

Partnerships inspire creativity as technology shifts gears



By Jacques van Wyk

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A recent Tech Nation report, *Powering the Digital Economy 2015*, shows that three-quarters of successful digital companies surveyed work in a close network of entrepreneurs, with whom they share ideas.

Like-minded people, working in close proximity, feed off one another's ideas, a lesson first learned by academics at Stanford University.

Graham McClements, a UK architect at BDP, a firm of international architects and engineers, suggested this is because environments that appear creative and support creativity are the ones that people aspire to join and are therefore more likely to succeed. The Economist Intelligence Unit interviewed McClements for its [The Future of Work](#) survey, sponsored by Ricoh Europe.

Creative people who surround themselves with similar types, who also have computers to increasingly perform mundane or laborious tasks, make companies more productive.

Social engagement

Creativity that leads to innovation will become a key currency in the business world, in McClements' view, regardless of the increasingly automated nature of work. He adds that people recognise they still need social engagement to do their best work regardless of what technology is at their fingertips.

People - in partnership with advancing technology - still form the centre of the workplace. Work is a major aspect of life because, while it provides a living, it also provides a social connection. Employers are realising, as a result of committing resources to [transforming into digital businesses](#), that process are changing as well as fundamental issues on how and where to work.

These clusters of expertise - whether they focus on scientific research, communications technology, finance or something else - also depend on office buildings that can evolve in response to the social trend.

"People are looking for authentic environments where there is a sense of vibrancy and the possibility of spontaneous encounters," McClements says. "The building itself might be mixed use, with cafes and shops, and there will be a range of work settings, with less emphasis on the traditional desk and more on different kinds of spaces and collaborative areas."

Working in networks

In another interview from the series, Henrich Greve, professor of entrepreneurship, INSEAD, takes a similar view. Professor Greve believes that an important trend in the future will be people working in networks, interacting with professionals from other organisations to mix knowledge spheres and blend industries.

"Firms need new knowledge so they are increasingly turning to collaborations and working with partners with different expertise at all stages to make sure that things work," Professor Greve says. "A perfect example of this is the iPhone. Think of all the industries that are inside that."

Both interviews make clear that the larger the environment, such as the architecture of the city, as well as the immediate environment of the structure and layout of the office, will have to adapt to enable people to succeed in these new ways of working. In an ideal world technology will underpin this success.

We will continue to see more organisations unite with similar organisations as they realise how this helps to create efficient workplaces and ensure [a culture of technology-led innovation](#).

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