

Thursday 4th & Friday 5th May 2017
Manhattan, New York



For Immediate Release: 5th April 2017

WORKTECH17 New York returns to Manhattan for its 8th annual future of work conference...

The future of work is on everyone's agenda. This event brings thought leaders together from North America and Europe to share cutting edge ideas on the future, from a people, place, and technology perspective. It will allow an understanding of the key drivers of change and enablers of innovation that will shape how, where and when work takes place. Our global speakers will explore future technologies, digital transformation, cutting edge award-winning workplaces and people, change and engagement. Together they will create forum for debate and the sharing of ideas.

Keynote speakers at the event include: Chris Fussell, former Navy SEAL Officer, Managing Partner of the McChrystal Group, and co-author of Team of Teams, will talk about the networked organisation and how organisations must fundamentally transform the way they operate in today's turbulent environment. Ryan Fuller, General Manager, Workplace Analytics, Microsoft, will describe how to harness the power of a gold mine of collaboration data generated by the systems that millions of people use every day to understand the behaviours that drive productivity and engagement. Diana Rhoten, Associate Partner and Design for Change Lead, IDEO, will talk about the rise of new social behaviors spurred by the gig economy and how the emergence of advanced technologies like AI are changing work. Chris Kelly, Co-Founder, and President of the real estate industry's first workplace-hospitality platform, Convene, will explain how the office of the future is like a full-service hotel. And, workplace design pioneer Clive Wilkinson, will examine factors that influence the design of the new workplace and how it performs for its users. This is just a handful of the renowned international and local thought leaders we will be welcoming to the audience and stage.

We hope you will join us for this fast-paced day filled with visions of the future.

Speaker Spotlight: Chris Fussell is a Partner at McChrystal Group, where he heads up the McChrystal Group Leadership Institute. Chris is an author of the 2015 New York Times bestseller, Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World. Chris was commissioned as a Naval Officer in 1997, and spent the next 15 years on US Navy SEAL Teams, leading SEAL elements in combat zones around the globe.

WT: What are the best ways to future proof your office design?

CF: "Future proofing" your office design is impossible to completely achieve, but critical to creating a resilient office is ensuring that it grants adaptability and freedom in problem-solving to those who use it.

Ideally, a workspace needs to offer employees as wide a variety of work settings as possible. This allows them to change their surroundings to match the requirements of their current problem set, and mitigate the strengths or weaknesses of different workspace designs - thus becoming operationally adaptable. The vast majority of companies fail to achieve this.

At the McChrystal Group, this is the approach we pursue with our own employees. Though most of our spaces are occupied by an open floor-plan, we also have lined these collaboration-minded

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bullpen environments with conventional board rooms and private work spaces. These are useful for instances when our analysts need to focus on "deep work" and eliminate external noise.

WT: What do you think are the key trends effecting workplace strategy in the USA?

CF: A good line to recall in the face of all trends is the Newtonian principle that "every action has its equal opposite reaction".

Not that long ago - in the first decade of the 21st century - corporations and intelligence agencies began to realize how traditional functional compartmentalization of teams restricted collaboration, information exchange, and problem-solving between them, to disastrous results. Thus, popular organizational momentum swung in favour of breaking down these Chinese walls and promoting radical transparency in the interests of changing this status quo.

If I had to put a finger on the trends that exist regarding workplace strategy today, it is that while employers still recognize the need to promote networked problem solving across functional teams, they are increasingly aware of the dangers that exist if it is executed incorrectly - and so, for some, the popular opinion pendulum has begun to swing the other way, as hesitance begins to take hold and organizations are unsure how to go about networking their teams.

Today, technology and increasing external complexity is compounding the need for organizations to create informal networks throughout their siloes, but companies also need to be confident that their employees are synced on this need, and make the necessary overtures to ensure that this is done correctly.

WT: How is technology changing the way people behave in the workplace?

CF: Well, consider how popular technology differed, say, 10 years ago, and how that difference might visually manifest in an office setting.

Distracting types of new technology - like iPhones, Facebook, YouTube, and Spotify - would be non-existent, and would better allow for "deep work" to happen uninterrupted among workforces. People would be focused on the here-and-now, ears unblocked by headphones, and could dedicate more their total brainpower to a smaller variety of cognitive tasks.

At the same time, the lack of other technological wonders like Slack, data analysis tools or videoconferencing would mean their ability to interact with other teams would be comparatively limited, and their work less complex or well-informed.

To summarize the effects of technology on workforces today, employees are exposed to greater variety of information sources, but risk inefficiency and a lack of productivity not due to too little information or resources, but rather too many.

WT: For companies adopting new technological initiatives, do they need to change their culture first, or does the introduction of this new technology change the culture and they just need to be responsive?

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CF: Many companies assume that interconnection as delivered by technology is an end in itself, and so many have invested in new technological means to interconnect their teams without making the necessary investments in their cultural health first. The result, all-too-often, is that reliance on technology can accidentally widen the cultural and operational gaps between teams.

Just because different teams and leaders now have the means to communicate does not mean that constructive interactions will result.

Rather, technology is simply a means to scale a pre-existing culture. A company's leadership should first develop the right aligning narrative and cultural principles to promote through its use of technology, before trying to open all lines of possible communication and interconnection within the organization.

WT: The potential of artificial intelligence and advanced robotics to perform tasks once reserved for humans is no longer reserved for spectacular demonstrations by the likes of IBM's Watson, DeepMind, or Google's driverless car. What will be the impact of automation efforts like these, multiplied many times across different sectors of the economy? Can we look forward to vast improvements in productivity, freedom from boring work, and improved quality of life? Should we fear threats to jobs, disruptions to organizations, and strains on the social fabric?

CF: Well, what amazes me is the subtle breadth of this revolution. Even today, artificial intelligence systems are not only defeating chess and go masters, conducting high-frequency trading, or controlling vehicles, but also writing software code, ghost-writing newspaper articles and fighting wars for us. It is scary to consider - today, it is Uber and Lyft drivers that fear for their livelihoods, but soon an individual in any profession will likely be replaceable.

The (underwhelming) answer I have for this question is "I don't know - maybe this time will be different". I say this last part because history has seen humans absolutely panic at disruptive technological innovation, only to be proven wrong when these inventions generate more jobs than they'd made redundant. The Luddites of the Industrial Revolution come to mind here.

But, then again, there is a trap in assuming future developments based entirely off observations of the past - and our external environment as of late seems dedicated to proving that.

On Thursday May 4th 2017, over 300 industry business leaders will gather at Convene, 117 West 46th St. to share expertise and further knowledge on a mix of business strategy, technology, architecture, design, HR & Workplace.

The conference will be followed by a masterclass sessions at Boston Consulting Group, Hudson Yards, and R/GA on Friday May 5th 2017.

Images and additional information available

For more information on the topics and speakers, or to request a press pass, please contact:

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Event website: <http://www.unwired.eu.com/WORKTECH17/new-york/index.php>

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About WORKTECH

The first WORKTECH conference was produced in London in 2004, in collaboration with the Royal College of Art. Since then, successful WORKTECHs have been held in New York, Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris, Manchester, Melbourne, San Francisco, Shanghai, Sydney, and Singapore.

WORKTECH New York is organised by UNWIRED, a leading research and events company, looking at the impact that emerging technologies will have on work and the work place, the retail sector, and the property sector. UNWIRED organises cutting-edge conferences, executive briefings, symposia, and exhibitions. From WORKTECH to practical briefings on workplace sustainability, the future of wireless, and agile working, UNWIRED brings together senior professionals and thought-leaders for unsurpassed learning and networking opportunities.