



CORENET
GLOBAL

THE LEADER

JUNE 2019

Diversity and Inclusion

Also in this issue:
Psychological wellbeing at work
Strategic engagement and alignment
The 'Future Fit' enterprise

Corporate real estate flexes its muscles

How it has evolved to incorporate branding, marketing and human resources

by Stefany Koslow

A distinctive corporate campus is one that is a physical manifestation of a company's values and culture. Today, corporate real estate (CRE) execs have more influence than ever in transforming their valuable assets into dynamic experiences for employees and visitors alike. By adding creativity and technology to existing spaces, CRE execs can supercharge real estate's potential as a powerful communications platform.

Well-designed spaces that offer dynamic, interactive experiences can fully immerse employees in the brand. Imagine complex company data transformed into fun, informational stories about everything happening in the workplace. Imagine live data feeds and social media streams updated in real-time making the workplace "come alive." Generative content, corporate social responsibility stories, and big takeover events all work together to give the digital storytelling on campus a heartbeat.

According to a recent survey conducted by CBRE with CoreNet Global, CRE executives increasingly have the ear of business leaders and members of the C-suite¹. This elevates them to a proactive role when it comes to how the corporation leverages real estate, a vital yet expensive asset.

Forward-thinking companies are recognizing the enormous opportunity to use the corporate campus as a physical manifestation of their culture, transforming it into a brand experience and an employee recruitment and retention tool. Today's CRE exec serves as a liaison and powerful partner to brand, marketing, communications, and human resources (HR) teams. Understanding their internal client workflows and timelines allows for the most effective and efficient cross-department collaboration.

This trend dovetails with a growing body of research revealing that uninspiring offices take a psychological toll on the people who work in them². Employees are happier and healthier when they spend their days in well-designed environments that promote learning, discovery and social interaction, and that offer opportunities for unexpected encounters with both the space and the other people in it.

To become dynamic, workplaces are turning to digital media and technology to engage employees like never before. Using data-driven, generative digital media in the physical world provides a constantly refreshed stream of informational and custom, branded content. It falls to the visionary CRE professional to take the lead in navigating this new landscape and identifying what design strategies and stories will bring the company to life in a meaningful and impactful way. This includes having the right internal and external partners to integrate digital technology into a variety of corporate spaces.

eBay serves as an example

CRE execs are taking their cue from places like eBay's Silicon Valley campus. Seeking a new approach to its brand identity after spinning off from PayPal in 2015, the company engaged experience design studio ESI Design to create a unique experience that would serve as the new

"front door" for its corporate campus, offering a clear and immediate representation of the company's culture and brand to all who crossed its threshold.

The result is Main Street, a vibrant 20,000-square-foot (1,858-sq.-m.) hub filled with natural light and interactive installations that capture the robust pulse of eBay commerce. "We're reinventing our brand, we're reinventing our culture, and it's so important to have a physical



A touchscreen wall provides interesting eBay data to employees and visitors alike.

manifestation of that," said Lars Kongslem, the company's director of Corporate Digital Experience. "It's how we show up to our community. It's a gathering place for our employees that is inspirational, engaging, and fun and interactive."

The centerpiece is a 15-foot (4.6-meter) touchscreen wall that allows employees

and guests alike to explore eBay's most recent transactions; other digital installations distill the company's immense wellspring of data into bite-sized nuggets, such as the ten most popular search terms at a given moment. While many businesses overlook the importance of making sure employees have a sense of the corporate big picture, Main Street provides a place where employees can see and experience exactly how their own work fits into a business's broader mission and goals

The site also reinforces the company's theme of community by providing spaces that foster collaboration. The ground floor boasts a beautiful outdoor deck, a coffee bar, and an eBay swag store, as well as a 1,000-person-capacity, multi-purpose event and meeting space dominated by an enormous multi-screen LED display with webcast and presentation capabilities for company-wide town hall meetings.

Wendy Jones, eBay's SVP of Global Operations, said, "Main Street has infused so much more energy, so much more pride amongst our employee base, both here in Silicon Valley and to our employees around the world – and I don't think I would've said before that a building could do that, which is pretty incredible."

Elsewhere in Silicon Valley, Apple's corporate campus has a visitor center that's become a tourist destination in its own right³, with attractions that reinforce the company's brand: an Apple store with exclusive merchandise; an augmented reality experience that lets visitors explore the site through an Apple device; and a café whose menus are, of course, read from iPads.

It's about movement and energy

Digital displays and dynamic media are also replacing static paintings on office walls and motionless logos in the lobby as corporations strive

to avoid projecting a sense of staleness and rigidity. Because it's flexible and easily updatable, digital technology can be carefully curated and customized to complement the rhythm and tempo of a given physical space; lobby artwork can respond to the movements of passersby, and digital wall murals can fluctuate based on real-time data. Suddenly, the office becomes an atmospheric meshwork of small delights and surprises, and the daily journey from the street to the desk offers moments of charm and unpredictability.

Another enormous advantage of digital media is that it can be designed to continually update on its own; art and information displays remain evergreen, keeping tenants immersed in fresh, interesting environments while avoiding the need for a team to constantly create or curate new content. Data-driven installations can be powered by anything from weather data to social media feeds to stock market updates – even the movement of people through the space can inject life and energy into a cold, static space without requiring a huge team to constantly produce something new.

Striking digital displays can be found in the lobbies of several properties owned by Beacon Capital Partners, an investor and owner-operator of office properties. Beacon's brand is to create distinctive office environments that reflect



Photo credit: Andy Ryan

Visitors can engage with the The Beacon, a soaring 24-foot high installation that pulses with shifting light, color and sound to express real-time building and environmental data from The Tower at PNC Plaza in Pittsburgh.

expression and leading data-driven technologies, The Beacon has become an iconic presence in Pittsburgh's streetscape.

Important function along with form

CRE professionals can take advantage of all these innovations to help corporations derive greater functionality from less space. According to a CBRE spokesperson, nearly 70 percent of the company's clients say they expect to continue gravitating toward better and fewer square feet – more flexible, activity-based workplace designs that require much less space than traditional layouts⁴.

Workplaces that use the latest in experience design and digital displays to better communicate their brand through experience are not only more interesting for workers – they are more effective at attracting and retaining talent. Each new visitor becomes a potential recruit or brand advocate who, before speaking a word to anyone in the building, has a clear impression of an energetic, innovative organization that goes out of its way to create an inviting environment for its employees.

CRE executives are harnessing the potential of the corporate campus and making it a company's most valuable asset, transforming the office into a dynamic experience to connect with their community.



Stefany Koslow is director of business development at ESI Design.



Cherry blossoms come alive, thrive and fade on motion-activated LED walls at Terrell Place in Washington, D.C.

the personality of tenant companies as well as the city around them. A notable example is Washington, D.C.'s Terrell Place, where an impressive digital experience unfolds, but with a uniquely Washingtonian twist: as employees and visitors pass by a 1,700-square-foot (158-sq.-m.) digital mural in the lobby, D.C.'s iconic cherry trees bud, bloom, and blossom in time with the seasons until eventually their petals drop off. An ever-evolving software-driven artwork uses a high-tech infrared camera system to react to the presence of people.

In a different form, another data-driven example can be found in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, at the corporate headquarters of PNC Bank. An iconic data-driven sculpture, named The Beacon, interprets and visualizes the building's green systems into light, color and sound. Designed to be the greenest office tower in the world, The Tower at PNC Plaza has such advanced and responsive sustainable systems that it behaves in many ways like a living organism. The 24-foot (7.32-meter) installation inspires employees who pass through the lobby daily to learn about the environmental impact of their workplace through beautiful and informational visualizations and an accompanying website. Melding artful

- <https://www.cbre.com/real-estate-services/occupier/client-strategy-and-consulting/cbre-institute/executive-management-series/articles-folder/managing-global-corporate-real-estate-and-facilities>
- <https://www.thecut.com/2016/04/the-psychological-cost-of-boring-buildings.html>
- <https://www.businessinsider.com/apple-park-visitor-center-tour-photos-2018-6#theres-an-apple-store-here-open-to-the-public-too-16>
- <https://www.globest.com/2018/11/13/survey-reveals-advancing-roles-for-corporate-real-estate-executives/?sreturn=20190325124037>