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WIRED VERSUS WIRELESS



SHARED WORKSPACE INSIDER

But First!

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Always-on connectivity has given people and devices the ability to connect to the cloud from wherever they are and regardless of what they're doing. The network is now the computer, pushing much of the hard-core processing into the cloud, which means that our devices have become smaller, more convenient and even wearable. But we all know that mobile connectivity has limitations and frustrations, so how can we make sure to provide the best possible network access in a flexible workspace?

WIFI IS THE NEW BLACK

Because of the ever-growing ecosystem of mobile devices that support us all, the workplace now exists way beyond the desk. Flexible knowledge workers demand access to information and applications anytime and anywhere. The transition from mobile to at-desk has become more blurred, with workers happy to plug in for power, but looking for Wi-Fi for their network rather than a cable. Occupants of flexible workspaces therefore demand reliable access to their own networks and the Internet using Wi-Fi on

multiple devices as an essential complement to wired connectivity.

Today, many new operators, especially in the coworking sector, are building, running and configuring space to operate completely without data cabling, and it seems that the technology might finally be here to deliver this. While it's true that well managed and well planned Wi-Fi can deliver, it requires strong expertise and sometimes significant capital outlay to get the right infrastructure in place.

AVOID THE COMMON WIFI PITFALLS

In the recent past, many workspace operators have failed to provide any Wi-Fi, causing tenants to often create their own Wi-Fi networks using SOHO (standing for Small Office/Home Office) devices. These devices are often unreliable and generally less secure than enterprise solutions and can lead to chaos in the electromagnetic spectrum. For starters, when multiple Wi-Fi networks exist in a relatively confined space, they fight for access to a free channel, leading to slow speeds and connections that drop.

Later, operators began providing managed Wi-Fi networks for all occupants of a shared space. But many a time, poorly implemented solutions just added to the chaos with multiple network names and unreliable security. If a wireless network isn't properly installed and password protected, operators may experience bandwidth theft and as a result revenue leakage. Generally, less secure wireless networks leave information vulnerable and easy to hack into, putting you and your clients at risk.

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The reality is that wireless connections are overall much slower than wired network connections. Slow network speeds can be caused by multiple users connecting with multiple devices as well as interference by other networks and electrical devices in the area. Connected wireless users have varying upstream and downstream traffic usage patterns that may impact the overall productivity of members on your network.

In addition, the result of poor building construction and distant access point locations negatively affect the strength of the wireless signal. Obstruction by building structures commonly causes disrupted connections and often times spots of little to no coverage throughout the space.

THE PROS OF PLUGGING IN

For the reasons above, flexible workspace operators should not overlook the 100% reliability, bandwidth capacity and resistance to interference that plain old copper Cat 5 (or 6 or 7) cabling delivers. It's also incredibly versatile and can deliver AV signals using HDMI, connect security devices, provide small power for LED lighting and displays, and is still the best mechanism for connecting a printer.

Multiple users, multiple devices on a poorly managed Wi-Fi network will experience very poor useable data rates. At a desk, there's no substitute for the reliability of a cable. For every

user plugged into a wired connection, it reduces the wireless load. A balanced wired and Wi-Fi approach to connectivity works best. Workstations merit a cable and power outlet that work in conjunction with a robust and secure wireless network. Needless to say, cables are a must for on-demand services and high availability machines and systems.

Having run a flexible workspace company for over a decade, I know first-hand that an operator's number one and two priorities are customer retention and maintaining high occupancy

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rates. Flexible workers rely on good Internet connectivity all of the time. Offering a secure wireless solution with simple access and fast, reliable Internet connectivity are key factors that keep flexible workers happy.

Well planned and managed Wi-Fi needs to work hand in hand with conventional cable infrastructure in order to deliver the robust Internet connectivity that flexible workers in today's on-demand economy rightly expect.

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Mission-critical software for the flexible workspace industry.

essensys is the world's leading provider of coworking software and technology.

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