

# Facility Management Trends and Innovations of 2021

How employee experience is driving facility services

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## Introduction

As we move into 2021, organizations are moving into a new digital era. Yes, it's been said many times before: across the line – whether in hospitality, finance or healthcare industries—COVID-19 has fundamentally impacted the way we work and our workplace.

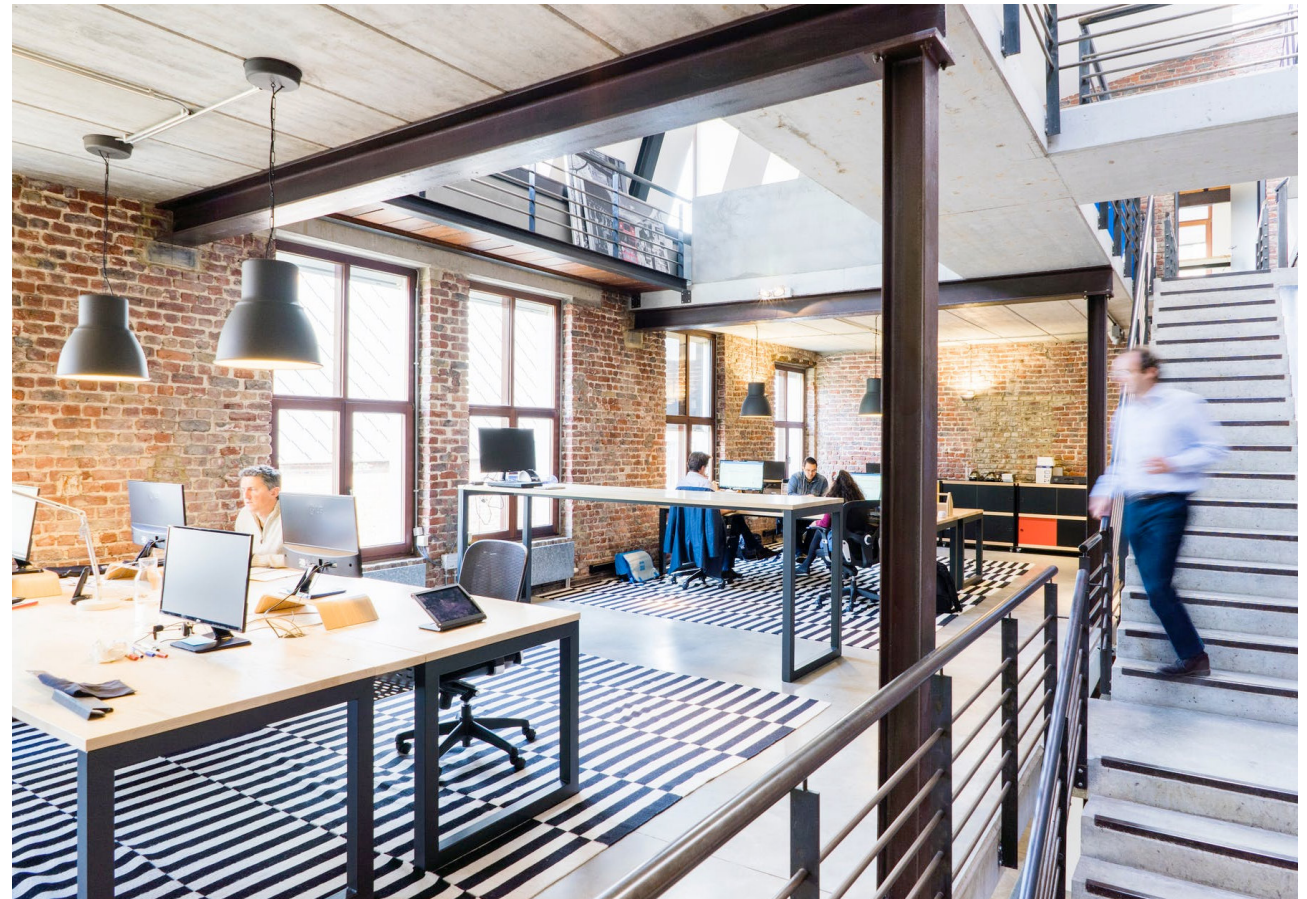
One thing the pandemic has made clearer than ever before, is that people and human interaction are still at the center of all businesses. People need to connect, collaborate and interact with one another. In fact, it has shown that we as a humanity have a versatile and adaptable nature. It's many of the legacy systems that have proven to be less adaptable. Digitized processes are failing to reflect that the employee experience has become paramount in our working day.

# Beyond digitalization

Yes, organizations moved to digital over the last few years. Implemented systems and changes were largely focused on saving on housing costs, boosting productivity and improving employee satisfaction. But digitalization often came second when it came to investment decisions. 'We can do it later' has been an eagerly embraced mantra for many decision makers.

COVID-19 turned the tables. With it, the need for digitalization undoubtedly became the understatement of the year 2020. Now there is no other option than digital. Across the board we have been catapulted into a situation where organizations can be divided into two categories: those that have managed and those who need to manage. Take the hospitality industry where restaurants were forced to go digital almost overnight. Size, amenities and number of tables in a restaurant suddenly became totally irrelevant. Having a streamlined, online take-away ordering system became key to survival. Those that managed are still in business. Those who still needed to manage are no longer in business.

Similarly, as we continue to work from home or slowly



move back to the office environment, relying on what was built for yesterday with local or legacy systems spells disaster. Such systems were built to manage workplace facilities like meeting rooms and events. Yet, now that the workplace has changed radically, facility services have moved beyond the physical office environment. Facility now extends

to employees having full access to facility services in their home setting. It also includes turning the office into a hub for hybrid collaboration, where we can merge virtual and physical environments in spaces in which we work and meet up. Facility must shift fundamentally from 'managing space' to 'ensuring everything is in place for a hybrid, safe way of working.'

# Five trends that will be defining facility services in 2021



## 1 Work is where your home is

For the majority of office workers, the dining room table has become their office. The line between work and home has become thin as thread. For many, a healthy work/life balance is inherently difficult working from home. Not only are we missing the natural breaks chitchat and direct interaction with colleagues bring, we're also forgetting to switch off from work at the end of the day. The inherent risk to employee health—both physical and mental—is huge. The million-dollar question here is: how can you support employees in their day-to-day work needs and create an impactful workplace that keeps everyone happy DIGITALLY?

## 2 Consumerism is driving service standards

Intelligent mobile-first solutions that have impacted our home life are set to impact our work life too. We have become totally used to the fact that the world has entered our homes on our mobile.

Now that we're using immediately accessible services for everything we do at home, we're expecting the same when we interact with the office. A workplace has become a place where employees are onboarded, work, learn, socialize, share ideas and move on. It has matured to an all-embracing experience that is best supported by an omni-channel, digital platform.

Wherever employees choose to work, workplace services should be available to employees in a way that is easiest for them.



# What's missing when working from home

## I'm stuck!

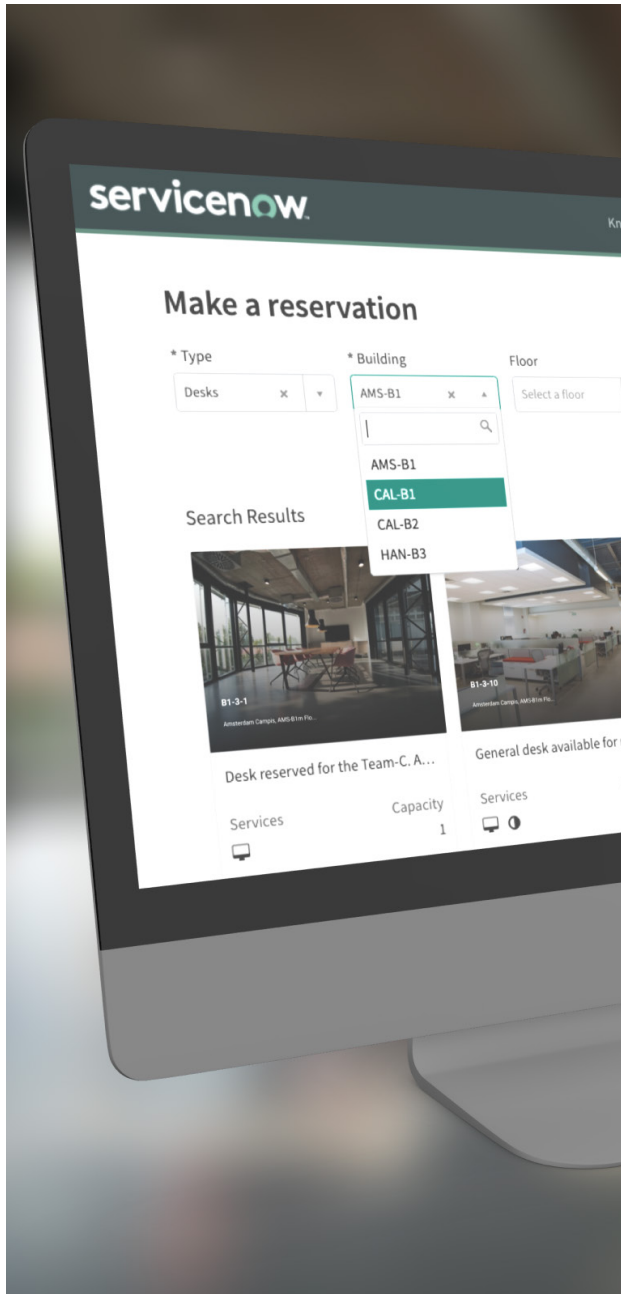
A quick mental and physical break at the coffee machine, informal exchanges with colleagues give you the 'Eureka!' moment and a sense of collaborative spirit and serendipity.

## I need help, now!

A deadline is looming, but you're having some major difficulties accessing certain info. You turn to your colleague who quickly points you in the right direction. Thanks to her proximity you manage to get your work done well in time.

## My back's killing me!

Your colleague sees you're in pain as you get up from behind your desk. He points out the ultra-comfortable chair he ordered through facility that helped him get over his back issues within no time. Sharing is caring.



### 3 Facility management becomes a workplace service

Facility is fast moving way beyond just simply booking a desk or meeting room or reporting a broken projector or a light bulb that needs to be replaced. It's about being able to see whether I can be in the office tomorrow and knowing if my colleague will be there. Can I plan a meeting in a room that allows me to keep the necessary distance or should I plan a digital meeting via Zoom? Office space needs to be redefined to offer the levels of safety required to welcome back the workforce—both in terms of actual space as well as levels of hygiene.

And facility is increasingly about finding answers to workplace related issues. Wherever your workplace is: at home, in the office or on the road. People will be turning to facility to find the services and solutions they need to conduct their daily work.

### 4 Going from reactive to preventive facility management

The working from home imperative has once and for all done away with the myth that distributed working has a negative effect on business performance. With it, the hierarchical curve has been flattened. Importantly, working from home has made the employee experience paramount, in the realization that output can only be boosted if job satisfaction is maximized.

Instead of a transactional management style (you shall do this by that point in time) organizations will have to move to a transformational style (what is it that you need to be able to carry out your work to your best ability?).

**Reactive**

**Responsive**

**Preventive**

next page



# Reactive vs. Responsive vs. Preventive

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**Who hasn't been there?  
Your laptop gives you a black  
screen of death. What to do?**

Here's 3 experiences from people we spoke to how they managed to get back to work. To our mind, they perfectly reflect the 3 modes in which organizations choose to operate.

## Reactive

'I phoned IT and they asked me to drop by the office and hand in my laptop so they could check it. Unfortunately, they didn't have a replacement. They called the next day to say they'd fixed things and I could come and pick up my laptop. There was little else for me to do than to do a one-and-a-half-day's-worth of Netflix binging.'



## Responsive

'I reported the issue online and the IT people reacted immediately. They were able to fix things the same day. Of course, it caused some delay in my work, but I was really glad with the quick response and turn-around time.'



## Preventive

'The moment I reported my laptop was down, I was assigned a new one completely in line with my requirements. Apparently, their systems predict how many spares are needed. It was a great experience and it gives me the reassuring feeling that facility is completely in sync with my needs.'



Ironically, before the pandemic, companies worried that employees allowed to work from home would be wasting time watching Netflix. Now the name of the game has changed and employees are forced to sit on the bench (watching Netflix) because companies have failed to implement systems that fully support them in their work.

## 5 Employee experience is the key to employee satisfaction

There are many more areas where the pandemic is forcing us to look beyond simply going digital and consider workplace related needs from the employee experience point of view. For instance:

**Going touchless** – Hygiene in the office is top of mind for facility. Already, there are many technologies available to make entering a building or getting a cup of coffee in the coffee corner, where needed, secure and safe hands-free experiences. Smartphone capabilities, QR code generation options and near-field communication (NFC) for scanning badges will make touchless the safe and also, from a user point-of-view, the easiest option.

**User interface** – Going digital is one, but can you expect an employee to feel comfortable using log-ins, passwords or two-factor authentication when he just needs to go in and fix the toilet? What this boils down to is that digital brings many benefits but will fall short if the user is not top of mind in every design stage. You can even compare user interface with a joke: if you have to explain it, it's not good enough.



It is here also that the name of the game has changed and that the employer has to learn to speak the language of the employee. If he fails to do so, the employee will find it impossible to navigate through a jungle of things he doesn't understand. Inevitably, this leads to a poor employee experience.





# Putting in place the best workplace services

Optimizing how employees interact with their workplace requires a shift in how services are offered:

## Unite

Ask an employee how s/he defines employee experience and they'll cite everything from booking a desk or meeting room, to reporting a faulty coffee machine or laptop, to trying to find those forms. Basically, their ideal experience is when they can get the answers they need fast and don't get stuck in systems or details.

Whether issues involve IT, Legal, HR or whatever department is of little interest. They just want to be able to resolve an issue and get on with their work. The reality is that every action or interaction counts towards how we experience our working day. The quality of such actions determines whether we are happy, frustrated or productive and impacts job satisfaction.

Yet, increasingly, we are having to navigate our way between systems in finding the facility services we're looking for. Even more so now that the list of interactions with the organization has grown exponentially with most of us working from home. Whereas previously we could simply ask a colleague for advice—or vent some frustration—we now depend on automated systems to interact. But we don't want to be bogged down in silos and back-end complexity.



Digital solutions should make it possible to carry out cross-departmental workflows in a way that offers us a seamless employee experience.

Facility needs to adopt a service-oriented structure that comprises cross-functional services covering everything from HR, IT through to Finance. Such an organisational structure is the basis for making employees empowered, engaged and enabled to deliver value.

## Act

We know where our people are working, what they are doing and we know who they are. But, do we know their needs? Now that we are not meeting each other in the office, are we talking to them to find out what issues they are facing? Are they getting enough assistance? Can they take care of their work life and their personal life as their home has become the workplace? Because, the bottom line is that if your employees are not managing to balance things, the first thing to be lost is job satisfaction and productivity will be the next victim.

The way to go forward is to go from reactive to proactive. We shouldn't need to search. Things should come to us. Even Netflix asks you after a couple of hours if you're still watching or makes suggestions for further watching.

Organizations should be asking the same questions to their employees. Are you hanging in there? Is your laptop working properly? What are your needs and can we suggest the following? If these questions are asked pro-actively, we can address issues before they arise and boost the employee experience. Even using it to safeguard employee health, for instance by nudging them to plan their holidays.

### **Automate the small and routine**

Most people don't get much job satisfaction doing routine, mundane work. We far prefer doing meaningful work. Yet, a recent survey by ServiceNow pointed out that 37% of all work time is spent on manual tasks that require little training, skill or talent.



For a 38-hour work week that means over 14 hours lost on tasks that do not contribute to meaningful work.

To address the wish of employees for meaningful work standardize and automate whenever possible. Track workflows to identify and improve what is not optimal or replicate and build on what is working. Empower your employees with self-service and virtual agent solutions that can help expand your services offering. Accelerate resolution by applying AI and machine learning to identify common questions and issues and retrieve relevant information immediately from your knowledge base.

A way-of-work model that ensures we can devote ourselves to those activities that add most value and are most motivating will not only boost the employee experience, but productivity as well.

### **Humanize the big and valuable**

In a time where AI and machine learning are the buzz words of the day, it's the human factor that continues to be leading in 2021. The notion that 'we're in this together' is paramount. Yes, we need processes and structure. And there's some great tech out there. But

## **TIP**

**ServiceNow Workplace Service Delivery helps you provide a great, digital employee experience.**

[Learn more →](#)

it's the people that count. Similarly, any hierarchical structure with walls between 'us' and 'them' should be done away with in one fell swoop. Simply because the challenges that face us are too large to be solved by one man or department alone. All interactions or transactions, routine or otherwise, should be focused on making the lives of employees better and simpler.

We need to create empathy. Breaking down any silos and replacing them by a human-centric approach will help make employees feel heard and understood. Workplace interactions can be transformational for an employee. Yet a company is nothing without its employees. To be truly beneficial to employees, we should put employee needs bang in the middle of any new workplace services.