



**Space: The Organizational Frontier**

**September 2019**

## Overview

Digital technologies are changing the physical environments in which people work. With businesses adopting flexible working and remote working patterns, how does team cohesion happen? How do businesses ensure that digital natives and workers accustomed to more traditional tools are able to collaborate effectively? Thus far digital tools have primarily revolutionised working practices for information workers. How could new tools such as augmented reality benefit frontline workers in different industries?

## What Topics Will be Addressed?

- Now that research has shown workers in open plan offices spend less time collaborating face-to-face than their cubicle-bound counterparts, what kinds of physical and digital boundaries do organisations need to create in order to maximise collective intelligence?
- In a world where attention traps are increasingly common, how do workers set effective boundaries in order to effectively manage their time and focus on the right things?
- What tools, policies and etiquette need to develop for organisations to succeed in an increasingly digital world?

## Research Interviews & Benefits of Participation

We seek the participation of CXOs, CIOs and key functional and IT leaders in organizations experimenting at the leading edge of new ways of working as well as architects, designers and technologists building collaborative systems to give us their expertise with these areas. Interview participants will receive early intelligence of report outcomes.

We are also seeking teams interested in participating in mobile ethnographies to get direct participant-led observations of working environments and habits. This will entail up to 20 participants taking no more than 10 minutes per day to use an app on their mobile phones to take photos and videos of their working environments, answer short questions about their working experiences, and optionally participate in a chatroom/forum to discuss topics related to collaborative working. Teams participating in mobile ethnographies will receive customized reports of learning outcomes relevant to their organizations.

## Anticipated Outcomes

- **Refreshing collaborative technologies.** Through the research we will revisit Douglas Neal's [Use and Misuse of Collaborative Technologies handbook](#), last updated in 2010.
- **Accelerate your customer empathy.** The research will involve innovative digital methods such as collaborative mobile ethnography. These methods can serve as a guide for companies looking to innovate their own research and customer sensing capabilities.
- **Prepare your teams for the Smart Machine Age.** In a world where [Humility is the New Smart](#), the way that we relate to each other at work will change. For human workers, emphasis will shift from pure analytical capability to an approach that values emotional intelligence and collaborative learning. Through this research we will find examples of working practice where "NewSmart" behaviours are emerging and how they're being encouraged—or stifled—through the environments where people work.
- **Supercharge staff learning.** Research has shown that learning and cognition are most effective when the learner is experiencing positive emotions. Learning, particularly for physical tasks like machine operation, is also accelerated when the learner is in motion: retention improves in VR learning experiences when the learner moves around more. Are your workspaces set up to maximise staff learning and cognition?

## Planned Deliverables

Research report due in September 2019

Revised edition of [Use and Misuse of Collaborative Technologies](#) handbook

## Project Team

The project will be led by Dr Caitlin McDonald, LEF's Digital Anthropologist.