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CMS WIRE: 6 Ways 5G Will Empower The Digital Workplace

By: David Roe

<https://www.cmswire.com/digital-workplace/6-ways-5g-will-empower-the-digital-workplace/>

5G may be a technology of the future, but that is set to change. Dallas, Texas-based AT&T has said that it is aiming to be the first US carrier to launch standards-based mobile 5G services to customers later this year. For smartphone users this means faster access to more apps. For enterprises it means a faster, data-driven digital workplace.

While the digital workplace has been driven by data since enterprises started moving online 20 years ago, the release of 5G as a workplace and consumer technology, could revolutionize the way we work in much the same way the internet did. But will it? Here are six ways that the digital workplace will changeover the next two years, according to analysts and experts.

Latency

Roger Nichols is 5G program manager at Keysight Technologies, a Santa Rosa, Calif.-based company that manufactures electronic test and measurement equipment and software. He points out that the enhanced Mobile Broadband (eMBB) facet of 5G will help workers move data at speeds much faster than existing networks. However, 5G is about not just faster download and upload, but also much lower latency. The combination of these two will enable approaches to information management not feasible in the legacy mobile environment. The "carry your office anywhere" can be enhanced by an augmented reality

Complement these two with network operators using network slicing technology to provide a particularly secure or high-reliability network service through real-time provisioning, and the applications go well beyond that of an augmented teleconference.

Connected Everything

This will be augmented by ubiquitous connected "things." Even legacy networks will have facilitated an Internet of Things consisting of perhaps 20 billion devices by the year 2020 and 5G will be set to augment that with new network capability, rolling out right around that same time. As 5G becomes a reality, emerging technology will impact us on a massive scale, especially in the workplace.

Nichols points out that 5G will allow technology to connect the workplace and keep it running efficiently — providing a huge boost for the future of work. Resources like smart conference rooms, office automation and the integration of AI into everyday technology will not only become the norm, but will be taken for granted in maximizing workplace productivity. Office collaboration will grow, complex challenges will become easier to tackle, and the assistance of the technology may even improve work-life balance.

"The switch to 5G will be colossal for businesses, and those that embrace and adapt to what 5G offers will thrive. The vision requires innovation and persistence, and this is why the development and implementation phases of 5G is crucial to where we will find ourselves in the coming years," Nichols said.

Mobile access, in general, has been critical for enterprises with regards to their efforts to adopt a digital workplaces. This is especially true in the Asia-Pacific and Japan region, where Redwood City, Calif.-based SAP Jam — a collaboration company owned by SAP — typically sees 80 percent of the usage of its collaboration products entirely on a mobile client, according to Stephen Hamrick, vice president of product management.

What's astonishing, he said, is that despite many stories about how great mobile coverage is in emerging markets like Asia-Pacific, the majority of smartphone uses aren't even at 4G speeds, while a good number are stuck at 3G.

Right now, he points out, with limited bandwidth and coverage, employees will either choose not to share or will wait until they can find a nearby WiFi hotspot. "Given how important digital content is not finding its way into a company's digital workplace today, it's clear that better speed will always be welcome," he said. "Given the current state of coverage for 4G, we'll have to wait and see if 5G sees the roll-out and coverage necessary to make a significant impact. In the meantime, companies are relying more and more on local WiFi coverage."

Collaboration and IoT

Don MacLeod, practice director at TEKsystems Telecommunications, a Hanover, Md.-based provider of IT staffing and IT services, points out that the addition of 5G capabilities will immediately impact the speed of communications, helping increase productivity across the distributed workforce. "Collaboration takes time, and with a distributed workforce, interactions that are typically scheduled and time bound can become more ad-hoc and real-time. 5G will allow near real-time collaboration, which will reduce the requirements of organizing these interactions and lead to increased productivity and efficiency," he said.

He adds that 5G capabilities will power an advanced IoT which could allow real-time collaboration between people and things. It will also drive advancements in augmented reality and virtual reality (AR/VR) allowing them to become fully realized collaborative technologies.

The delay in moving toward a decentralized workforce is predominantly due to the limitations of current technologies (4G and wired networks) being able to support these real-time interactions. 5G could usher in the death of the non-productive work space, and the collaboration and enablement that occurs with 5G can fully support a decentralized workforce.

Real-Time Synch

Paul Alick, an electrical engineer with Campad Electronics, an Australian-based mobile technology provider. He says that the difference between what happens on your device and what happens in the cloud will become unnoticeable because of 5G. Cloud processing will be able to be done in real time giving users access to potentially unlimited data storage and access to massive processing power via the cloud. The productivity and benefits of this are huge. This will also enable real-time video interaction.

"Real time video interactions will become standard. Video calls won't buffer due to 5G's massive bandwidth delivery. This means that remote trouble shooting, doctor conferences, business meetings will be a possible. This gives flexibility and reduces travel time," he said. This all means more portability, faster bandwidth in the field and home and will allow organizations to save on operational costs for remote workers.

Network-as-a-Service (NaaS)

It will also be possible to increase the number of networks used in the enterprise, according to Steve Dietch Chief Revenue Officer at Mountain View, Calif.-based Pensa having previously occupied senior management roles at Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Compaq, IBM and Booz-Allen & Hamilton.

He says that with 5G technology, service providers will be able to partition a single physical network into multiple virtual networks allowing the service providers to offer optimal support for different types of services across different customer segments. This means providing enterprises with network as-a-service which will reduce time to market, provide the right service to the right customer at the right time, and create significant cost effectiveness for service providers. "Most importantly," he added, "this will deliver targeted services

