

# Envoy In View

## The Future of the Visitor Experience



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The Envoy In View series aims to explore key areas of the workplace that are changing significantly, drawing on data collected by Envoy's technology. Each short report produced in partnership with Worktech Academy casts an analytical eye over important shifts in work and workplace taking place right now. In this edition, we look at how the visitor experience is changing and how organisations can address the new expectations of their visitors as we move beyond the pandemic. What are the components of a great visitor experience in the digital age, and how can organisations address these to build stronger relationships with clients, customers and prospective employees?



## IN THE VIEWFINDER

To create better visitor experiences, organisations need to consider some of the emerging trends on the horizon. Seven are outlined here in our viewfinder:

**Organisations need to go beyond the bare minimum of safety in the office and actively enhance their visitors' health and wellbeing.**

In November 2021, data from Envoy's At Work survey of 400 workplace leaders across North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand showed that employees submitted 2.5 times the number of health checks to their organisation than they did at the start of the year (1). This suggests health is still at the forefront of many people's mind. When considering a visitor experience for the future, organisations can use digital enhancements to improve the wellbeing and health of visitors and ensure they are safe. For example, companies can pre-register guests and adopt touchless sign-in technology such as QR codes on their personal mobile devices.

Workplace security is becoming more complex as new hybrid working practices result in an unpredictable flow of people in the office.

Envoy's At Work 2022 research found that a quarter of workplace leaders have invested more into physical security technologies in their offices to address the unpredictable occupancy levels resulting from a shift to more flexible ways of working. The digitisation of visitor management tools now means that an organisation can send a calendar invite, NDA, safety paperwork

and health verification documents in one go. When the visitor arrives at the office, the system will recognise the visitor and automatically send a notification to the host and alert them of their visitor's arrival. This ensures efficiency of the sign-in process and verification of any guests invited to the building.


**Experiences need to get more personal with pre-registered visitors being able to note their preferences before entering the building.**

Pre-registration of visitors in the building not only improves the security of the workplace, but they allow visitors to note their preferences before entering the building. For example, a visitor might state that they are travelling straight from a flight and therefore might need washroom facilities or food and beverage amenities. Some visitor management solutions can integrate with your WiFi provider, allowing you to grant authorised visitors temporary access to your network.

A survey by workforce experience experts Applaud found that hyper-personalised experiences were one of the most significant trends emerging in the future of work (2). However, its report also found that more than two-thirds of the 200 HR leaders surveyed stated they still do not offer individual personalisation in their workplace experience. There is still a lot of work to be done in this area.

**Organisations will reconsider their amenity offering to meet the new expectations of visitors in their workplace.**

Amenities can be as simple as offering a guest a coffee and a free WiFi code. But as the expectation for experience grows, visitors may expect more. According to Envoy's At Work 2022 survey, more than a third of workplace leaders want their organisations to invest more in on-site events and programs; and almost a quarter said they wanted more food and beverages programs. Not only does this offer employees an incentive to return to the office, but visitors can also engage with your organisation on a different level. Some organisations have taken visitor management a step further by offering dedicated work areas, luggage storage and lockers, pre-reserved desks or meeting rooms, and the ability to order lunch before the visit.

 **There is an opportunity in the office to bring in services and amenities, and use underutilised office space to serve people and offer richer experiences ..."**

Hilary Green, Director of Change Management and Workplace Transformation, Scotiabank (3)

Making a great first impression with visitors can improve brand perception and enhance future business with perspective clients and partners.

According to research by PwC, one in three people (32 per cent) say they will walk away from a brand they love after just one bad experience (4). This research translates to the office – a bad visitor experience is bad for business. A workplace lobby is the first look into a company's brand – visitors can gather a lot of information about a company's values, goals and culture by this experience alone. If the experience is positive, the visitor will go on to share this with their wider network.

**Organisations should make sure the visitor experience feels authentic and reflects the values of the business.**

Beyond first impressions, visitors now seek authenticity and a genuine connection with the businesses they visit. Consumers are increasingly interrogating brands for their authenticity to make sure they align with their own values, and the same concept now applies in business. Tim Greenhalgh, Chief Creative Officer at branding expert Landor & Fitch, explains that 'behind the scenes is the new scene... customers want to see how everything works and they want transparency' (5). This means that organisations now have to facilitate experiences which genuinely reflect the way they conduct business.



**“The consumer experience is increasingly being applied to the workplace experience...”**

Tim Greenhalgh, Chief Creative Officer, Lander & Fitch

**Visitors to the office have a key role to contribute to a sense of community and belonging in the workplace alongside employees.**

According to a report by BetterUp, a sense of belonging can lead to a 56 per cent increase in job performance and a 50 per cent decrease in the risk of employee turnover (6). Aside from socialising with colleagues, social connections with visitors can drive a meaningful sense of belonging for employees. Many visitors come from different industry sectors with different roles, skills and outlooks, and they bring their own perspectives to enrich workplace culture. Organisations can take this opportunity to create inclusive environments where everyone can contribute to the workplace community.



**“People want a live, stimulating, engaging, meaningful experience that will attract them, get them involved and ultimately create a sense of belonging...”**

Adam Scott, founder and creative director of Free State, part of Hassell Architects (7)


## FOCUS ON CHALLENGES

In contrast to the slow uptake by employees in returning to the office more than two years on from the global pandemic, data produced by Envoy suggests that there is an eagerness to resume in-person client and customer meetings. As organisations start to implement strategies to reimagine the workplace experience for their employees, a critical part of this will be redesigning the visitor experience. However, there are a number of challenges in doing so.

### Overcoming the reluctance to return:

According to data from Envoy, between 2021 and 2022 visitor traffic in offices increased by 84 per cent. Visitor traffic has continued to grow in 2022 by a further 43 per cent. But while the pace of visitors returning to the office picks up momentum, the opposite is true for employees. According to separate surveys conducted by The Partnership for New York City (8) and CBRE (9), larger firms are struggling with a much slower pace of RTO (return to office) than smaller ones.

The challenge for the visitor experience is that it is difficult to curate a sense of community and communicate brand values when the office is empty. Organisations can overcome this by using data to understand the people traffic in their offices and scheduling meetings for days which are typically most popular – according to Envoy's data, these are Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

 **There is no office amenity more valuable than the choice to go there or not. People don't want to be forced to go back in so they need a greater experience when they do go in..."**

David Cairns, Senior Vice President of Office Leasing, CBRE Canada (10)

**Making first impressions count:** Research studies suggest that a first impression is made within the first 27 seconds of meeting or encountering someone. These impressions are not necessarily made through words, they can be made through the environment and through another person's body language. The office can be a powerful tool in communicating the brand, values and innovation of a business.

**It takes 27 seconds to make a first impression after encountering someone**

The challenge is to create a welcoming entrance to the workplace which conveys a well-rounded perspective of the business and the host, right on the threshold of prospective clients, partners and talent engaging with the organisation. Organisations can make a great first impression by carefully considering the experience of the visitor.

This may start with a digital calendar invite followed by a pre-registration, so the experience is seamless and streamlined from the moment the visitor walks through the door. Using software to handle the manual parts of the visitor registrations allows for more meaningful in-person interactions between reception staff and visitors when they are in the office.

 **People are now expecting values, not just value, and how a business can relate to their individual views..."**

Samantha Huddle, General Manager, Good Places to Work (11)

**Leveraging the benefits of face-to-face interactions:** In-person encounters can be more personal than digital meetings as they allow for deeper bonds to forge. According to *Forbes* magazine, 84 per cent of executives prefer in-person meetings because it allows them to build stronger and more meaningful business relationships (12). Research from HubSpot also found that the close rate for in-person sales meetings is 40 per cent (13).

The impact of in-person meetings can even have financial benefits. Research by the Centre for Economics and Business Research found that the London economy benefits by £54 billion per year from face-to-face meetings specifically (14). Further analysis showed that for every £1 spent on business travel, an organisation receives a 60 per cent return on investment.

The challenge is to create a visitor experience which makes the time, cost and commute worth it for the guest. To overcome this, organisations can ensure a seamless experience throughout the check-in process and offer further benefits while they are in the office. This could be a space to work after the meeting has taken place or free food and beverage amenities upon arrival.

**Managing unpredictable people flow in the office:** Too often the visitor experience is filled with barriers such as overcrowded waiting areas and a lot of paperwork. According to Envoy data, more than 19 per cent of today's offices still use pen and paper for their visitor registration. There are significant challenges that come with a manual visitor management approach, particularly in a world where expectations and models of work are changing so rapidly.

Hybrid working enables people to work wherever they feel most productive. While some organisations have prescribed days back in the office, some have given autonomy to employees to choose when they return. This makes predicting a flow of traffic through the office almost impossible, especially if there is no digital infrastructure in place.

Visitors to the office make predicting traffic flow even more complex. There are additional risks to emergency responses and compliance audits if facilities teams don't know how many people are in the building or who they are.



However, organisations can overcome this challenge if they have insight into who is using their office. The data from a digital visitor management system can record how many people are passing through the entrance of the building and use the data to understand visitor volume by type such as contractor, client, candidate or vendor. This allows facilities management to track how many people are using the building and this informs resourcing decisions internally. In effect, the system becomes more streamlined for the host organisation and the visitor enjoys a seamless experience from the moment they first engage with the company.



## A PRACTICAL LENS

Many organisations are leading the way in creating exceptional visitor experiences for guests to their offices. Some have particular areas of focus highlighted below:

### **Cramer: creating strong first impressions**

Experiential marketing agency Cramer occupies a 70,000 square foot office space just outside Boston, Massachusetts and the firm has thought carefully about the type of visitor experience it wants to curate (15). Unlike most agencies, Cramer has designed its visitor experience into its ethos of work – starting with its workspace. The firm claims that it wants clients to come into the space and, when they can, spend the whole day there – working side-by-side with Cramer teams.

Cramer's lobby is designed to leave a lasting impression on its guests. The agency explained that when visitors come into the space, it wants their initial impression to be formed by three things: the person at the front desk, how the physical space is designed, and the check-in process.

Cramer said that it wanted its clients to see from the outset that it is an agency based on openness and transparency, so it has activated Envoy's non-disclosure agreements into the sign-in process in a way that ensures clients feel confident they are protected, but it doesn't interfere with the welcoming atmosphere.



Cramer also uses Envoy's automatic notification feature so hosts receive an email or text message to alert them when a guest arrives. Cramer's aim is to reflect its brand and culture into the physical space and into the visitor experience so guests immediately have an insight into the business.

### **Box: building a secure environment for everyone**

Box is a leading cloud content management platform that houses sensitive content for some of the biggest companies in the world (16). With six global offices and more than 2,000 employees, Box is focused on transparency, security and putting its customers first.

Box partnered with Envoy to create a frictionless visitor experience, but with best-in-class security. Box's visitor experience requires an ID check which is processed through Envoy; this system can also identify visitors who are on a 'watch and block' list which may mean they are no longer authorised to be on-site. This list helps Box automatically flag potential security threats by comparing every visitor that comes in against flagged names.

Despite the thorough checks, Box wants its visitors to have a personal experience. Through the Envoy dashboard, employees can see if their guests have arrived and what they look like, so they can be personally welcomed into the building.

For group visits, Box can send invites and NDAs to visitors beforehand to streamline the sign-in process at the office.

### **CBRE: going beyond the standard amenities**

Global real estate and investment firm CBRE has renovated its London headquarters, which now stands at 144,500 square feet (17). The newly renovated building aims to create a people-centric workplace that responds to new ways of working for its 2,000 employees. Reimagining its visitor management was a big part of this vision – particularly when it comes to providing the right amenities.

Upon arrival to the building, visitors are welcomed by staff members at reception and offered a seat in a dedicated client lounge designed to sit separately but adjacently to the lobby. The client lounge is equipped with a kitchen and washroom facilities where guests can help themselves to food and drink or freshen up if they have travelled far. The client lounge also provides a variety of seating arrangements so guests can work at a desk or wait on soft seating until they are welcomed by their host.

Visitors and clients can also benefit from the building by using a special client event space which offers room for entertainment complete with a bespoke bar and dining room. The office was designed with amenities and experience for both employees and visitors to share.

**“The range of on-site amenities at Henrietta House, coupled with the calibre and variety of workplace, technology solutions and our dynamic working patterns, will together allow everyone to thrive...”**

Natalie Barnicott, Head of People, CBRE UK (18)

### **Headspace: balancing culture and security**

Californian-based meditation app Headspace recognised that visitor management was a critical part of building its workplace experience in its new 20,000 square-foot offices in Santa Monica, California (19).

As Headspace started to scale the number of visitors and foot traffic increased in the workplace, it needed a system which could automatically process some of the paperwork. The company partnered with Envoy to streamline the visitor management process, but it was conscious that the Headspace brand should be the first impression for the visitor.

Not wanting paperwork and NDA signing to be the first experience when visitors walked into the office space, Headspace wanted to ensure that signing-in was a pleasant experience. Envoy incorporated NDA signing into the check-in process. Every visitor is emailed the form after checking-in, and all NDAs can be readily accessed through Envoy. The NDA can be automatically amended based on why someone is visiting, allowing the visitor's first impression of the office to be of the welcoming receptionists and the calming lobby space which better reflects its culture and brand.



## FRAMING THE FUTURE

In the future, it will not be enough to simply welcome visitors back to your workplace. Organisations will need to rethink and invest in the digital and human experience of each of its visitors, from contractors and customers to potential employees. Visitor experiences will have to be positive, personalised and memorable to balance the 'worth it' equation of people taking the time to commute to the office, instead of merely taking the meeting digitally.

If companies can curate a visitor experience which exceeds expectations, visitors will be encouraged to come back and tell their network about how great the organisation is. But there is still a long way to go and companies are at different points on their journey to creating super visitor experiences.

We have outlined the frames in which organisations move through as they create a seamless and memorable visitor experience.

### Frame one

The first frame in the journey to a great visitor experience is the digitalisation and streamlining of sign-in processes. The ability to pre-register guests and implement touchless sign-in technology immediately reduces the time spent on paperwork when a visitor arrives at the workplace.

As part of this process, visitors can be sent QR codes before they arrive which allow them to enter the building for seamless check-in at a reception desk having already filled out the necessary documents to get into the office. The host will then get a notification which informs them that their guest has arrived, and the host can personally welcome them into the office. This experience provides an instant impression to the visitor that the company is modern, digitally enabled and shows that the business already values the guests' time.

### Frame two

Once an organisation has implemented an effective digital sign-in process, the next frame focuses on accommodating a visitor's needs once they are signed-in to the workplace. In the event that a guest arrives early, or a host's previous meeting has overrun, then the visitor can often be left waiting with nothing to do in the lobby. This additional time gives visitors the opportunity to look around and observe how the business works from the lobby. In this time they will get a sense of the company's brand and culture. This is a critical, yet often overlooked, part of the visitor experience.

Organisations who are thinking about the future should curate an experience where visitors feel comfortable. This might mean comfortable seating, an accessible WiFi code, free food and drink, and clearly displayed information about your company so visitors can read about the business while they wait.

### Frame three

The final frame zooms in on the visitor as an individual. What are their personal needs, and are they being met? Organisations should want their guests to leave feeling positive about the company and willing to discuss it with their network. To secure a superior visitor experience, the visitor journey should be personalised and powered by technology. The pre-registration of guests allows visitors not only to submit and complete necessary paperwork, but also to state their preferences before entering the building. The company can then prepare the experience ahead of time, making sure the WiFi code, amenities and spaces are available.

For example, a guest might state that they need to come early because they have a virtual meeting just before they are due to meet the host. The host organisation can respond by sending the WiFi code in advance and booking a small meeting room with VC capabilities, which will be available to the guest when they arrive at the building. This small gesture can be the difference between a standard and a super visitor experience.



## AND FINALLY...

If you are interested in the visitor management issues and innovations raised in this Envoy In View paper, please contact:

### ENVOY CONTACT DETAILS

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## ABOUT ENVOY

Envoy is transforming modern workplaces for flexible work to bring people together so they can connect, collaborate, and thrive. Envoy's workplace platform has redefined how companies welcome visitors, improve the employee experience, book desks and conference rooms, and manage deliveries in 16,000 locations around the globe by designing products for a flexible workplace experience. Companies like Slack, Pinterest, and Warby Parker rely on Envoy to create an unrivaled first impression and keep their offices secure and compliant.

For more information, please visit [envoy.com](https://envoy.com) or [contact sales](#).



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WORKTECH Academy is the leading global platform and member network exploring how we'll work tomorrow.

WORKTECH Academy looks at innovation in the world of work and workplace through five key streams: people, place, technology, design and culture. WORKTECH Academy engages with its powerful network of over 10,000 individual members and more than 70 corporate, design and technology organisations around the world to deliver content on the latest trends, research and best practice in work and workplace.

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