

How to use

Strategic Seating

to boost learning & productivity



workplace design | innovation | productivity | collaboration | employee experience |
learning culture | boosting profit | team performance | facilities management

Facilities & HR: the new psychologists?

Introducing... Strategic Seating

It's inevitable that Facilities and HR are leaping into the realms of workplace psychology.

No longer is Facilities just about buildings and HR about treating people as resources. Instead, the focus lies firmly on the wellbeing and productivity of our teams.

Facilities professionals are combining forces with IT and HR to serve as a centre of excellence for creating an adaptable, sustainable organization, in the face of great change.

As we shift from an era of scientific management (Taylorism) to one of agile working, organizations are under increasing pressure to differentiate their workplace and create a high-performance environment.

Suddenly Facilities is tasked with enhancing innovation and collaboration. This demands new skillsets and a deeper understanding of what makes people tick. In other words, to grasp how best to improve individual performance, we must develop a more sophisticated understanding of workplace psychology.

As work becomes less menial and routine - less structured and bureaucratic - our workplaces should evolve in sync with the radically upgraded expectations of top talent.

By applying new knowledge in psychology - particularly the psychology of *motivation* - we can attract, retain and develop a high value workforce that continuously learns, adapts and improves.

Yet human behaviour is notoriously tricky to measure. What works in one organization or team doesn't always translate to another.

That's why an agile, 'test and learn' approach is essential. Not only do we need to don our workplace psychologist caps, we need to add our scientist's cap on top - coming up with experiments based on hypothesis, trying things out, learning what works and what doesn't.

The question is, where do you begin?

A good place to start is grabbing the low-hanging fruit. What low-cost, low-hassle workplace tweaks could you make, that could dramatically improve results?

Well, that's the subject of this guide. Scientists have been exploring the impact of changes in seating arrangements at work; and it turns out you can improve learning, creativity, innovation and financial performance simply by changing where people sit.

Hopefully you'll find all the info you need, right here, to form your hypothesis. Then you can get out there and create some experiments of your own.

At the end of the day, Facilities doesn't have to stop at simply supplying the seats and desks. You can, in fact, extend your impact much further, by influencing the performance and behaviour of those who occupy them.



Jane Young, Smartway2

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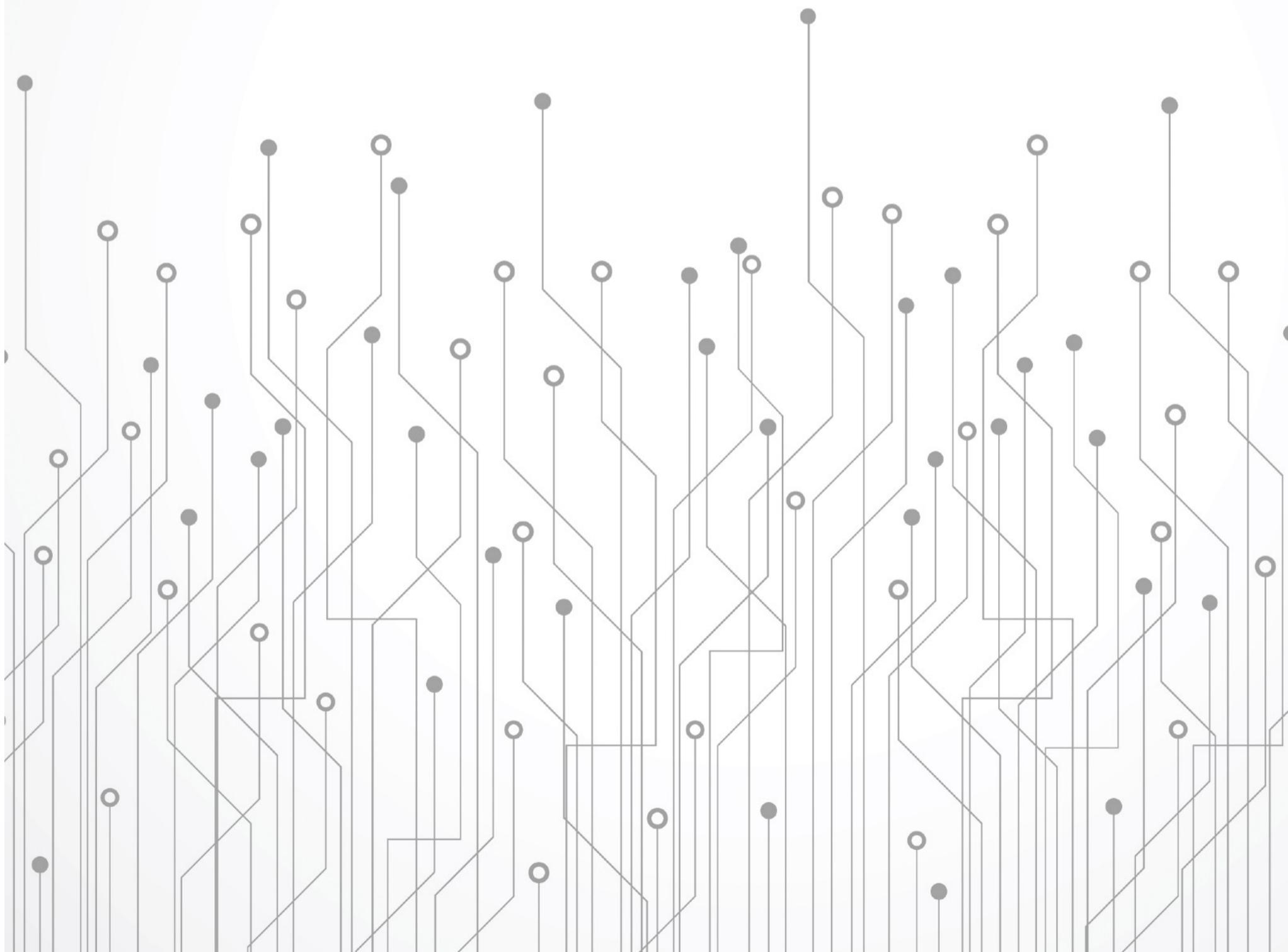
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Chapter One

Creating a workplace

where innovation thrives



Tiny tweaks = epic results

The magic of strategic seating

What if there was a low-cost way to boost your teams' performance by 15% or more, with just a few workplace tweaks?

What if you could add thousands, even millions, to the bottom line... simply by changing where people sit?

Well, it turns out researchers have been diligently exploring the effects of seating arrangements on learning, productivity, innovation and revenue.

In this guide we're going to share some of these findings and explore how you can use 'strategic seating' to transform results in your organization.



The trouble with change

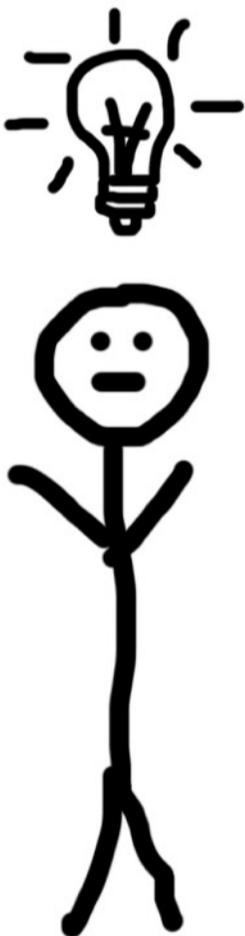
Creating a 21st century culture of learning & innovation

Faced with accelerating change in the world around us, forward-thinking CEOs acknowledge that continuous up-skilling and innovation are essential to survival. That's why leaders in many disciplines - not least in Facilities and HR - are being challenged to create *learning cultures*.

Typically, when leaders realize they need to boost learning, creativity and innovation, they approach the challenge at an organizational level.

That's all very well, but when change efforts fail, it often comes down to a lack of focus on the *individual*. A meaningful shift in performance always happens at an individual level. We all need our lightbulb moment - a trigger that changes our behaviour from the old way to the new. When this occurs en masse, we create a cumulative wave of performance improvement.

Yet this is not an easy thing to do.



Read more about change & creating learning organizations in our **FREE** ebook:

[Your Definitive Guide to The Future of Work.](#)

The trouble with change

So far, most organizations are failing to influence individual mindsets and outputs. As a result, our efforts to create agile learning cultures and boost creative output fall short of expectations. Or worse, we flounder before we even get off the starting blocks.

Exploration vs exploitation

The need for radical leaps

Luckily, scientists have found a smart, simple, high-impact solution. Through spacial design - namely where people sit - you can shift the dial on creativity and productivity. What's more, individuals raise their game almost immediately.

Let's dig a little deeper...

Whatever your role at work, chances are your activities can be split into two broad categories:

- **Exploration:** e.g. searching, risk taking, experimentation
- **Exploitation:** e.g. refinement, efficiency, execution

'Exploration' is inherently difficult and uncertain. That's why most people tend to avoid it. Instead the majority of us focus our attention on exploitation, at the expense of exploration.

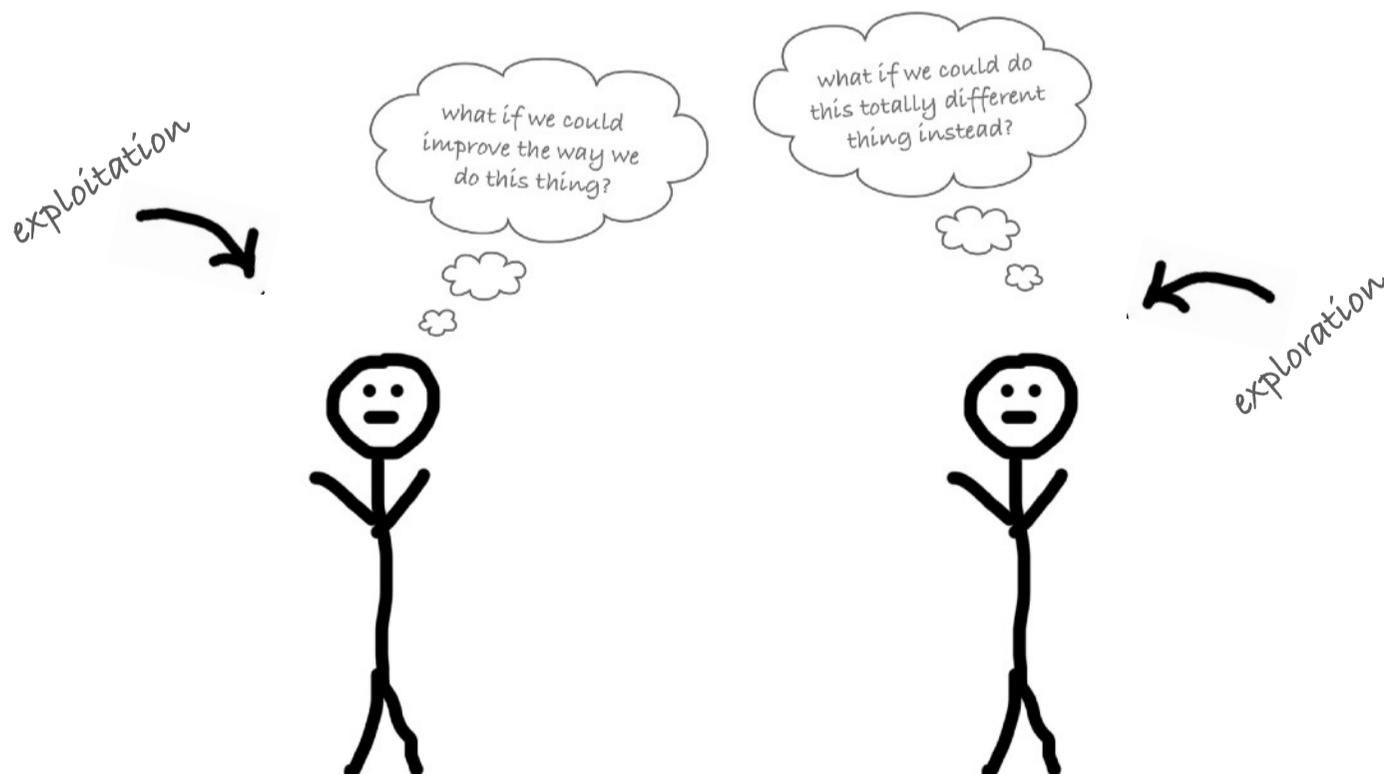
Radical leaps

But exploitation alone isn't going to cut it. Not when we find ourselves under increasing pressure to deliver extraordinary results, in the face of rapid culture and technology change.

Although exploitation keeps things ticking over and *does* improve performance, incremental growth isn't sustainable in an exponential world. We need to take radical leaps forward, think differently and continuously up our game.

Regardless of whether you're in Facilities, HR, IT, Customer Service, R&D, or any other discipline, we all need to seek new and novel ways to get things done. We have no choice but to innovate.

This, in turn, means we need to find new ways to increase individual levels of *exploration*.



Serendipity & Steve Jobs

Where innovators collide

Workspace design, Steve Jobs style

For years organizations have designed their workspaces to spark unplanned 'collisions', with the hope of increasing exploration, i.e. innovation.

Steve Jobs famously made sure that the large central bathrooms in Pixar's HQ were positioned in the atrium. This meant that most people had to take a fairly long walk to use the facilities. The idea was that employees would bump into one-another, sparking spontaneous conversations.

Countless studies have confirmed the benefits of purposefully creating 'water cooler moments'

and other opportunities for diverse people in different disciplines to communicate.

Getting lucky via 'planned serendipity'

Thor Muller and Lane Becker wrote about this in their book *Get Lucky: How to Put Planned Serendipity to Work for You and Your Business*.

Muller and Becker describe planned serendipity as luck that you create for yourself. Often 'luck' is the result of people taking advantage of things that happen by chance.

Companies like Google and 3M attribute much of their success to exactly this.



The atrium at Pixar Animation Studios

Many of the key skills they identify for creating 'luck' in your organization can be influenced by innovative spatial design. For instance:

- **Motion** - Luck happens when people interact with unrelated people and environments.
- **Preparation** - Prepare your mind by filling it with facts, being curious and observant - then being open to anything.
- **Divergence** - Have the ability and the open mind to use existing resource to create something new.
- **Commitment** - Use your skill of divergence and combine it with a commitment to something bigger - a passion, a vision or an overall mission. The

balance lies in being committed to something big enough for options and specific enough for focus.

- **Activation** - Use 'intuitive triggers'. Our unconscious brain makes decisions faster than our conscious brain. The key to driving serendipitous events is to know and understand what the triggers are and stock your environment with them.
- **Connection** - The power of our personal networks and connections can enhance serendipity and solve mysteries.

The question is, how do we design spaces that enable us to get lucky, encourage individual exploration and ultimately create higher performing teams?

What Post-It notes can teach us about planned serendipity

Planned serendipity, you could say, is the deliberate pursuit of happy accidents.

Research by American author Pagan Kennedy showed that 50% of patents are a result of happy accidents, i.e. 'serendipitous' processes.

But how can you deliberately pursue accidents, when they are by their very nature... well... accidental?

Let's look at a famous example.

You may have heard the story of how Post-It notes were invented at 3M. Researcher Spencer Silver was busy working in his lab in 1970, trying to find a strong adhesive. He accidentally came up with a particularly weak adhesive that stuck to objects, but was easy to lift off. There was no obvious use for this super-weak stuff, but he kept hold of it nevertheless.

Four years later, another 3M scientist, Arthur Fry, was singing in his church choir. He used markers to keep his place in the hymn book, but to his annoyance they kept falling out. Thinking back to his colleague Spencer's accidental discovery, he tried using the super-weak adhesive to hold the markers in place. They were easy to lift off, without damaging the pages.

The rest is history.

Building planned serendipity into your workplace strategy

Benefiting from planned serendipity isn't just about creating chance encounters via the way you encourage people to move and flow around your buildings.

You also need the ability to spot when something interesting or novel is happening; even if it isn't the interesting or novel thing you've been searching for. Like Arthur from 3M, you must remain open to the unexpected; and you mustn't dismiss unintended consequences as being of no consequence.

It also demands that you share your findings far and wide, in order that others can help join the dots.

Get your hands on broader datasets

This requires that you combine the skills outlined by Muller and Becker with the

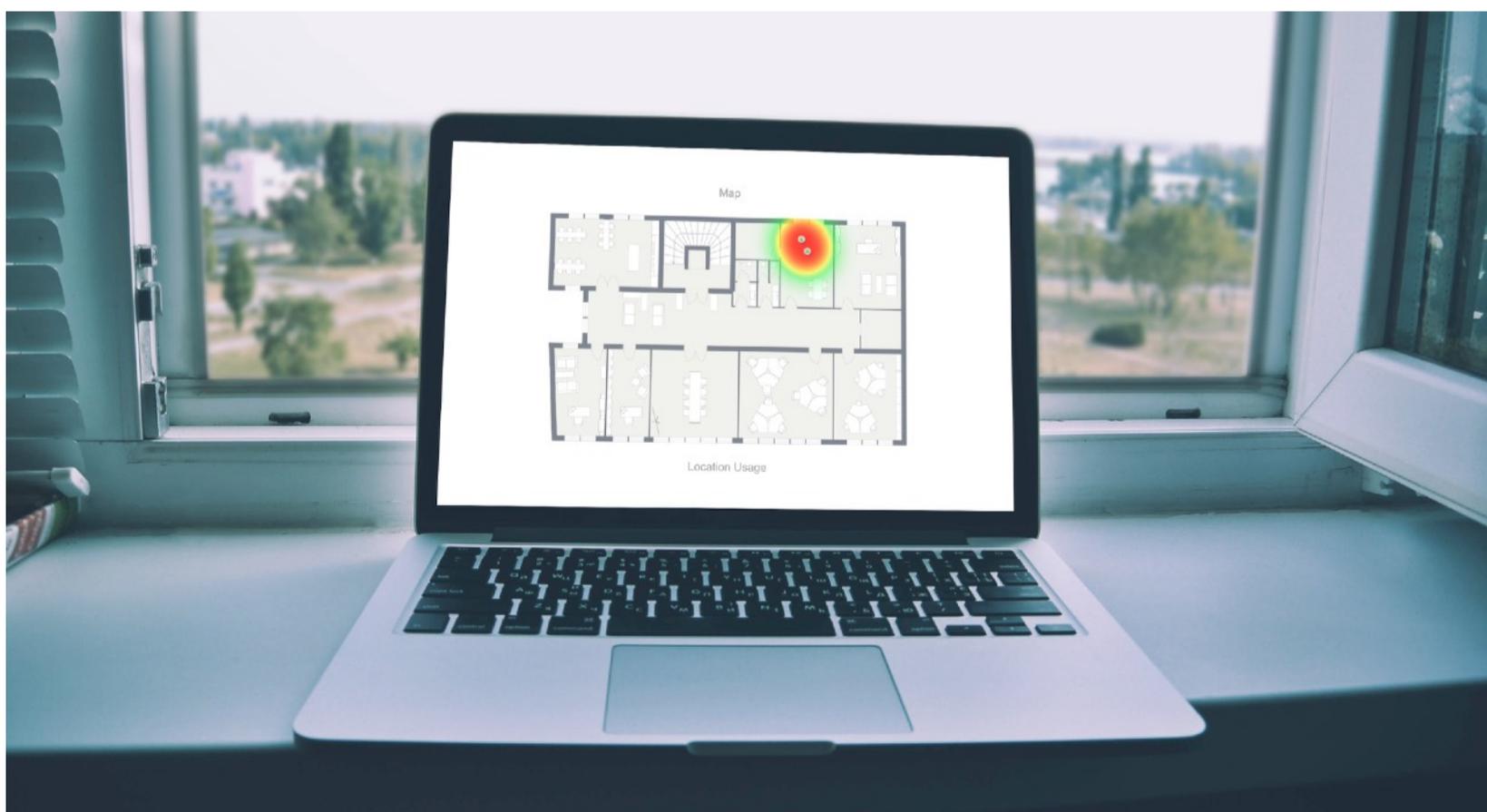
gathering and sharing of data. Productivity data, engagement data, revenue data, room and desk occupancy data, data on who is using which facilities... the list goes on.

In order to obtain the insights you need to innovate and create the workplace of the future, Facilities and HR need access to wider datasets than ever before. That way you can spot correlations that reveal novel ways to boost performance.

It's also helpful if your data is as visual as possible. At Smartway2 we've been working on some exciting new developments to do exactly that.

If you can visualize desk and room usage data on floor plans, for instance, it's easier to spot patterns than if you're staring at bunch of line-items on a standard report.

The search for the ideal workplace of the future is never-ending. We can always find new and better ways to help people do their best work.



Visualizing desk usage data on a floor plan in Smartway2

It's the way you walk

The influence of office walking patterns on collaboration

Steve Jobs had the right idea

A study by the University of Michigan showed that Steve Jobs was on the right track when he positioned the toilets in the atrium.

Bumping into people as you go about your day-to-day work does indeed make it more likely that you'll share ideas and collaborate with colleagues. Researcher Leon Festinger studied this in depth in the 50s.

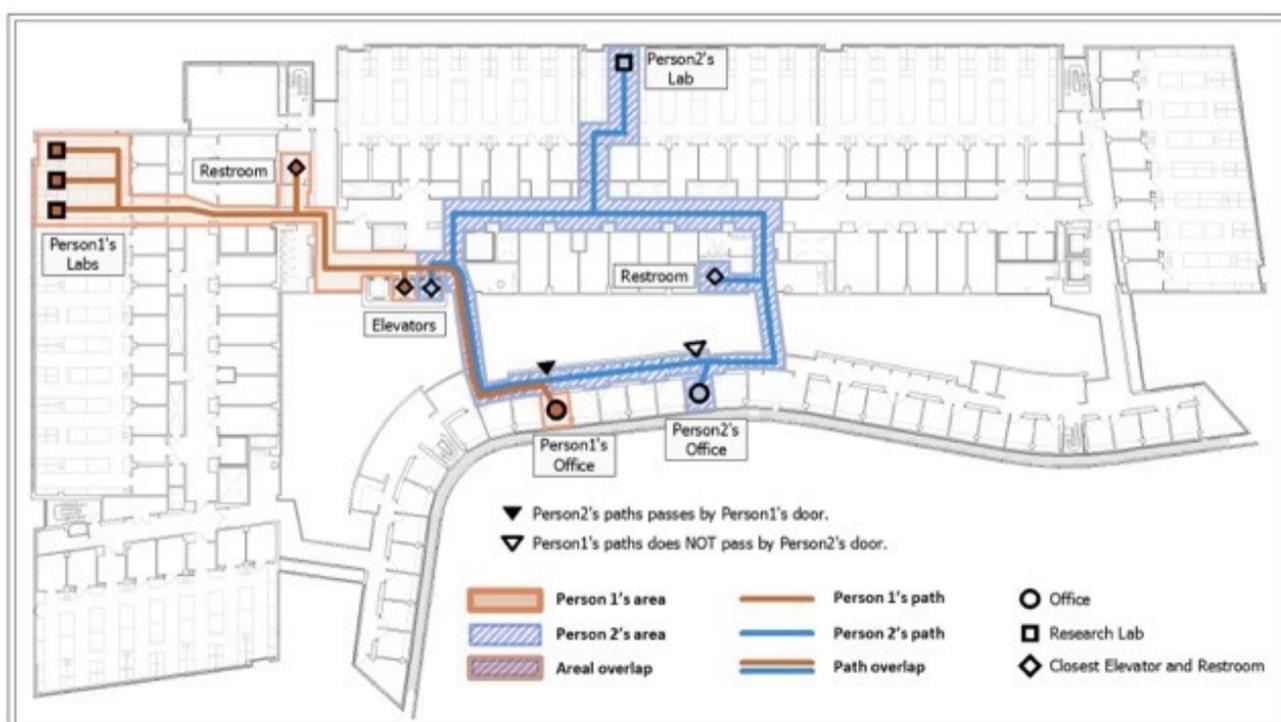
Jason Owen-Smith, associate professor of sociology and organizational studies, took things a step further. He analyzed walking patterns in a scientific research building. As a result, he discovered that the linear *distance* between offices was a less important success factor than the *overlap* in daily walking paths.

Zonal overlap in your workspace

Owen-Smith and his colleagues developed the concept of 'zonal overlap'. They examined how much overlap there is between two people moving between various spaces: the lab, the office, the elevators and the bathroom. They found that for every 100 feet of zonal overlap, collaboration went up by 20% (and scientists' grant funding by 21-30%).

They also discovered that if someone's work path passes by another person's office door, they are more likely to interact and collaborate.

Most of these interactions tended to be face-to-face and happened via impromptu encounters rather than scheduled meetings.



Zonal overlap

Frictionless working

How to boost collaboration by removing barriers that hold us back

This is where another essential component of boosting innovation via 'planned serendipity' is revealed.

It's essential you make it easy for people to grab the right room on the spur of the moment.

This also requires that rooms aren't going to waste due to 'no-shows', as this will stunt your

teams' ability to find the right space when they need it.

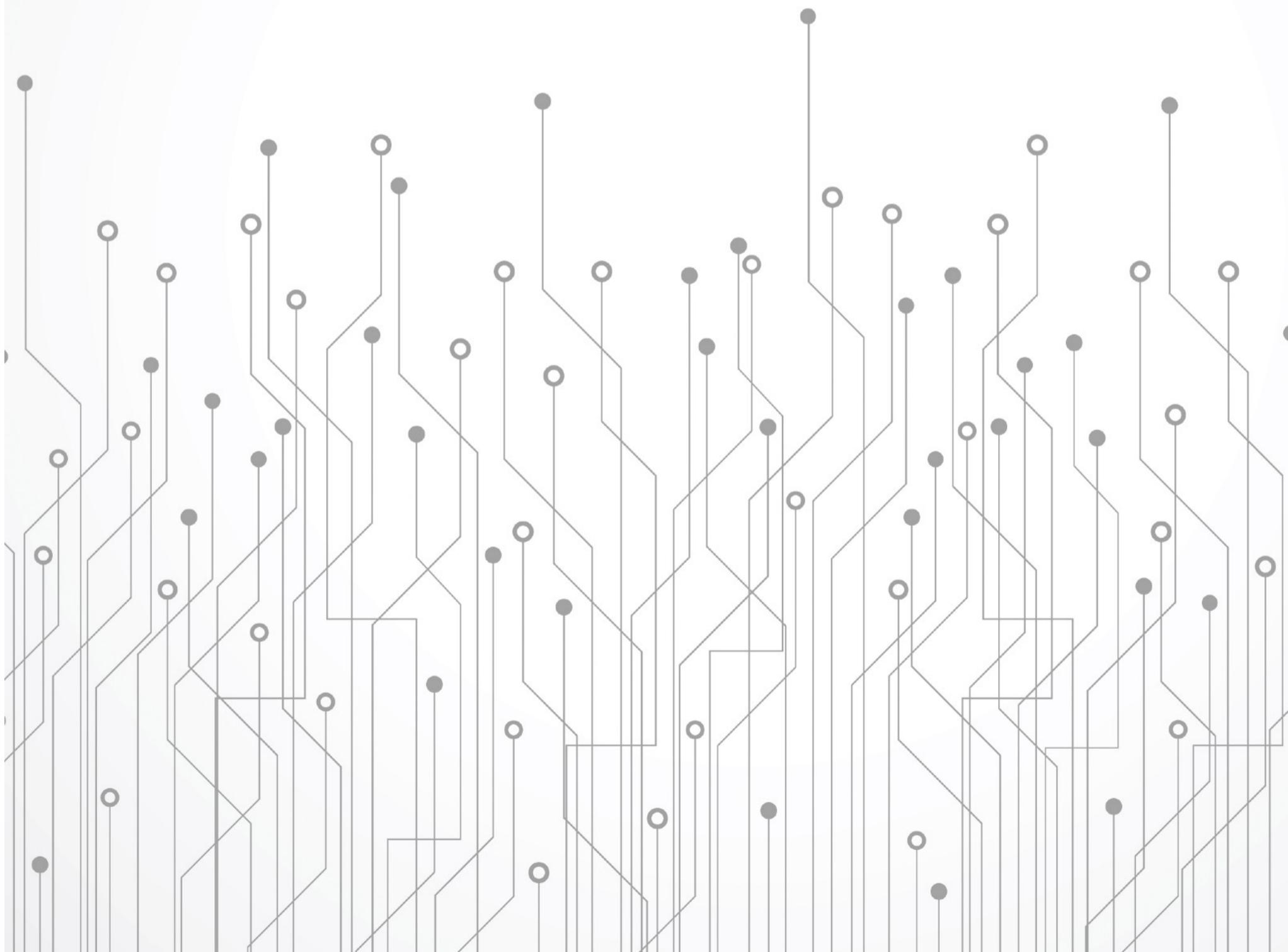
Check out [this short video on Smart Room Recovery](#) to learn more about how to achieve this and prove the ROI of eliminating no-shows.



Chapter Two

Strategic seating

boosts performance



Tweak your seats

Seating arrangements have a dramatic impact on performance

Now let's explore another aspect of strategic seating: the impact of who sits next to whom.

Researchers at Harvard Business School and Cornerstone OnDemand revealed some fascinating stuff when they explored how performance is influenced by whom you sit next to.

They analyzed over 2,000 employees at a large multinational tech company over two years. Through this analysis they were able to identify how the co-location of workers - specifically whom people sit beside - affects their performance.

It turns out the impact on performance is dramatic.

Rearranging seating increased organizational performance by e15% and added \$1 million annual profit to the bottom line

Understanding 'spillover' effects in your office

As part of the study, they defined a metric called 'spillover', to measure how employees affect one-another, based on their proximity.

These spillover effects kicked in immediately when certain employees were seated close-by and vanished within two months of them being moved apart.

The researchers concluded that this ruled out peer-to-peer learning as the source of performance improvement. Rather they put the transformation down to inspiration and peer pressure.

We'll come back to this point later, as we have more stories to share on how strategic seating can indeed impact peer-to-peer learning.

Measuring performance to inform strategic seating

During the study, performance was measured across three dimensions:

- **Productivity** - the time taken to complete a task
- **Effectiveness** - the number of times work needs to be escalated to another person to solve
- **Quality** - the satisfaction levels of the task's recipient

Using these measures, they identified three distinct types of people:

- **Productive workers** - high productivity, low quality. These people were 38% faster than your average worker and 28% less likely to escalate a task to someone else; but the quality of their work was 14% lower than average.

- **Quality workers** - low productivity, high quality. These people were 33% slower than your average worker and 17% more likely to escalate a task to someone else; but the quality of their work was 7% higher than average.
- **Generalists** - average across both dimensions

The impact of strategic seating

When the researchers started to experiment with seating different types of worker together, they saw a significant shift in results with one particular configuration:

When Productive workers sit with Quality workers and Generalists are located separately, organizational performance shot up by 15%.

It turns out that if you're particularly strong in one dimension, whether productivity or quality, your area of strength isn't really impacted by whom you're sitting next to. What *is* impacted is your area of weakness.



Complimentary skillsets spill over

In other words, spillover strongly improves our areas of weakness when we sit with someone who is strong in that dimension. The conclusion is clear: pairing people with complimentary strengths and weaknesses significantly improves performance.

The vast majority of organizations are radically underestimating the importance of seating arrangements.

What's more, it's an extremely low cost way of adding serious value to the bottom line.

Using strategic seating to combat negatives

It would be remiss not to mention the fact that spillover can have a negative impact too, in certain situations.

Namely, if someone is considered a 'toxic' worker, due to misconduct or unethical behaviours, their negative performance spills over to the people they sit next to.

In fact the study revealed that your chances of being terminated for toxicity increase by over 150% when you're placed next to a toxic colleague; or 27% when adjusted for other factors, like perception of the environment, trust in your manager etc.

This suggests that employee engagement surveys can play an important role in informing strategic seating decisions. If your surveys reveal that a particular team has issues with their work environment and their manager, this insight can serve as an early warning sign and be used to help prevent toxicity spreading.

On the plus side, these negative effects disappear after one month if seating arrangements are adjusted appropriately.

Boosting innovation

Strategic seating increases learning & exploration

Now let's look at some other fascinating tales of innovation, spurred by smart spatial design.

The study we were just discussing claimed that performance improvements via overspill were due to the inspiration and peer pressure that you feel when you're sitting next to someone who is particularly strong in your area of weakness.

Another award-winning paper by Sunkee Lee, assistant professor of organizational theory and strategy at the Tepper School of Business, revealed something else.

Lee's research examined an e-commerce company in South Korea. They changed the seating arrangements of 60 people working in sales, whose roles involved making daily 'exploration' decisions.

Defining 'exploration' as a route to innovation and high performance

At the beginning of this paper we mentioned that exploration activities involve things like

search, risk taking and experimentation. Let's expand on this a little.

Scientists define individual-level exploration as activities relating to *the creation of new knowledge*. That's why exploration is an essential ingredient for creating a learning organization; and for boosting innovation and high performance.

For example if you're engaging in projects with new clients, or projects involving new services - or indeed any project that demands you learn new skills or acquire new knowledge - you're in 'exploration' mode. Likewise if you're searching for, implementing, or marketing new ideas.

One point to note is that *individual-level* exploration differs from the creation of new knowledge in *collaborative* teams. In teams, it isn't necessary for everyone to learn all the skills and acquire all the knowledge of all their collaborators, as long as they can do their bit. When it comes to individual-level exploration, on the other hand, you alone are responsible for acquiring any knowledge you lack.

'Exploration' is tricky, but it can be learned

Scientists sometimes argue about whether people can truly learn how to improve their exploration levels. Some believe most people have a natural aptitude for either exploration or exploitation, claiming it's unlikely you'll be strong in both areas. Meanwhile, others believe you can learn to explore, particularly through peer-to-peer learning.

Adopting a growth mindset

On balance, the general school of thought is moving steadily towards the theory that exploration can indeed be learned. This is supported by a great deal of research on having a growth mindset, which we touch on in [this article on Transformational Facilities Management](#).

The trouble is, the knowledge and skills needed for exploration are difficult to document and

articulate. Explorers tend to have 'know-how' that they've developed through experience.

The impact of proximity

Seating arrangements dictate how much people communicate with one-another. If you sit close to someone, naturally you'll communicate with them more. Not only does the frequency of communication increase, but so does the quality.

'Within a 25 meter range, the probability of communication between two individuals will exponentially increase, the closer the two individuals' workspaces are located'

- Allen and Fustfield (1975)

You're also more likely to develop friendships with people you sit close to. You form a sense of belonging and shared identity; and it's likely you'll be more supportive of their ideas.



For instance a 2015 study documented that members of the US Senate who sit in close proximity are more likely to support one another's legislation, regardless of their party affiliation.

This kind of peer-to-peer, proximity-enabled trust has been proven to influence our rate of learning.

Get it wrong, however, and your seating arrangements can have the opposite effect. Inability to concentrate, distractions, reduced motivation, the sense of being 'watched' (lack of privacy) and an erosion of employee satisfaction have all been linked to close proximity in the workplace.

Then there's the risk of 'group think' hampering innovation and creativity, if specific groups of people become too entrenched and insular.

Back to the Korean e-commerce company...

To help you work out how to use strategic seating to boost peer-to-peer learning and innovation in your organization, let's dig into Lee's study on the e-commerce company.

Their job was all about selling 'flash deals' through their online platform. Sales team members were responsible for sourcing deals in their particular category (fashion, toys, baby, electronics etc) from external suppliers.

This meant they had to identify suppliers, negotiate deals with them and get creative with their marketing efforts, by coming up with compelling descriptions, pictures and videos of the products.

People in the sales team used both exploitation and exploration:

- **Exploitation:** They exploited deals by selling products they've sourced in the past (using and refining established knowledge)
- **Exploration:** They explored new deals by sourcing novel products they haven't sold before (acquiring and creating new knowledge)

Mixing up the seating arrangements

The e-commerce company had grown quickly, so they decided to relocate their headquarters.

This is what prompted them to rearrange seating.

In the old HQ, sales team members entered the building through a common entrance, then made their way to their workspace on either the left or right side of the building, depending on which category team they were on. There were six teams on each side and very little communication between them.

When everyone moved into the new HQ, some people who'd be on the left side of the old building were mixed up with others who'd be on the right side... all of them now sitting in the same workspace.

In other words, colleagues were suddenly sitting with people they didn't know.

Meanwhile, a smaller group who'd all been working together on the right side of the old building were moved to a separate space. These people were already familiar with one-another.

At the time of the move, there was no particular reason for these groupings. The seating plan wasn't strategic at all. Rather it was just the

result of allocating a certain number of people to each area because there happened to be available space.

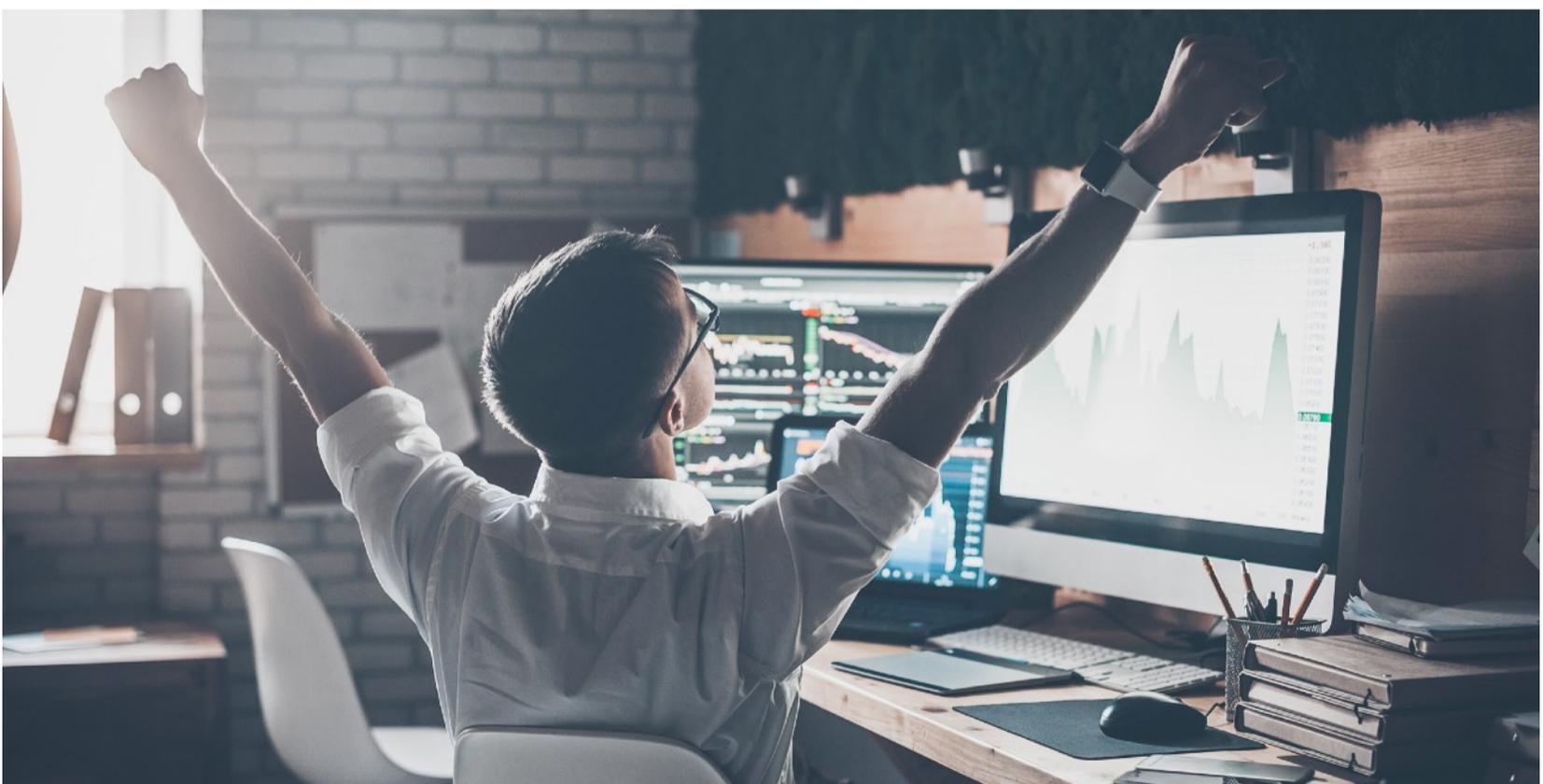
The new configuration created a 'natural experiment'. In one group there were unfamiliar colleagues who didn't know each other and in the other group were colleagues who'd sat together before.

How did seating arrangements impact performance?

Lee examined 38,435 deals performed by 60 team members over 200 days, spanning before and after the move.

Before the workspace reconfiguration, average daily exploration levels were pretty similar across the two groups of people. But after the move, results started to diverge, dramatically.

People who were sitting next to the same old faces began to engage in less exploration behaviour, while *those sitting next to new faces sourced 25% more deals* from new suppliers.



What's more, the *daily revenue generated by each team member in the high performing group went up by an average of 40%*, equating to a whopping \$16,510 a day.

The massive hike in performance was most dramatic of all in people with above median experience, who had no pre-existing social connections to anyone in their new workspace.

Strategic seating enhances individual creativity

Lee attributed the impressive results not to an increase in collaboration, but to an increase in exploration behaviour at an individual level.

These people were getting creative, because they were learning new things from new colleagues. Being surrounded by unfamiliar team members meant they were overhearing new conversations and getting inspired in new ways.

Combining their existing experience with new knowledge around them, these team members came up with all kinds of novel product ideas. A rice cooker that you can plug into your car. Earmuffs with built-in Bluetooth. A baby potty that plays tunes.

Not only were they exploring new ideas and building new supplier relationships - they also



started seeing better results from their exploitation activities. By exchanging knowledge with their new peers, they adjusted their marketing messages, product descriptions and photos; and tried different advertising channels. Applying these learnings enabled them to do a better job of selling existing products they were already familiar with, as well as breaking entirely new ground.

The importance of organizational experience

Just because you're exposed to new knowledge, doesn't automatically mean you'll soak it up and start engaging your explorer's mind to approach problems in new, creative ways.

If you're unable to recognize and assimilate the new information - or if you're unable to apply it in your role - neither you nor your organization will realize the benefits.

That's where experience comes into play. People who've acquired more experience are generally better able to recognize, assimilate and apply new information. They've gone through many successes and failures.

Having a solid base of experience enables you to combine old and new knowledge in useful ways, making exploration easier.

Saying that, some argue that being an 'old hand' leads to inertia and stunts your ability to absorb new information and apply new learnings. More experienced people may have a tendency to tread well worn paths.

Experience vs enthusiasm

Likewise you could argue that less experienced people may be more motivated to learn.

However, as Lee points out in his paper, if you don't have a sufficient understanding of how the skills and knowledge of others can be applied, due to lack of experience, your ability to learn and engage in exploration will be limited.

That's why experienced people tend to see particularly high performance gains when they're seated next to unfamiliar faces whom they can learn from.

Lee's study did, in fact, reveal that an individual's level of experience could have either a positive or negative impact, depending on whether they were placed with new peers that could teach

them new things. If they were with the same old colleagues, they were more likely to exhibit inertia and fail to think outside the box. However, if they were in a novel situation that allowed greater learning opportunities, their experience had a positive impact on performance overall.

The takeaway is this: mix it up, by placing more experienced people alongside new faces who are less experienced but keen to learn.

Also, assume nothing: experiment, test, learn and adapt. Such is the way of agile. [Read more](#)

[about taking an agile approach to facilities management.](#)

The importance of social ties

Say you have two teams, John's team and Amy's team.

These two teams work in separate workspaces and they don't know one-another, so there's no cross-pollination between them.

At first, John learns a lot from the others in his team, because they all sit together. Likewise,



Amy picks up knowledge and skills from her colleagues.

John's learning and Amy's learning develop in different directions, because each of their teams inevitably contains a unique mix of knowledge and skills.

However, let's assume John and Amy become friends. This means they have the opportunity to share knowledge and skills, despite the fact they're not sitting together. They have drinks after work and they often sit together at lunch, sharing ideas and catching up. They even pass on knowledge they've absorbed from their respective team members (albeit that this is trickier).

All of these interactions lead to plenty of exposure to the knowledge and skills of others,

that facilitates plenty of learning and the potential for innovation.

However, if you were to later reshuffle the seating arrangements and put John's team and Amy's team in the same workspace, the result might not be so great. They wouldn't have so much to learn from one-another, because knowledge and skills have already been transferred from those peers. Nobody would find this information novel.

Another takeaway: consider moving people around so they sit with unfamiliar colleagues. Give them enough time to absorb knowledge and skills from one-another, then switch things up to ensure they don't stagnate.

If you enable this to happen by creating an agile workplace that encourages activity based working, all the better.



Check out [this article on Agile Working](#), including in-depth case study on 'new ways of working' and activity based working (ABW).

Watch out for high performers

Lee's study confirmed what many other studies have also suggested: the better an individual is performing relative to their peers, the less exploration they will engage in.

That's why it's important to keep an eye on gaps in performance across a co-located team. Try to switch things around to make sure high performers remain constantly challenged and surrounded by those who won't inadvertently encourage them to drop their game.

Building trust in your teams

Although much of this research points towards a fluid approach to seating that encourages people to move around, it's worth mentioning

the value of building friendships and trust in teams.

In situations where innovation and creativity are important, it's clear that there's evidence to suggest your strategic seating plan should ensure people sit next to those with fresh knowledge they can absorb. In other words, this works best when people aren't seated with those they have existing close ties with.

That said, there is also evidence to suggest that having friends at work increases engagement and creates trust that can in turn benefit innovation and knowledge-sharing.

The future of work is full of ambiguities!

The upshot is that it's important to strike a balance. We need to keep things fresh and provide opportunities to sit with new people... while giving people the time, space and flexibility they need to build close relationships at work... while ensuring learning doesn't



stagnate. The only reliable way to find this balance in your organization is to try things out, measure the results and keep on learning.

Innovation demands a long-term view

When organizations are focused on driving short-term results, people inevitably turn to exploitation behaviours. Using the e-commerce company as an example, it's clearly easier and faster to tweak product descriptions and advertizing channels for existing products than it is to generate novel product ideas and build relationships with new suppliers.

Increasing exploration takes more time than increasing exploitation. The search for fresh approaches - the pursuit of innovation - is not a quick fix. Often it takes a long time to kick in. What's more, the effects are diffuse rather than direct; and the outcomes are less predictable.

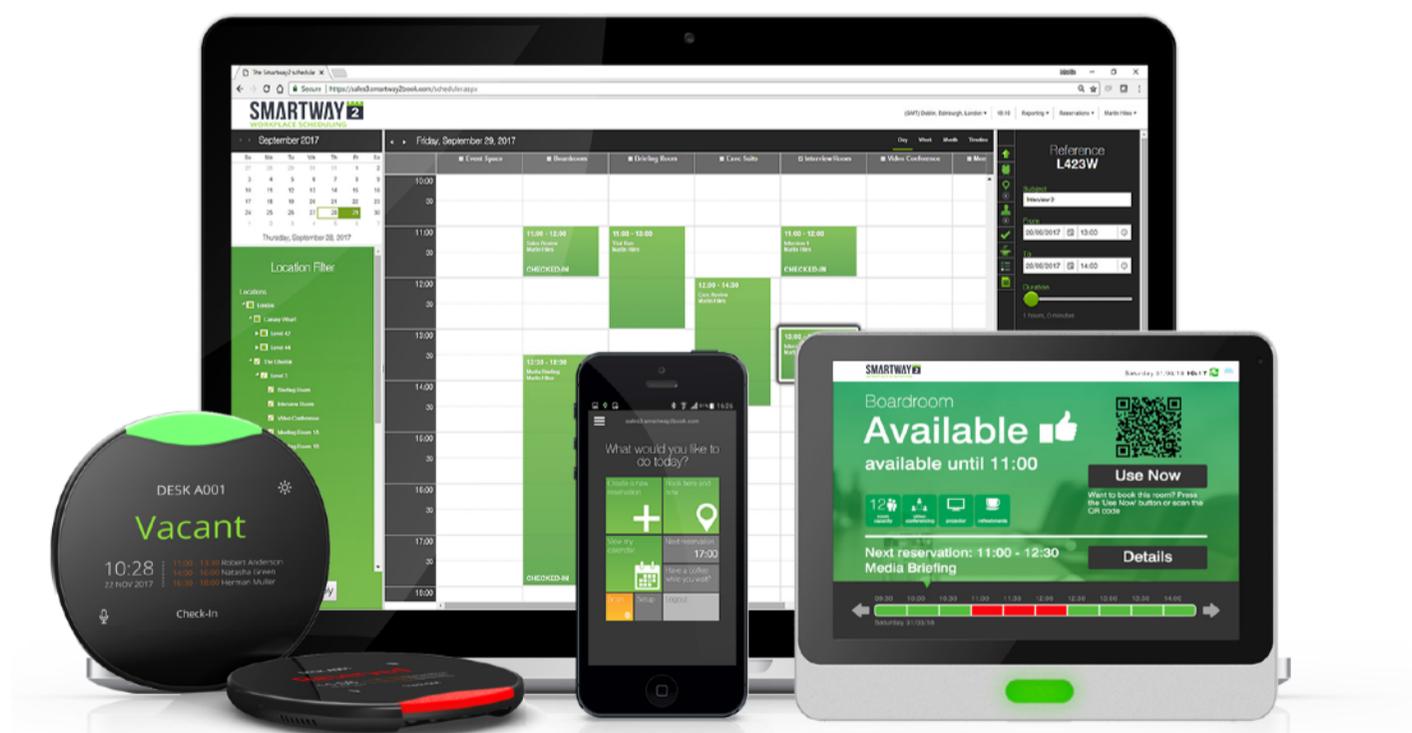
Inevitably, innovation brings greater risk of failure. We need to broaden our horizons and stick with it in order to realize the full benefits.

Design a desk booking experience that supports strategic seating

Strategic seating is extremely complex without the right tools to provide the data and employee experience that you're after.

In order to change and measure where people sit on an ongoing basis, it's essential to use a facilities booking system that supports your efforts.

At Smartway2 we believe the tools you use should enable you to change the way things get done. In other words, your tools should enable you to tweak and tune the employee experience. And this should happen 'naturally' and effortlessly, simply by using the system.



Some of the ways you can book desks, meeting room and other facilities in Smartway2: mobile app, Outlook, meeting room display and desk puck.

For example, you might want to implement a '3 day rule' to improve collaboration and learning. This means that people can't book the same desk for more than 3 days in a row. That way they avoid slipping back into the same old patterns of sitting with familiar colleagues from their department, in silos, instead of building new relationships and working with a more diverse selection of people.

As we cover in [this article on Transformational Facilities Management](#), one way to do this is simply to tell people 'you must obey the 3 day rule', hand them policies and police their behaviours to make sure they comply.

But there's a load of evidence to support that dictating rules in that way makes people think negatively not only about the rule itself, but about the organization overall.

Instead, make sure your desk-booking tool can be easily configured to support the rules you want to implement. In other words, your tool should lend itself to experience design.

This level of flexibility in experience design is something we've focused on heavily at Smartway2. We don't believe that configuring these 'rules' should require a troop of consultants or custom coding. That's just too slow (and expensive). Rather, with a few clicks, you should be able to 'nudge' the correct behaviours. If someone tries to book a desk on day 4, it simply shows as unavailable. What's more, you can customize all the notifications (whether email, or mobile), to suit your brand voice.

Where to begin

So, we've covered a lot of ground in relation to strategic seating. The question is, where do you begin?

We're firm believers in taking a lean, agile approach to change. So it's time to don your scientist-meets-workplace-psychologist-meets-entrepreneur hat. That way, you can come up with experiments to test your

assumptions (hypotheses). Then you can use what you learn to inform your next move, scaling what works.

The more deeply you explore the challenges in your workplace and the more you can frame these challenges in an inspiring, novel way, the more likely you are to come up with groundbreaking creative ideas.

To learn more about this and get ideas on how to approach your strategic seating masterplans, check out [this article on how to use Agile Project Management & Design Thinking in FM](#).

You might also like...

If you enjoyed this article, you may also be interested in some other free resources:

- [Your Definitive Guide to the Future of Work](#)
- [Your Definitive Guide to Agile Working](#)
- [How to Create an Effective Workplace Strategy](#)
- [Top 10 Workplace Trends Impacting HR & Facilities](#)

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.

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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