

The Critical Role of IT in Workplace Transformation

Practical tips & insights for 2019 and beyond...

What role do IT professionals have to play in this new era of continuous workplace transformation?

Every CEO is placing employee experience firmly at the top of their agenda, but what will it take to deliver a sustainable workplace of the future?

IT, alongside Facilities and HR, is under pressure to create a workplace where people are equipped with the tools, processes and environment they need to do

their best work. A workplace where innovation and creativity can thrive.

As our heads spin with all the hyped-up capabilities being promised by AI, robotics, the internet of things and more... the question playing on every IT leader's mind is this: what exactly should I be paying attention to?

To help you figure out how to look beyond the hype and worm's eye view of emerging tech, here are some practical tips and insights for 2019 and beyond.



Insight #1 - IT is becoming more strategic; and working closely with Facilities & HR

As organizations create smart offices and adopt agile working practices, the role of IT is undergoing a major shift.

In the past, 'IT' conjured up images of a reactive back office function. Today, technical talent has stepped firmly out of the back office and into the boardroom, playing a fundamental role in shaping our organizations' future.

The challenges of running an efficient, secure and user friendly workplace are increasingly complex; and a whole host of new responsibilities are falling on IT professionals as emerging technology raises expectations.

That's why today's IT leader is more strategic than ever before, wielding enormous power to influence the

productivity of our workforce and improve the employee experience.

As we learn more about the way our working environment influences employee engagement and sows the seeds of collaboration, we discover it's vital to set a vision for IT that closely aligns with your organization's wider people strategy.

IT, for this reason, will be working more closely than ever with HR and Facilities. A whopping 80% of global HR leaders foresee a greater HR ownership of the physical workspace, according to research by Unispace - and it's up to IT to make it run like clockwork. This shift is driven by a greater need for cross-functional collaboration amongst teams and the need to accommodate headcount growth. The same study found that 68% of global HR leaders expect to be involved from the start of a workspace change project. IT Managers are no longer just doing the doing, but doing the thinking, behind workplace transformation.



"Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things." - Peter Drucker

***Insight #2* - IT managers are becoming employee experience (EX) designers**

Our expectations around the value that IT can deliver are rising. Just as consumers expect better products, better service and a seamless (if not remarkable) customer experience from brands... people we hire expect an employee experience with bells on.

Jacob Morgan, author of [The Employee Experience Advantage](#), analysed over 250 diverse organizations and discovered that companies who invest in employee experience are four times more profitable than those who don't, so it's little wonder we're considering it a source of competitive advantage.

IT, HR and Facilities are stepping up to create an engaging employee experience that's worth telling your friends about. Suddenly IT is part of a cross-functional team of employee experience (EX) designers, borrowing skillsets and methodologies from app designers.

We need to identify and optimize every employee touchpoint, online and offline, to create an engaging, energizing experience that helps us get, keep and grow talent.

59% of Millennials say an employer's provision of state-of-the-art technology is important to them when considering a job [source: PwC]

***Insight #3* - The open talent economy brings IT challenges (and opportunities)**

Startups like Uber and Airbnb have disrupted entire industries, changing the way we think about earning money from our resources, whether that be our time, skills, vehicles, or homes.

These disruptive forces are shaping a thriving gig economy. An economy that looks beyond the 9-5 job-for-life, to a more flexible, on-demand, work-from-anywhere approach to life.



The numbers reveal the sheer extent of this shift. A [study](#) by Edelman Intelligence, commissioned by Upwork and Freelancers Union, surveyed 6,000 workers to analyze the size of the growing freelance economy and the major role freelancers play in the future of work. They found that over a third of today's US workforce is made up of freelancers. [Some experts](#) believe the gig economy will double by 2021. Already, half of millennials are currently freelancing, adopting a lifestyle that promises greater freedom at the expense of security. There's also a fair chance you're employing some of them.

The gig economy presents an enormous opportunity for organizations to access a global pool of talent, without the overhead of employees. Freelancers can jump in and out of projects, giving new levels of flexibility to organizations who might struggle to find the right people or have limited budget.

Yet this brave new world of temporary workers brings a raft of IT challenges.

Organizations often aren't geared up for giving freelancers everything they need to do their best work - whether it be secure access to project files on-the-move, API access to homegrown apps, or desk space and equipment if they pop into the office.

Billings from freelancing sites like [Upwork](#), [Freelancer](#) and [Guru](#) grew 200% between 2016 and 2017. An interesting development is the increasing technical complexity of the tasks that these freelancers are taking on, from blockchain architecture and robotics, to ethical hacking and deep learning.

Could you bridge the talent gap in your department by taking advantage of this global talent pool?

Or perhaps you could free up your team's valuable time by using virtual assistants to take care of their mundane, repetitive tasks?

Companies like [Time Etc](#), [Worldwide101](#) and [MyTasker](#) are helping individuals and companies increase their productivity.

You might remember the story of [Bob](#), a software developer who made the news in 2013 by successfully outsourcing his entire job, freeing him up to watch cat videos on YouTube. Needless to say, Bob got fired. Should he have been promoted? Or put in charge of up-skilling his colleagues to help them utilize freelance talent (assuming they'd put their free time to better use than cat videos)?

The most innovative companies will find ways to leverage all the world's talent at their disposal, by striking a balance between employed and freelance workers. The utopia is that contract terms become irrelevant, as the focus falls clearly on finding the right people at the right time, regardless of how they choose to work. This is an essential dimension of the shift towards agile working practices - a shift that every IT leader must prepare for.



Encouraging employees to outsource aspects of their job can free them up to focus on more cognitive, higher value activities, bridging the gap as we try to implement AI solutions to automate more of our workloads.

***Insight #4* - IT must enable agile working to give employees more freedom to work anywhere, anytime**

The challenge is on for IT leaders to create lightweight, sustainable workplaces that adapt to fast-changing needs. Traditionally we've grown used to big office buildings set up for a fixed use, perhaps with cubicles, individual offices or an open plan layout.

The workplace of the future can't be so unwieldy. The penny has well and truly dropped that we need to cater for a wider

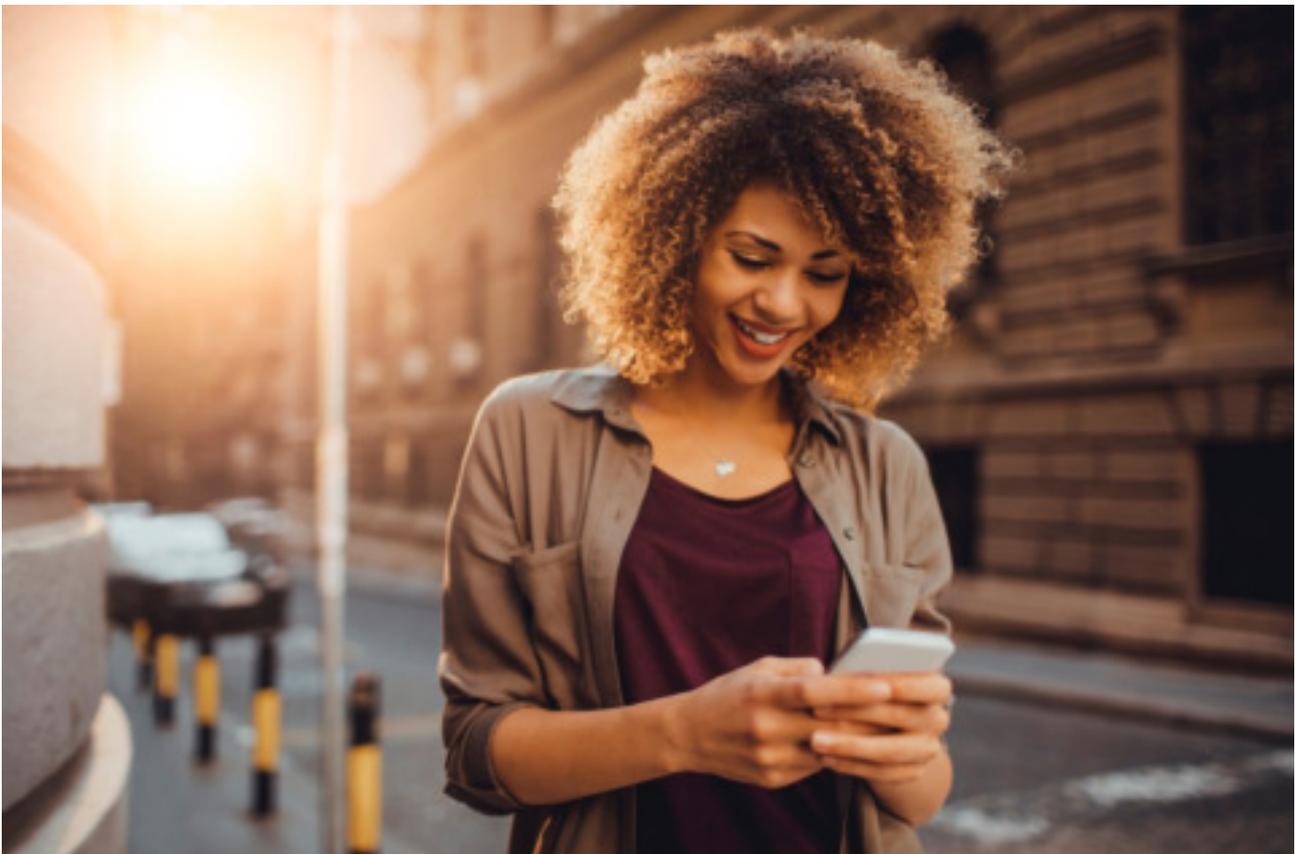
"It's not the strongest nor the most intelligent species that survives, it is the one that is most adaptable to change."

- Charles Darwin

range of preferences and encourage collaboration between diverse groups of people. That means flexible spaces that mix up different layouts and toolkits. In other words, Activity Based Working (AWB): workplace design that optimizes the spaces for various tasks that employees are working on.

Providing a variety of spaces and services to employees on-demand, from anywhere, is becoming the new normal. Our people expect to be able to book meeting rooms, desks, equipment, catering and more, wherever they are, 24/7.

Agile working extends beyond the space itself, into the realms of workplace culture.



It's about giving people freedom to choose where and when they work. It's a philosophy that focuses on results and giving individuals the flexibility they need to achieve them however they see fit. In an agile working environment you'll typically find ABW.

For instance you might have a video conferencing room equipped with all the latest kit, a brainstorming area with beanbags and whiteboards, a cafe for informal meetings, a boardroom for formal meetings and some private offices or booths where people can make calls in peace. You can also cater for personal preferences, like standing desks.

Agile working is a major pull for top talent and improves retention, as smart people expect more freedom than ever before. Get it right and organizations can create a highly engaged workforce, while reducing real estate costs and operating more sustainably. Studies show that organization can bring down the need for office space by

up to 30% by adopting agile working practices.

To make agile working succeed, organizations need to make sure the employee experience is seamless. Wherever and whenever people choose to work, they need secure access to files and the ability to book the spaces and things they need via the cloud.

In an ABW environment, people don't have a fixed desk. Rather they hot-desk, choosing a desk each morning when they arrive at work, depending on what suits them that particular day. Some prefer office hoteling, where desks, rooms and other facilities can be booked in advance.

An important consideration when designing a more agile workplace is understanding which platforms people should be able to book resources from, e.g. Outlook, touch screens, desk panels, meeting room displays and mobile apps (hint: it's an omni-channel world, so the answer is 'all of them').



Then there's the question of how you'll track data like utilization and no-shows (hint: [ask us!](#)).

Insight #5 - IT is using Internet of Things (IoT) technologies to turn offices into smart buildings

A smart office uses technology to make the physical work environment intelligent, so it adapts to individual employees' needs. According to Gartner, 31% of organizations have already launched internet-of-things solutions.

Smart offices use sensors and automation to control things like lighting and heating, to save energy bills and improve sustainability. These 'things', in an internet-of-things world, only come on when they're needed and are switched off when they're not. For instance moisture sensors could detect whether the irrigation system outside needs to automatically turn on to water the grass on a hot, dry day.

Smart devices can detect whether a room is being used and whether a video conference is underway - turning on equipment, opening and closing blinds, or ordering coffee as necessary.

This heralds a new era of IT, where IT professionals are considered strategic players whose role is to support the wider company goals. They'll be challenged by the need to create a workplace that enables people to work more efficiently than ever before.

In that sense it's vital that IT's up-skilling plans include a new awareness of IoT technologies and how they can create a more sustainable, user-friendly, optimized workplace.

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." - Alvin Toffler.



***Insight #6* - IT will help to embed 'rules' in everyone's workflow that streamline the way spaces & facilities are used**

Consider the following scenario...

One of your colleagues in Marketing feels like having their team meeting in the atrium. But they haven't considered the fact that it's a premium space in your building for major events.

Someone from your IT team interrupts them half way through their meeting, a little exasperated, explaining that they need to set up AV equipment for the CEO's presentation in an hour's time. Apparently nobody should be using the atrium without approval.

'Who can give us approval?' asks Marketing. Your colleague shrugs, 'Sorry, I have no idea'.

The marketing team moves on, pacing through the office in search of a free room.

By the time they find one, they've wasted a quarter of their meeting time.

Not only that, but half an hour in, they're kicked out again by another team who booked the room in advance. They give up and hope next week's meeting runs more smoothly.

If this kind of situation sounds familiar, your organization still lacks the basic foundations of an agile workplace.

How to embed rules for booking rooms & facilities in everyone's workflow

Meeting Room Booking Rules can play a significant role in creating an agile, efficient working environment. The scenario described above could be easily avoided by implementing some basic rules.

The key word here is 'implementing'. Most organizations already have rules, some explicit and others unspoken or implied. However, too often, we see that these rules, guidelines and processes aren't actually



implemented in their meeting room booking systems. This leads to unwanted behaviour: people book the largest rooms with the best views, unnecessarily hog scarce video conferencing facilities, or book services at the last minute, placing undue stress on internal service teams.

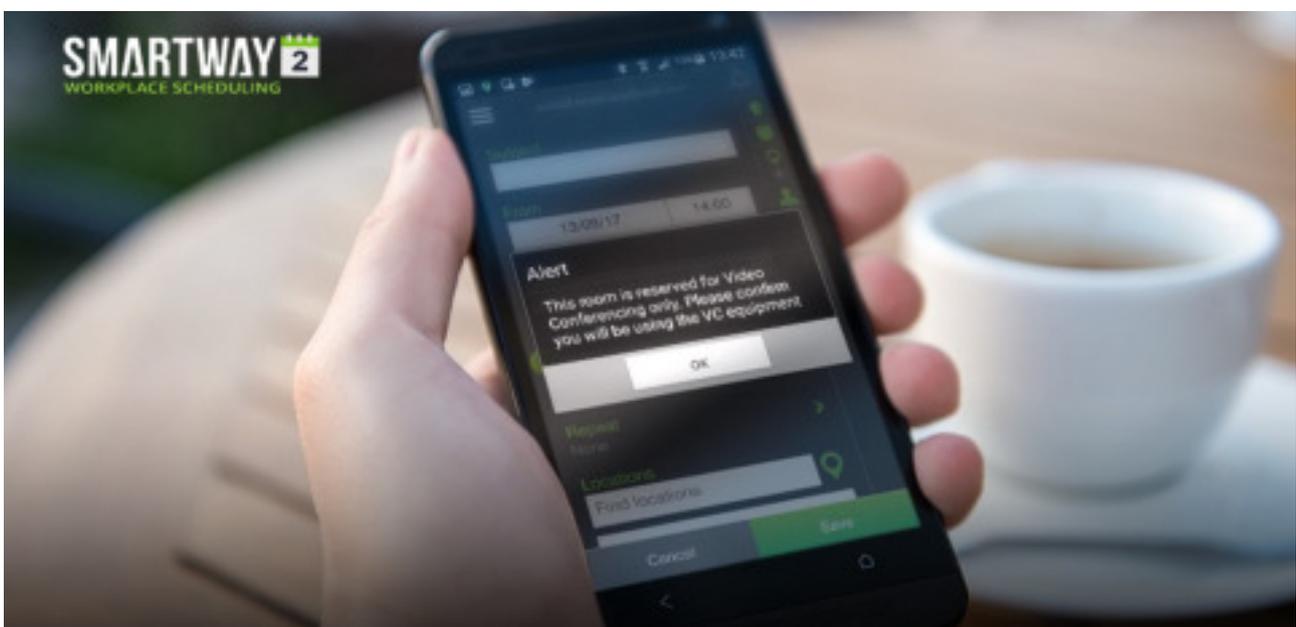
The challenge is this: how do you communicate and enforce meeting room booking rules in a way that enhances the employee experience?

The answer lies in using a meeting room booking system with a flexible rules engine. That way you can implement highly specific (and sometimes complex) rules that trigger at the right time and provide useful guidance for employees.

Read [this blog post](#) to find out how this works in Smartway2.

You'll discover how to:

- Set rules that trigger when someone tries to book a particular space, prompting them to get approval from the right person
- Set rules around the provision of catering and equipment, room-by-room, so hospitality, Facilities and IT get the advanced warning they need to deliver excellent service on time
- Configure notifications, reports and digital signage to ensure that the right people are informed with plenty of notice
- Set rules that determine what should happen when someone wants to cancel a meeting, catering or equipment at short notice
- Eliminate no-shows and meeting room mix-ups that waste time and damage your brand reputation
- Control the workflow when someone requests a flexible room layout and furniture needs to be rearranged or partitions removed
- Set rules for booking video conferencing space so people don't hog equipment they aren't using
- Set office hoteling and hot-desking rules, like a rule that prevents people sitting in the same space every day to



improve collaboration, or rules that enforce departmental neighbourhoods, so you can only book desks in your own zone

- Enable admins to see which bookings are waiting for approval and approve with one click
- Make sure it all works across any user interface, whether a web calendar, mobile app, kiosk, or in Outlook

Meeting room booking rules don't just support the way you work. They enforce a smooth, efficient way of working that instantly becomes business as usual. Just by using the system, everyone naturally rolls with the rules and works the smart way. So you avoid the usual costly pitfalls of poor workspace management.

"Simple rules lead to complex behaviour. Complex rules lead to stupid behaviour."

- Dee Hock

Prevention is better than cure. Your meeting room booking system should stop problems from occurring, rather than applying sticking plasters. That way you can avoid putting extra pressure on colleagues to fix resource mix-ups and oversights later.

Rules encourage users to adapt to processes and workflow that make sense for everyone.

These are the small things that make a big difference to an agile, 21st century workplace; particularly if meetings are a vital part of everyday business in your organization. Smart use of meeting room booking and desk booking rules can transform your workplace.

***Insight #7* - IT will look beyond Outlook to create a more agile workplace**

Does your organization use Microsoft Outlook to schedule meetings at work?

If so, it's no surprise. A culture of Outlook calendar invitations is prevalent in most organizations today. Yet there's more to the story. It's a great tool to start with - the obvious choice, you might say. But many IT professionals don't see it as a viable long-term solution for meeting room management, for several reasons:

As you grow, Outlook room booking gets complicated. More clients (and colleagues) means more meetings. More meetings means more Outlook room bookings. More Outlook room bookings means higher demand for services like catering, AV equipment, or a particular room layout. Ultimately this results in more mix-ups, more chopping and changing and ultimately wasting vast amounts of time on back-and-forth communication.

Aligning the planets so a bunch of busy people all show up for a meeting is no mean feat. Typically the organizer's inbox gets bombarded with declines and cancellations, as they struggle to find a time that suits everyone. When those planets do finally align, it's too early to jump for joy.

If your organization uses Outlook on a daily basis chances are your colleagues often feel like they've spent more time arranging their meeting than actually having the meeting.

In today's fast-paced office environment, best laid plans are bound to go awry now and then, yet there's no easy way to handle

complex cancelations and changes in Outlook.

Depending on company protocol, employees might end up having to phone or email IT to cancel equipment, placing last-minute burdens on your team.

Many organizations have rules that apply to certain rooms, or services available within those rooms, as described in the section above.

The trouble is, these rules can be difficult to enforce in Outlook. When it comes to arranging meetings, Outlook room booking functionality doesn't stretch to validating your reservation against company rules.

Yet **Outlook room booking problems are easily solved.**

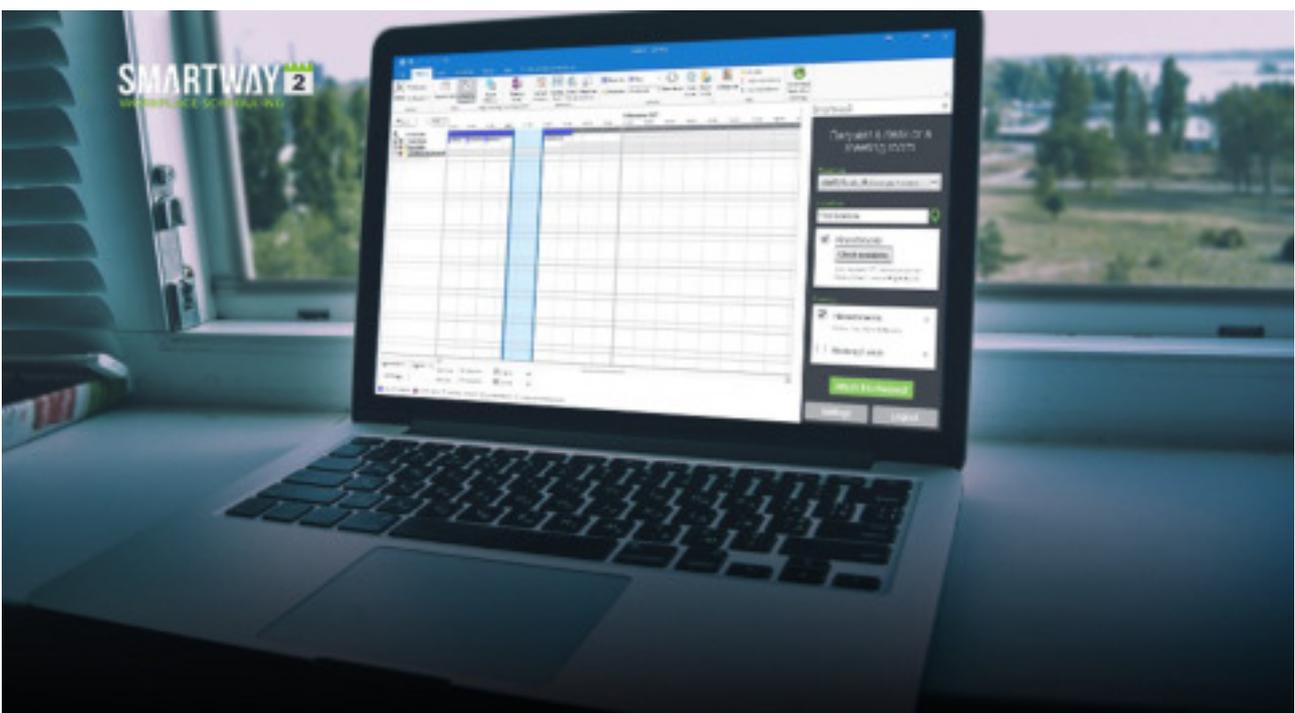
You might be asking yourself whether you need to ditch Outlook. Then questioning whether it's even feasible to do so. The good news is, you can carry on using Outlook room booking and meeting

scheduling *and* solve all these problems. What's more, you don't need a massive IT project to make it happen.

Read [this blog post](#) to find out how to make Outlook room booking a whole lot easier with Smartway2.

You'll discover how to:

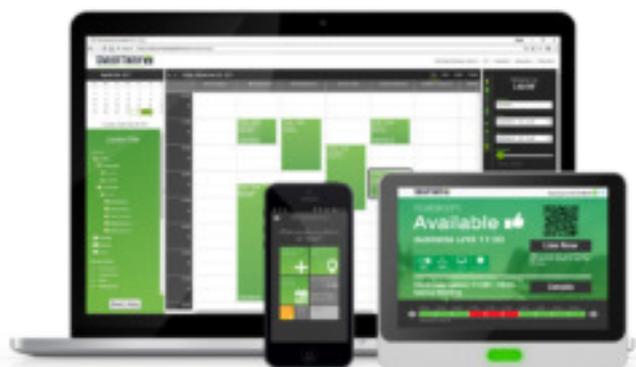
- Bring a smoother, time-saving meeting room booking experience to Outlook with one-click installation, regardless of whether you're using Outlook for Windows, for Mac, or even Outlook Web Access.
- Enable your colleagues to order refreshments, catering, specialist equipment, or a particular room layout
- Implement rules your organization has on room usage, catering, or facilities
- Ensure any meetings deleted from a personal Outlook calendar automatically cancel the room and any other services



- Make changes to a booking, such a shifting it to a different room, in the knowledge that any services you've ordered will also be moved, attendees will be informed and their calendars updated
- Enable any Outlook room booking to instantly appear on meeting room panels and lobby displays
- Automatically alert reception when external visitors have been invited to your workplace, so they know to expect them
- Easily configure and format notifications
- Provide a seamless, consistently high quality employee and visitor experience, no matter which device or which version of Outlook they're using

Want to see for yourself?

If you'd like to see Smartway2's user experience in action, feel free to [request a demo](#) now. We love sharing ideas on how to improve meeting room management in your organization, so [contact us](#) any time if you'd like to talk.



Smartway2 is a SaaS platform that enables businesses to help their people, places and technology work better together.

The platform provides a powerful rules-based engine, combined with leading room and desk signage, to improve employees' interaction with their company facilities.

In addition, the solution delivers extensive workplace analytics that drive better space utilization.

Smartway2 enables users to book desks, meeting rooms, catering, equipment and other resources on-the-move; a capability that is vital to any organization that's striving to create a more agile workplace.

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SMARTWAY 2
WORKPLACE SCHEDULING

