



Creating a culture-driven workplace

Workplace UX: Empathy, Experience and Engagement

Businesses should recognize that their workplace is a tool to engage their employees and nurture the growth of their culture. The following summary addresses the relationship between space and culture in the context of the workplace.

What is the nature of the two conceptual terms—*space* and *culture*—that are invoked constantly? How do they interact and impact one another? These are some of the many questions that Melissa Marsh engaged with during “Workplace UX: Empathy, Experience and Engagement,” about [the relationship](#) between space and culture in the context of the workplace. Marsh emphasized that workspaces are an incredible opportunity and tool for companies to truly engage with their employees.

“Culture is,” according to Marsh, “this intersection of those things that you believe and those little things that you do as a result of what you believe.” In this vein, our culture is then expressed through what she calls the microtransactions, interactions and things that we do as an organization that are evidence of our collective values. The workplace is not what determines an organization’s culture, but rather it provides the nutrients for a culture to grow and evolve on its own. Space is an essential material that each organization has available to support a culture as it matures - organically. In this sense, Marsh explains, “architecture is much more than just a container for culture,” it is a key enabler of it. This realization has motivated a shift in the way that the relationship between workplace and work culture is imagined. In the past, the workplace was designed for machines and equipment like servers, now we see an interest in really designing the workplace for its users, and the kinds of transactions and interactions within the community that will go on in those environments. Design is both free to and demanded to contribute to much more than function.

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With advancements in smart mobile phone technology, Marsh explains, we now have a capacity to get detailed snapshots of an organization's culture. We have at our disposal this wealth of "exhaust data" produced by our digital transactions from which we can learn from the choices that occupants make while in their work environment. "So just like digital UX designers can move a shopping cart around so that it gets clicked on the most," Marsh explains, "now we as architects can move a cafe part around so that people are the most connected...." The workplace design process should incorporate this valuable feedback mechanism.

“Architecture is much more than just a container for culture...”

During her presentation, Marsh urged the audience to reconceptualize workplace as a tool to help employees feel more engaged in their work environment, by incorporating the users of a space into the evolution and design of the space itself. The contrary is much to frequent, simply deploying a work environment onto workers is a sign that companies are disengaged with their workers. This is where PLASTARC steps in, a firm that blends building science, people science and social science to help organizations invest in the spaces that improve user experience and organizational performance. The variety of tools that PLASTARC uses to inform their clients includes including location analysis, workplace observations, occupant surveys, executive and user interviews and workshops. Investing in your space and getting it right matters because the people that move through it matter.

The evening's event, [Creating a Culture-driven Workplace](#), was hosted by [CultureIQ](#) and [LivePerson](#), businesses that are working to respectively enhance the way that organizations connect internally with coworkers and externally with customers. Furthermore, they distinguish themselves by hosting and organizing events that facilitate cross-industry relationships and conversations about the topics that are important to their organizations cultures. In addition to Marsh, [Elliot Bell](#) (Director of Brand strategy & Community, [The Muse](#)) and [Kristy Sundjaja](#) (Chief of Staff & the Global Head of People, LivePerson) gave talks about cultivating and communicating company cultures.

*While earning his degree in Political Science and Philosophy, Jonah developed an interest in using **social research** and **design-thinking** as tools to address racial, economic, social and environmental injustices. Passionate about the intersection of research, design, and public policy, he now applies his interest in spatial design and policy, along with his observational and analytical skills, to the study of the workplace as a social environment.*

*At **PLASTARC**, we find ourselves at the intersection of people analytics and building design, supporting clients who are thinking differently about the future of work and place. With a multidisciplinary team of architects, social researchers, an environmental psychologist and a data visualizer, we pretty much have the bases covered for innovative thinking.*



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Jonah Bleckner
Sociospatial Analyst

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