



2007 What's Next ☺

A Farewell to Flexibility?

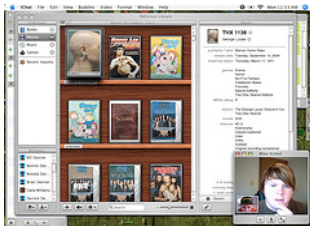
Lucy Kellaway (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucy_Kellaway) writes in a recent article published in *The World in 2007, Forecasting Trends for the Year Ahead* (© 2006 The Economist Newspaper Limited, London) (http://www.economist.com/theworldin/business/displayStory.cfm?story_id=8133533&d=2007) that in the year ahead "Flexible ways of working, hot-desking and virtual teams will be in retreat." She heralds the return of the "old ways of working" namely individuals working in isolation behind closed doors, for increasingly long hours. Working from home is fraught with the peril of becoming disconnected, and therefore will inevitably go the way of the dinosaurs!

At BPS, our experience, and therefore view of the future, is different from Ms Kellaway's. Outlined below are seven trends that we think will impact the workplace in 2007.

2007 Trends that Will Impact the Workplace...the BPS Version

1. Sharing continues to be more important than not sharing

Sharing, as in sharing information, or collaborating, or in simply communicating. Information matters more and more. Its flow and dispersion is becoming more critical to many businesses. Workplace researcher Judi Heerwagen, PhD refers to it as the speed of information – the faster the better. There appear to us to be fewer and fewer jobs out there that focus on individual contribution as the lion's share of their responsibility, or at least that aren't increasingly impacted by the work of others. As we'll note in trends that follow, sharing (or not) has important implications in the organization of the workplace, even if it's done through electronic networks.



"Daily Screen"
2006

2. Fewer private offices (with fewer amenities)

Simply speaking, we will continue to see a decline in the number of private offices in the workplace. Why?

- Sharing doesn't do well as an activity in a closed environment. And sharing will matter in 2007, see trend number one. Collaboration increasingly matters more than privacy and confidentiality. And besides, there are other ways to get to those two perceived needs.
- The decline in expectations for workspace as an entitlement or reward will continue. Is this possibly linked to a counter-expectation by younger employees? See trend six below (with due deference to the counterpoint that ends this trend).
- Work patterns continue to change with less and less time actually spent in the office. Work happens everywhere and there will be more recognition of that by the "office dwellers".

When there are offices, they will continue to get smaller. We see less and less appetite for "extra" square footage in offices just to distinguish those who've made it from those who haven't. We do wonder though if there will be any moves toward redesigning and improving the functionality of these smaller spaces?

As a counterpoint, Bill London, Interior Design Principal at RTKL observed that in their recent work they are seeing a slight retrenching in this area – perhaps an indicator reinforcing Ms. Kellaway's position. It seems some of the younger people are thinking they'd earned the right

to a door (interesting thought). He agrees that even in that scenario, there are no expectations (desires maybe?) for paneling or the corner door.

3. More open open work space

Cube walls will keep coming down. While many businesses don't want a bullpen environment, sharing still matters and it works better in an open environment (see trends one and two). Some people are even willing to admit that it's not any less private than the deceptive higher walls.

By the way, Bill's observations agree with this one.

4. Greater/deeper investigation into making the workplace supportive and productive

More and more companies will investigate changes to their workplace in response to both business demands and opportunities...of various kinds. It doesn't mean that companies are moving to the experimental edge, but our observation is that many, in their own way, are trying to engage their workplace in a more deliberate way in direct support of the business.

5. Slow transition to new management skill sets

Management skill development for the new workplace continues to lag. Both staff and workplace support systems are much better prepared for the changing workplace than is management. And that will continue. Manager's skill sets are struggling in this new age of technology and changing relationships, never mind adding workplace change to the mix. The result is that they will continue to be the biggest hindrance to workplace change. If you're a manager, and feel like you're keeping up to the pace of change, check out *Wikinomics*, the just-published work by Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams of the think tank New Paradigm (see www.wikinomics.com) and see if you're feeling as comfortable as before.

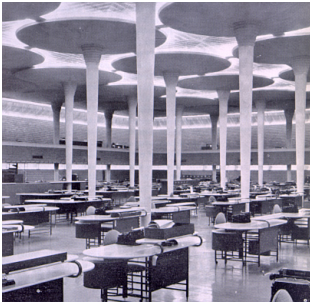
6. The next generation is on its way

This is one that we hear little discussion about outside of the media, but we think it's the big elephant that's not-so-slowly moving its way into the room...err, workplace. The Millennials (the "iGeneration"?) continue to grow in number and as a percentage in the workplace. Their experience, expectations and skills are different. They love to interact and are facile at it. With a focus on social networks, their interaction doesn't have to be face-to-face. Everyone's input is better than just someone's input - think in terms of beyond "outside the box". Their expectations for the workplace will soon come to matter.

Note: If you haven't read our article "Guess Who's Coming to the Workplace", ping us and we'll be happy to send you a copy.

7. More change

Finally, we agree with the many other prognosticators that change is going to continue to be a major business factor. Business change, technology change, it all inevitably means change for each of us. In 2007 it is just going to continue. But of course we might be a bit biased in predicting this one given that we spend so much time in working with workplace change. That said, ask your college-age kid (or a friend's) what kind of work place they imagine working in ...



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