, value for money has got to be the key objective.

The value of collaboration

1 Working with the Office Productivity Network shows the value of collaboration and sharing ideas in these uncertain times. No one company has all the answers but many occupiers, developers, suppliers and designers, are breaking new ground in developing the systems, services and products to deliver the modern office.

What seems clear is that through the next decade we will experience sustained change in all aspects of the workplace. Financial pressures will bear down on office developers, designers, suppliers and occupants to squeeze more output from less space.

It is surely inevitable that the 'old' world of less than 50 per cent of desks being utilised during the working day will become unacceptable. CEOs will want to get a better return from their large investment in property assets. They will want more people using them and producing more from that expensive space!

Generational impacts

2 The impact of demographics is also important. The modern office will reflect the changed expectation of the under 30s with their increased use and familiarity with communications, media, and digital technologies.

Another generational impact is the progressive retirement of the post-war baby-boomers, with their pre-internet expectations of rigid demarcations and seeing their office as an expression of their place



Paul Bartlett
Chairman, the Office Productivity Network

MY BEST TIPS**Change your mindset**

1 The idea of flexible working for a few will be replaced by it becoming the norm and the penetration to mainstream organisations' thinking of work being an activity, not a place.

Encourage sustainable working

2 An important change will be to look at the metrics of environmental impact - not on a simple square meterage of space but in terms of the number of people and business output the workplace supports.

in the hierarchy. Getting the right environment to recruit and retain this more media-savvy workforce will be as important as ever. Indeed it can be argued that because employees will spend less time in the company's office, the internal branding and reinforcement of corporate values becomes even more important.

Meeting the challenges

3 The modern office will have an increasingly important role in cementing the relationship between the company and its employees. Interestingly this might eventually stimulate more effective collaboration between HR, facilities management and property functions to deliver more holistic solutions.

In conclusion, the development of the office over the next five years will throw up unprecedented challenges imposed by the imperatives of economic recovery; but, equally, there will be impressive opportunities for innovation and commercial reward for those who get the answers right.

**WE RECOMMEND**

Trade secrets
Why staff selection and training could be your wisest investment yet.

PAGE 4

"As businesses came out of the last recession they practically got into a bidding war for certain skills..."

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Editorial Director: Danielle Stagg**Business Developer:** Chris Emberson
Contributor: Tony Greenway**Project Manager:** Tom Latham
Phone: 0207 6654441
E-mail: tom.latham@mediaplanet.com**Distributed with:** CityAM,
June 2010**Mediaplanet contact information:**
Phone: 0207 6654400
Fax: 0207 6654419
E-mail: info.uk@mediaplanet.com

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NEWS

THE PEOPLE PRINCIPLE

■ **Question:** As we come out of recession, how should an expanding company best start its recruitment process?

■ **Answer:** By going back to its business strategy and taking part in careful workforce planning.

It might not feel like it for some, but the UK is — officially — out of recession. And although the recovery is fragile, now might seem like a good time to expand for those businesses that are on the up-and-up.

Yet don't rush the process, says Angela Baron, Organisational Development and Engagement Adviser with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), Europe's largest HR development professional body. Careful workforce planning is essential for any expanding business on a recruitment drive.

"If you're a business which plans to expand," says Angela, "you need to ask: 'What is our business strategy? What kind of organisation do we want to be? Where are we going?' Once you know the answers to those questions, you can think about what you need in terms of staff resources, the numbers you require and the kind of people you're looking for."

Don't, says Angela, fall into the recruitment trap of simply taking on bodies; and don't make knee-jerk, short-term reactions. Instead, put some investment into developing HR/recruitment skills so you can find people who will come on board — and stay on board.

Of course, companies constantly moan about skills shortages and being unable to find 'the right' people. So what about the thousands of graduates on the market who are unsuccessfully looking for jobs?

"It does seem to indicate that there is a mis-match between the skills which graduates leave university with and those which employers actually want," says Angela.

"The smart employer, however, will create links with their local university, offer work placements

and liaise with the institution to make sure it is offering the right kind of courses and skills - ones that can be used in the real world."

This sort of pro-active stance also enhances a business's credibility and encourages talented, bright graduates to work for it in the future. And if employers put more effort into finding the best people for their companies, the classic graduate lament of 'can't get a job because I don't have experience... but can't get experience because I don't have a job' would be heard less often. Because 'the right' person isn't, necessarily, the one with the perfect done-it-all CV and the convincing sales pitch.

"When faced with lots of applications, some employers tend to remove the straw rather than look for the needle," says Angela Baron. "However, as businesses came out of the last recession they practically got into a bidding war for certain skills."

"I think employers have learnt lessons from that and are now wondering how they might invest in skills development instead."



ANGELA BARON
The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
PHOTO: CIPD

TONY GREENWAY

info.uk@mediaplanet.com





TALKING IT THROUGH
There are many ways to help your business progress from the gloom of the recession.
PHOTO: ROBERT CHURCHILL

Audio technology: are you listening?

Audio-conferencing technology has been around for 20 years or more; but, the recession has, if anything, increased its popularity among the business community.

EXAMPLE

“Historically, you can liken the development of audio-conferencing to the development of mobile phones,” say Ian Brindle, Head of Conferencing Sales at Nimans, the telecommunications distributor. “When mobiles first appeared they were very expensive – and look at how that’s changed.”

Now, audio-conferencing is very affordable – so much so that businesses see it as a cost-saving technology that can reduce the need for face-to-face meetings.

The average entry point for audio-conferencing equipment is anything from £200-£900; so if this outlay can cut down on staff’s air travel, taxi fares, hotel and bar bills, you start to understand the appeal.

Still, the perception persists that an audio-conferencing gizmo is a unit on a desk in a meeting room. Yet, these days, the technology isn’t



Ian Brindle
Head of Conferencing Sales, Nimans

simply office-based. You can also use it at home or on the move, because it can be loaded into a laptop and/or mobile phone.

That’s neat – but, to misquote The Buggles, could video kill the audio star? High Definition video-conferencing suites have the visual bonus of making you feel as though you are actually ‘in the room’, even when you are a continent away. Not with the add-ons which are now available with audio, says Ian Brindle.

High-quality

“There’s a growth in devices which complement audio, such as those you can use via your laptop. And, on the audio side, you can call-record, too. You can take the SD (Secure Digital) card out of the equipment, export it to a WAV file (Waveform Audio File Format) and email everyone involved.” Minutes can be circulated in double-quick time. In a boardroom environment, 20 or so people sitting around a desk can use the equipment and be heard in high-quality audio.

Last year, says Ian, a high street bank rolled out audio-conferencing to all its UK branches, and within a month saw a return on its investment. “And a global pharmaceutical company gave laptop technology to its field sales people globally. Now wherever they are in the world they can access full audio-conferencing.”

TONY GREENWAY
info.uk@mediaplanet.com



QUESTION & ANSWER



Nicola Lidgett
Azzurri Communications

Are more businesses demanding audio-conferencing technology now?

There’s definitely been an uptake in solutions that support remote working. Government legislation can have a big impact. For example, in 2009 an estimated 4.5million parents with children up to the age of 16 found themselves newly eligible to request flexible working.

What can audio conferencing do for a business?

Audio-conferencing can help with remote working and reduce the need for travel. Obviously that has a big impact on reducing our carbon footprint, so it’s good for the green agenda.

Could video-conferencing ever steal audio’s thunder?

Video-conferencing isn’t available to everyone all the time yet. A phone generally is. But both solutions have their own place.

Next step?

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NEWS

STEP

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EXPLORE YOUR
OPTIONS

SITTING PRETTY
The correct office furniture can eliminate injury from poor posture and boost productivity.
PHOTO: ALEXEY KASHIN

How ergonomics can help your business

Question: Is the use of ergonomically designed furniture desirable in the modern office?

Answer: Yes – because its correct use can help prevent insidious and accumulative injuries in your workforce.

“The problem with human beings,” says Nigel Heaton, “is that they are flexible. You can give a human a poorly designed office chair and they’ll adapt to it.”

It won’t do them any good in the long-run, mind you – but they’ll put up with it until it begins to take a toll on their bodies in insidious, accumulative ways: Back strain, for example, or neck, arm or leg injuries, all of which can mean time off work.

A smarter way for businesses to operate, says Nigel – the CEO of risk

management organisation Human Applications – is to build office equipment around their staff.

This is the practice of ergonomics.

We all come in different shapes and sizes, so it’s a good idea if, say, our chairs have adjustable backrests. And the key word is ‘adjustable’, because while the bump of the back rest might fit snugly into your lumbar curve, it probably won’t fit into the lumbar curve of the person using the same chair directly after you.

“You should also think about where your monitor sits,” says Nigel. “Should it be high or low, twisted or tilted? So good ergonomics in furniture is about adjustment that’s easy to use.”

Unfortunately, says Nigel, office managers can’t assume that peo-

ple know how to use ergonomic equipment – or why – so giving a member of staff a chair with 50 ergonomic features is worse than useless if it’s not explained and operated properly. In an office environ-

FACTS

■ **In 2008/09** an estimated 538,000 people in the UK suffered from a musculoskeletal disorder they believe was caused or made worse by their current or past work. (Source: Health and Safety Executive Labour Force Survey)

■ **An estimated 227,000 (42%)** suffered from a disorder mainly affecting their back; 215,000 (40%) from a disorder mainly affecting their upper limbs or neck, and 96,000 (18%) mainly affecting their lower limbs.

ment, good ergonomics also means employing right lighting and temperature and ensuring staff adopt correct habits, such as taking regular breaks.

Of course, when it comes to furniture, employers may reason that ‘ergonomic = expensive’ and opt for the cheaper options – but that’s a false economy, says Nigel. “Well-designed chairs do tend to be more expensive. But if someone is away from work for a single day, it can cost an employer, on average, £120.

“The average time away from work because of back injuries is six-eight weeks. Put that into pounds, shillings and pence, and you can do the maths.”

TONY GREENWAY
info.uk@mediaplanet.com

See why flexible working is on the move

Work culture is changing. Thanks to laptops, cellphones and free WiFi, today’s office workers no longer have to be chained to their desks from 9-to-5.

Office? What office? Today’s white-collar staff have more flexibility than ever before. They can sit in a café and read and reply to their emails. They can video-conference from their home or ho-

tel room and hot-desk from drop-in business centres.

In fact, the freedom and cost-efficiency of mobile office-working has the potential to energise a business – and have a profound impact on restoring an employee’s work-life balance. High tech and consulting have adopted flexible working for some while; the banking industry is only just getting to grips with it now.

Kimberlee Burt, Director and

Founder of Original Creative Co-op, a consulting firm specialising in workplace strategy and design, thinks that, ultimately, flexible working will replace the traditional 9-to-5 culture. With it, she says, organisations will have to create new criteria for performance evaluation: for example, managing by results instead of time-keeping.

“Working ‘anywhere anytime’ frees people from location,” says Kimberlee, “but the necessi-

ty to come to a building to congregate, meet people, attend learning events and collaborate with colleagues will still exist.

“The impact on building design means designing a different type of workspace. We will no longer be tied to a desk. Although we can work in cafés and third places, the home will become more important as a place of work.”



ERGONOMIC EXPERT TOM STEWART’S BEST TIPS



‘Usability’ of products

→ “In the field of ergonomics, we talk about a product or system’s ‘usability’. There are three elements to this. The first is ‘effectiveness’: is the product doing the job it’s supposed to do? The second is ‘efficiency’: how much effort is required to make it work properly?

The third element is ‘satisfaction’. This looks at everything from how comfortable a product is to use – and, in some cases, how much fun it is to use..

Look at the bigger picture

→ “In a fundamental way, ergonomics can be applied to something as simple as a chair: how compatible is it with the size, shape and weight of the person using it?

“But, actually, ergonomics is much more than that. It can be applied to an entire computer system in a dealing room, for instance, where you would want to know that the information is being displayed in a user-friendly way that people can understand. With mobile phones, ergonomics issues surround the size of the screen and the buttons, but also how easy it is to navigate around the system.

Creating the right office environment

→ “In an office environment, it’s crucial to make sure that the seating, lighting, heating and ventilation are appropriate. Getting the environment right is a big issue. Take dealer desks where screens – even if they are flat-panel – are still quite large, and users tend to want more than one of them. There’s a design need to make them comfortable to use, thus avoiding shoulder or neck ache, for example.

Customer-facing organisations

→ “Ergonomics is most important in customer-facing organisations. If you want your staff to treat your customers well, then you have to treat your staff well. If they’re sitting on an uncomfortable chair in an uncomfortable office, they won’t think you’ve invested in them – and they won’t give good customer service.”

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INSPIRATION

Question: Is it difficult to implement eco-friendly measures in an office environment?

Answer: No, but it does require a big behavioural change on the part of all staff. The benefits, however, can be enormous.

Easy ways to make your office 'green'

LEADER TO LEADER

Here's a sobering statistic. A recent national environmental survey established that UK businesses waste around £160million a year, simply by leaving their office lights on. The same survey also discovered that employees - used to recycling and energy-saving at home - would adopt more eco-friendly practices in the workplace if they were empowered by management to do so.

Yet two-thirds of workers said they were unaware that their organisation had any environmental targets in place, and just 18% were told about targets during their induction.

Sustainability

So, in an effort to buck this trend and promote greater environmental awareness at work, Avery, the office products manufacturer, launched its second Green Office Week in April of this year. The initiative encouraged offices to review purchasing habits in line with en-

vironmental targets, devise an action plan for the future, and celebrate the achievements of people who consider the environment regularly at work. Hundreds of organisations took part, including blue chip companies, charities, local authorities, leisure groups, colleges and universities.

Neil Pennell is Chairman of the Technical Affairs Committee at the British Council for Offices (BCO), the organisation devoted to researching, developing and communicating best practice in all aspects of the office sector. As such, he is a staunch advocate of employees finding ways to 'green' their office environment.

"Most of the larger corporates now have a defined Corporate Social Responsibility approach as part of their ethos," he says. "When occupiers take new spaces they have a series of queries concerning an office's environmental credentials. Yes, it's still not as important as rent and location, perhaps - but at least sustainability issues are on the



"Improving the performance of your office comes down to behavioural change of staff."

Neil Pennell
British Council for
Offices

agenda now."

Behavioural change

They're not going away, either. Stringent construction regulations ensure that the fabric of a building meets a particular level of energy performance; and there is a growing legislative drive on carbon and energy reduction to push industry into taking green issues more seriously. But what about day-to-day running issues? Are there procedures that staff could put into practice right now to make a real difference in their workplace?

"Improving the performance of your office comes down to behavioural change of staff," says Neil. "It's simple things, like turning off lights and air-conditioning when you don't need them, and making sure that controls and building management systems are working effectively."

It isn't rocket science, says Neil. For example, if half a dozen people are going to be working in your office over the week-

end, get them together in one specific area, rather than dotting them around on various floors. That way, only one part of the space needs to be heated and lit. And, while we're about it, why leave the photocopier on standby all night?

Inexpensive

These interventions aren't expensive, either. "Most of them are low-cost," says Neil. "And some of them are no-cost. Switching off your computer and the office lights is free, yet you can probably save 15 per cent-20 per cent of the energy output of most typical buildings by introducing those kinds of measures. The payback goes straight onto your bottom line. So why wouldn't you do it?"

Read more
on the web:

www.greenofficeweek.eu

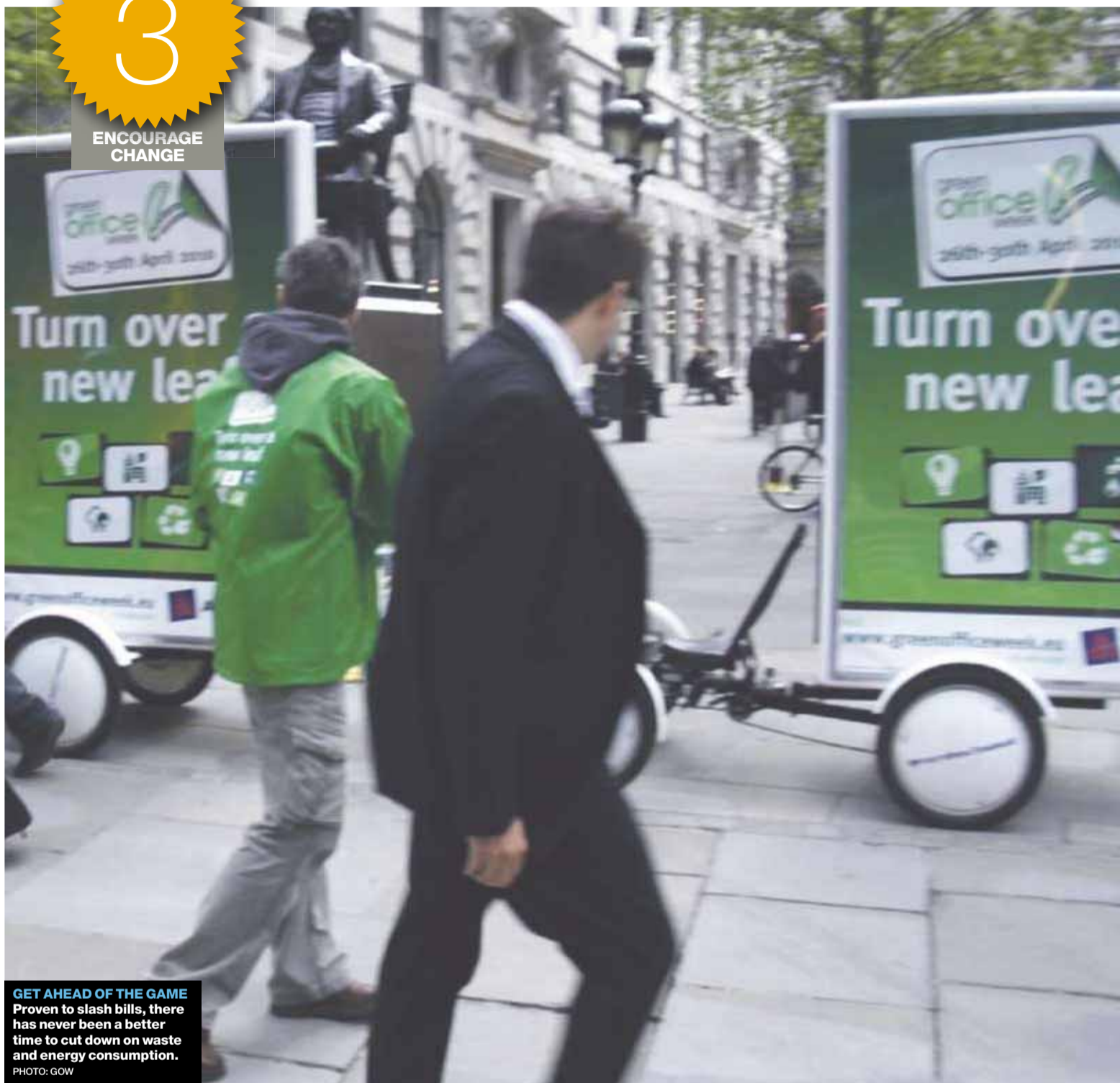
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TIP
3

ENCOURAGE CHANGE



GET AHEAD OF THE GAME
Proven to slash bills, there has never been a better time to cut down on waste and energy consumption.
PHOTO: GOW

5

TIPS: BE ECO-FRIENDLY

Outlaw wastepaper bins

1 Waste can be taken to a central location in your office and sorted into colour-coded bins. This is good way to encourage a recycling culture which people are already used to at home. Plus, get in touch with your local authority's recycling officer to see what services are available for businesses.

Use your intelligence

2 Intelligent controls which dim the lights automatically when daylight is available is a good way of saving energy - and it's cost efficient, too

Optimise your building

3 A building needs retuning in the same way that your car does to make sure that it is operating efficiently. This is known as 'recommissioning'. Put simply, is it time to retune its systems?

Be pro-active

4 Use a kettle and mugs to replace disposable cups from vending machines. Invite staff suggestions for cutting down energy consumption.

Switch off!

5 Switch off your computer when you go home (rather than leaving the monitor on standby), and turn off the photocopier, printers - and lights! - if you are the last to leave.



PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

Virtual meetings technology – such as web-conferencing or telepresence capabilities – can bring big rewards to a business and, as a bonus, help the environment. Andrew McGee of Gael Quality, a Scottish software firm, reveals how web-conferencing has benefited the company's workforce... and its client base.

Virtually Irreplaceable?

When the volcanic ash cloud grounded flights back in April, Gael Quality – a Scottish-based compliance management software firm – was sitting pretty.

The East Kilbride-headquartered company, which has 75 employees and a turnover of £5.5million, had invested in computer-based web-conferencing software three years ago, allowing its executives to hold virtual meetings, eyeball-to-eyeball, with clients across the world. Because Gael staff could see and connect with their customers while sitting in a room thousands of miles away, it was business as usual.

“When the ash cloud struck, companies had teams of people sitting in hotel rooms all around the world not doing anything,” says Andrew McGee, Gael Quality's Sales Director. “Yet we were able to carry on with our business in the way we were doing the day before. The volcano stopped travel, but it didn't stop us engaging with our clients.”

Increased productivity

Gael operates a suite of rooms with web-conference enabled laptops. The sales team can use these to set up a video conference with clients anywhere in the world, in order to demonstrate company products.

Video-conferencing, web-conferencing or telepresence facilities (sophisticated HD video-conferencing suites) can be expensive, however – and, Andrew admits, the capital expenditure for buying Gael's particular brand of virtual meetings technology “was not cheap.” Did management have to think long and hard before dipping their hands into their pockets?

“With expenditure of any sort you have to justify why you are doing it,” says Andrew. “It was apparent that the benefits of the web-conferencing software we are using outweighed the costs involved.”

Andrew recognises the environmental benefit of virtual meeting technology, but says the main justification for Gael was cutting down on travel. “That cost can be large,” says Andrew. “On top of that you have to consider productivity and efficiency when staff are travelling around the world.”

Support system

“Using web-conferencing technology, our office-based sales people can set up four or five virtual meetings in one day. Now, there's no way we would have achieved that kind of productivity with face-to-face meetings all over the world and still kept a handle on the costs.” Gael Quality hasn't calculated the actual cost-savings the company has

OPTIMISATION

“It's about using the facility intelligently in a business domain so that you, the user – and, more importantly, your clients – get the benefit of it.”



Andrew McGee
Sales Director, Gael's Quality

made through virtual meetings, but Andrew thinks the numbers would be “massive”.

The company's technical staff are able to use its web-conferencing technology to remotely take control of a client's PC, so that any potential customer maintenance problems can be dealt with efficiently. “That's another bonus for us,” says Andrew. “It's a support system which means we can quickly sort out any issues from our offices – and our clients can have a system that's back up and running in a very short space of time.”

Client benefits

Later this week, says Andrew, Gael will also be using their web-conferencing capabilities to host a ‘webinar’ to promote one of their products. “We can invite a number of people into that ‘webinar’ – 20 or 25 people, say – and demonstrate our product very rapidly in a call which would take between 20 and 30 minutes.”

Not that this technology will ever replace the need for face-to-face meetings. “In any business situation you have a range of communications options,” says Andrew, “of which web-conferencing is one. It's about using the facility intelligently in a business domain so that you, the user – and, more importantly, your clients – get the benefit of it.”



QUESTION & ANSWER



Sarah Eccleston
Business Transformation Manager,
TelePresence,
Cisco UK

What difference can telepresence make to a business?

The reason why companies tend to buy it, and justify the purchase of it, is because of its ability to reduce employee travel. By meeting someone virtually, rather than face to face, a business is able to cut costs – and its carbon footprint.

What are the benefits?

A business can have easier access to executives or experts and put those people in front of customers more often. Also, face to face meetings which might have taken weeks to set up can now be organised quickly, and decisions made in a matter of days.

Should every business with a sustainable ethos have virtual meetings capabilities?

Yes, but not necessarily only for the green benefits. Through the recession especially, the need to reduce travel costs – and ensure effective operations – is on every company's agenda.

Will virtual ever replace face-to-face meetings?

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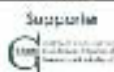
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