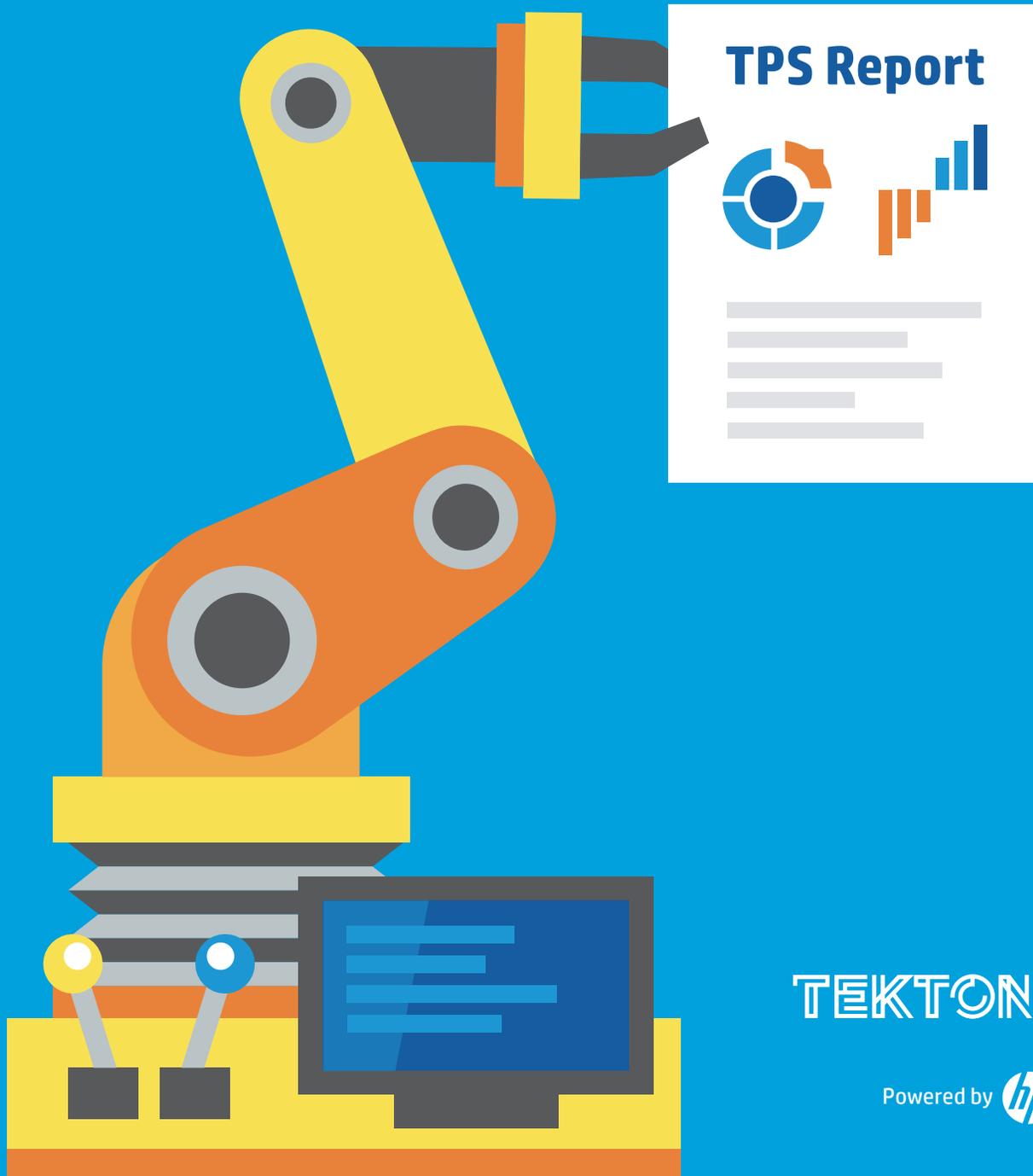


Welcome the machines:

10 ways tech and humans will shape the future of work



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What does the future look like?



There is no shortage of studies and predictions out there claiming to know the answers. While predictions about future trends may seem like throwing salt in the wind, the truth is that ten years isn't that far away. There are observable indicators happening now that can give us a foundation from which we can make reasonable extrapolations, or at least inspiring conversation-starters, about what is to come. As we look to the future of the workplace, here are ten office trends we expect to see in the next ten years:

1. Mobile and wearable technology

As [activity-based working](#) takes hold, we are moving to the individual employee that dictates what, where, and how they use technology, rather than the technology dictating where and how the individual works. This will go beyond the Fitbit, with new types of devices assisting in measurements that aid and improve worker productivity.

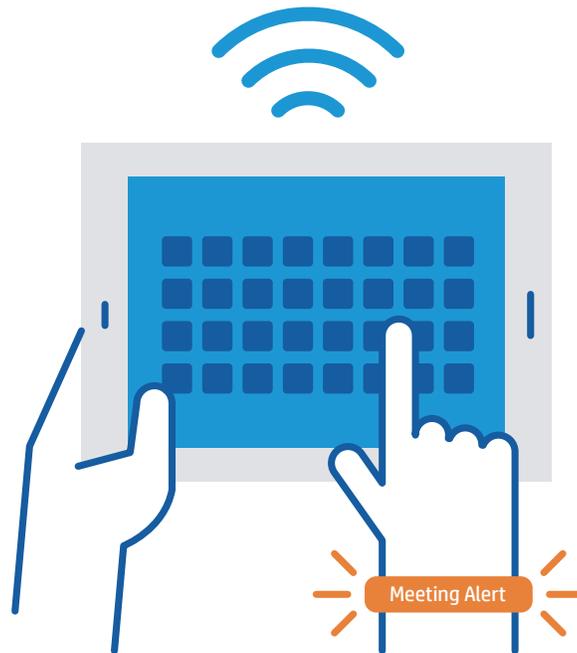
[The Workforce Institute at Kronos Incorporated](#) survey conducted by Harris Poll revealed that 73 percent of online adults believe there is at least one potential workplace benefit of wearable technology. Lewis Beck, Workplace Consulting Lead at CBRE and subject matter expert for the workplace 2040 report, says, "Wearables are one of the things that I think will be quite interesting. People are already using the data they collect to measure their own health. The rub is giving employers access to what is essentially private health information. It's about trust and whether employees feel comfortable providing information to their employer at all."

Architects, designers, and workplace experts are beginning to study the effects of these wearables on the physical workplace. They predict that just as BYOD (bring your own device) was a major shift in technology for managers of the workplace, [BYOW \(bring your own wearable\)](#) will have a similar impact.

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- Workforce Institute at Kronos Incorporated report



2. Freelance, remote workers, and more flexible work options

As technology enables workers to work where and how they choose, knowledge workers will decide where and how they work—and workplace culture will finally catch up. The [Intuit 2020 report](#) predicts that by 2020, 40 percent of the workforce will be freelance or independent workers. Individuals will drive this with increasing numbers going to a freelance or flexible work arrangement.

Rex Miller, futurist and author of *Change Your Space, Change Your Culture*, says, “The contingent workforce raises a lot of new questions for companies: If I can work anyplace, why come in to work? How do you create cohesive, engaged, aligned cultures if such a large percentage of your workforce isn’t employed by your company?” Freelancers will force a shift from owning workers’ time to owning the result.

According to [new insights from Kelly Services](#), “The best talent is looking for greater control and ownership over work-life design, and seeking out the organizations that will partner with them to achieve this. For the companies that do, engagement will rise in the form of loyalty, discretionary effort, and commitment. But organizations that don’t recalibrate their internal policies risk the high turnover of top, critical engaged workers—which could narrow the range of talent they can attract—and compromise business performance.”

3. Design for wellness and integrated daily activity

While today’s workplaces still are designed largely around sitting and static postures, workplaces of the future will be designed for a wide variety of postures and [work locations](#). Organizations like [Delos](#), which is creating the world’s first building standard focused exclusively on human health and wellness, will push these concepts forward in the next decade with new standards and measured return on investments (ROI).

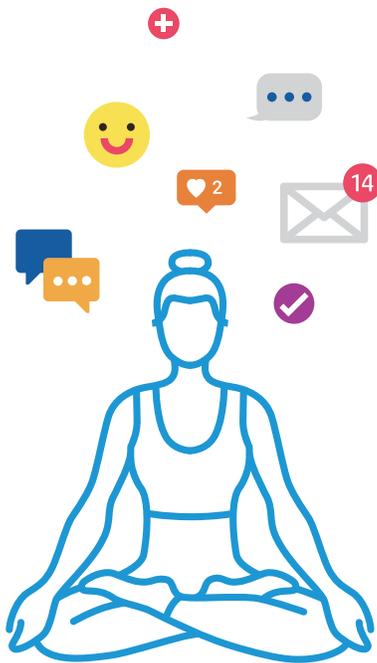
Kate Lister, president of Global Workplace Analytics says, “As a society, we finally are realizing it is about people. Without work practices, policies, and places that maximize the effectiveness of the ‘whole person’ who comes to work, you leave a lot on the table.” Technology will enable workplace designs that will encourage employees to work standing, meet leaning, and brainstorm while walking. We will see the evolution of wellness as not just nice to have, but as an expectation from employees.

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- Lewis Beck, Workplace Consulting Lead, CBRE



4. Mindfulness areas and healthy barriers

As the pace of life continues to increase and technology continues to invade every area of our life with ever-more targeted messaging, indoor and outdoor mindfulness areas will be created as a place to escape from it all and simply think. But there will also be a cultural-technological element, with more companies establishing policies to create healthy barriers.

Beck says, “We are starting to see a trend in Europe where companies like VW have an e-mail block at 6 p.m. and they don’t come back on until the morning. It’s sending a message, more than anything else, that we don’t expect our employees to be switched on 24 hours of the day. In Sweden, the four-day work week just passed legislation. We are beginning to recognize that you actually become less productive the more you work. Balance can increase productivity rather than reduce it.” Culturally, we will start to value sleep a bit more, recognizing that we are healthier, happier, and more productive when we have adequate sleep.

5. Technology-enabled work-life integration and the office

Hard-to-remember passwords will soon become obsolete. [Biometric sensors](#) and two-factor authentication are taking stride due to [worldwide user interest](#). As employers increasingly compete for talent and as new generations demand better balance between work and home, it will become commonplace for employers to provide services to reduce tasks needed in off-hours.

Beck says, “At high-end employers, it’s already becoming a highly competitive environment. One company just piloted a program with a touch screen where groceries can be ordered at the beginning of the day and picked up at the end of the day. These employers are looking to create a customized universe around their employees through personalization of services.”

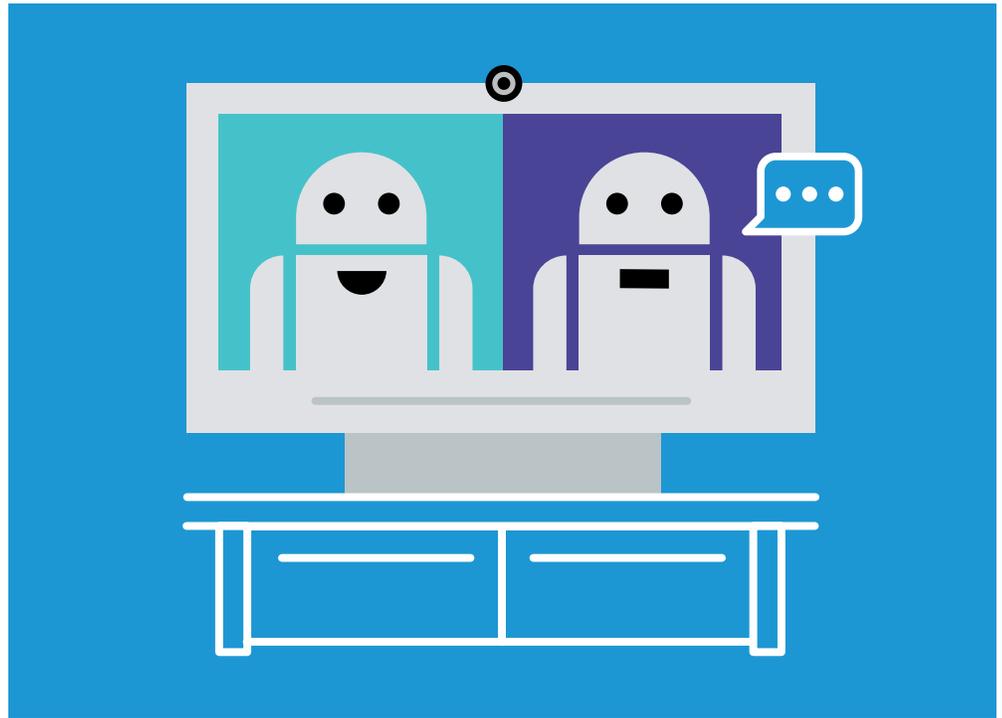
6. Virtual reality and immersive collaboration

Remote collaboration today still has not caught up with face-to-face discussions. As technology improves, immersive collaboration via [virtual reality](#) and gaming goggles will enable participants at different locations to feel as if they are in the same room.

Beck says, “Face-to-face communication always will be the mainstay of the way we do business, but certainly over the next ten years and probably even longer. We are seeing much more space being shifted to collaborative environments. We will see that shift go even further with less tasks being done at the desk and more tasks done collaboratively. Workplaces and the technology surrounding them will focus on innovation, creativity, and engagement—all the stuff humans can do that robots can’t.”

As virtual reality becomes more cost effective and reliable, it will begin to replace video conferencing—but even with this, physical office space will not go away. If anything, it will become more important as a place for building community.

“Each of these trends is interesting in and of itself when isolated,” Miller says. “But it will get really interesting to see what happens when they begin connecting.”



7. Robotics, automation, and the human worker

While [artificial intelligence](#) can seem alarming, as writer James Dellow puts it, it could potentially be a relief from “soul-destroying business processes and activities that waste human potential and creativity.” Digital-based automation will likely bring disruptive change, but there’s hope that it will also play a role in re-humanizing the workplace.

It is likely that machines will augment rather than replace the work of humans. Lister shared an example she recently saw of [3D printed](#) butterfly drones, the full potential of which is still being explored. She added, “I also have seen robots sent to conferences in place of a person. Right now it still is strange when the thing ‘walks’ up to you but within a few minutes it’s part of the conversation.”

Miller predicts that somewhere around 2040 the line between something that’s human and machine will be blurred. “By this, I mean augmented humanity. We are already seeing experimentation with neurostimulators that take away depression, contacts that enhance vision, and devices that help the military handle pain. In 25 years, that worker may have some augmented stimulation for creativity.” With even elementary schools now teaching robotics, it is likely that there will be giant leaps forward with robotics in the next ten years.

8. Experiential design, workplace as a concierge

Because workers of the future will not be required to go to an office, future designs will need to be magnetic and create a positive experience for guests and workers alike. Cheryl Durst, president and CEO of the International Interior Design Association, says, “We have focused so much in this decade on supporting the work. The next level of technology will support the human being. If you support the human being, the work will get done.”

Physical workspaces will need to offer workers something that they cannot get anywhere else, such as a social community that helps them do their job better—a sense of meaning, a culture of belonging, and a place that is adaptable and helps them be more productive. Along these lines, co-working—the use of a working environment by people who are self-employed or work-ing for different employers—will be an integrated way of working.

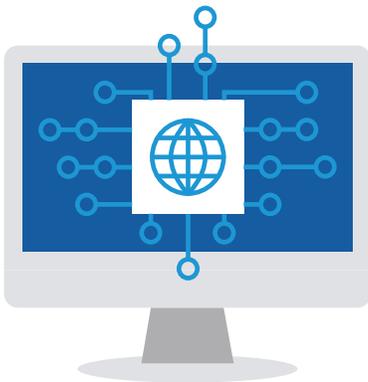
9. Integration of nature and the workplace

This means more than just bringing plants indoors. Spring-boarding off of the health and wellness movement, new products will be introduced that allow for better indoor air quality. New technologies will enable new workspaces to emerge in the outdoors that help manage for breezes, glare, and temperature.

Lister says, “There’s a whole science of the working city and integration of business with the city. How do you make your parks, libraries, and outdoor spaces part of the working environment? Some of it involves technology that we don’t have today: glare-free screens, acoustic privacy outdoors. Those are all things that these technologies will overcome.”

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- Martin Brooker, CEO, Condeco Software



10. Sensors, the Internet of Things (IoT), and the evolution of big data

Research firm Gartner predicts that commercial buildings will have more than [500 million “connected things” during 2016](#). As the Internet of Things evolves and more goods get connected, we will get increasingly better data on what is needed for individuals to function at their maximum productivity levels, and how we can customize physical locations to support that. Martin Brooker, chief operating officer at Condeco Software Inc., a leading provider of workplace technology solutions, says, “At the moment, we are collecting data and reacting to the information provided. In 10 years’ time, it will be a much more predictive situation. The next evolution is understanding what to do with that data.”

Research Program Manager at Haworth and principal author of a recent white paper titled [“Enabling the Organic Workspace: Emerging Technologies that Focus on People, Not Just Space”](#) Mike Bahr says, “Responding to employee workspace needs requires feedback. Without a current integrated feedback capability embedded in the workspace, sensing and adapting to changing employee needs is cumbersome. However, technology is evolving to meet this challenge. Soon we’ll see employees drawn to the office in their search for increased well-being, engagement, and effectiveness. Why? Because their workspace responds to how they work best.” Sensors will become commonplace, ensuring not only that expensive real estate is used to the fullest capacity, but also that the people in those spaces are thriving.

We may not be able to predict the future of work with any amount of certainty. If one thing is certain, it’s that it’s time to prepare for the unexpected.



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