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*For those of you old enough to remember "Leave it to Beaver", the sight of Ward Cleaver backing out of the driveway and on his way to work was a familiar one. While he was busy toiling about in the business world, June, perfectly manicured and dressed, was at home cleaning and baking a pie for dinner...**HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED!***

Enter e-mail, chat, voice mail, laptops, blogs, BlackBerrys, mobile phones, instant messaging, wireless high-speed Internet access, working from home, working from Starbucks, working from the back of a cab...*the business world will never look the same.* Technology has freed the workers from being chained to their desks and will continue to not only change the process by which work is completed, *but also the physical space which is required to do the work.*

In 2000, Jet Blue Airlines was one of the first major corporations to try a radical and comprehensive approach to telecommuting. Jet Blue was in need of a call center to handle all the reservations for their new airline so they decided to relegate the call center operation to telecommuters working from their homes. Jet Blue offered these home workers job flexibility, a competitive wage package and equipped them with cutting-edge telecommunication equipment. The subsequent cost savings were extraordinary and those savings went right back into immediate customer benefits such as televisions in the back of every airplane seat.

The concept of working from home has evolved over the last few years to include *working from just about anywhere.* Coffee shops, restaurants, hotel rooms and lobbies, public parks, trains, airplanes, taxis are



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all places where it is now common to see a person working with their laptop and mobile phone. With instantaneous communication software and robust broadband, workers can now be connected to each other in such a way that virtually makes it "feel" like they are in the same physical space. Ask anyone who has used instant messaging and they'll tell you that in some ways it's actually better than being in the same office *because it's much faster and more efficient to IM than to have to get up and walk down the hall to ask a question of a co-worker.*

As the demands on our time increase and energy prices rise, the pressure to augment traditional work forces with mobile options is accelerating. If the energy crisis grows as predicted, the pressure for mobility will increase and the implications to the Commercial Real Estate industry could be great.

The following are just a few of the impacts we could expect over the next few years:

- 1) Tenants may need smaller space to conduct their business.
- 2) Tenants will possibly need more flexible space in order to respond to the fluctuating demands for workspace.
- 3) A strong telecommunications infrastructure, including wireless, will be a requirement, not a luxury.
- 4) Real Estate companies will need to implement mobile worker programs in order to stay competitive.
- 5) Traditional roles such as brokerage, property management and facility management will change radically with increased mobile capabilities.
- 6) Organizations will be required to go paperless in order to make it easier for remote workers to access required information.

Mark Golan, Vice President of Worldwide Real Estate and Workplace Resources at Cisco Systems, and the visionary behind Building 14, Cisco's proof of concept virtual workplace in San Jose, predicts that *someday the entire Cisco workforce, including the CEO, will work in a temp-desk environment.*

David Frosh, President of Sperry Van Ness, has done the same thing in the Brokerage sector. According to Frosh, elimination of traditional space requirements and offering extreme flexibility *does wonders for the bottom line.* Even the federal government is moving quickly in this direction, mandating that a certain amount of federal workers must work in a mobile capacity for a certain percentage of their work week.

There is very little doubt that mobility will continue to impact our industry. It's probably a good idea to take a moment to assess your organization's current mobile activity. If you are 10% mobile, or less, it is highly recommended that you investigate the options of mobility and begin to implement the appropriate policies and programs. By ignoring this growing trend, you may find yourself uncompetitive and, even worse, unable to understand the changing needs of the market and your clients.

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