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Flexibility is the key

Mike Welch, managing director of Control Network Solutions discusses how flexible lighting solutions are key to managing commercial environments and maintaining a productive workplace.

More than 600,000 startups were expected to launch in 2015 following a government-backed national enterprise campaign aimed at inspiring entrepreneurs. A successful initiative encouraging new companies, the consequent development of these start-ups is the now large number of commercial tenants seeking their first premises.

As most start-ups are unable to commit to a traditional 10-year lease, where commercial office rents are continually increasing, more flexible serviced offices, which offer short-term leases and lower operational costs are considered favourable.

Offering a more affordable service, many start-ups begin in a shared office environment then relocate to a single occupancy office once better established. Due to the constant turnover in tenants and change in use of the shared office environment, it can often mean the reconfiguration of the layout and a headache for service providers.

This is particularly pertinent in lighting– where getting it wrong can have a significant effect on employee productivity and well-being. Lighting is a well-documented issue within the workplace, with more than 60 per cent of employees estimated to make complaints about the lighting in their office environment.

Dim lighting is often a main culprit, causing eyestrain and headaches; it can also result in drowsiness and lack of focus, ultimately decreasing employee motivation and productivity. In addition, fluorescent or bright lighting can also have a negative impact, as it's known to trigger migraines and can also make it difficult for the eye to focus.

Furthermore, recent research has shown that lighting intensity is also age dependent, with those aged over 45 requiring more light than those younger to see the same visual detail. Therefore, adjusting lighting to suit each individual could result in an increase in productivity.

As other lighting features also begin to be taken into consideration, such as colour temperature, a new area of human centric lighting research has developed. Considering the impact of lighting has on the human body, various new factors that can potentially influence mood and productivity are becoming of significant importance.

Therefore, in a busy office environment where the constant rearrangement of desks and employees will likely result in lighting complaints, a flexible lighting solution that can be instantly altered is ideal.

Enabling real-time instantaneous changes, flexible lighting control solutions allow for the brightness of lights to be easily altered to suit the employee's preference. This would in turn reduce the number of complaints, along with presenting service providers an easy solution to any issues that could arise.

Furthermore, by embracing the latest innovation and technology, and installing a control system that integrates with the Internet of Things (IoT), the requirement for an engineer to be onsite to make the changes is not necessary, removing the additional site visit costs associated with making system alterations.

Based upon a building's existing building management system (BMS), elitedaliTM is an example of a flexible lighting control system. Integrating with an existing Niagara BMS, elitedali enables the BMS system to control the lighting and connects it with the IoT.

A vendor-independent solution, any suitably qualified BMS engineer can install, commission and maintain the system, with the end-user and facilities manager having total control over who is appointed to do so.

In addition, through a connection with the IoT, elitedali controls provide access to the lighting system using any suitable web browser, anywhere with Internet access. This allows system changes to be undertaken offsite as well as onsite, with the system instantly registering the alterations.

This provides several unique benefits, for example, often if changes are made to light brightness, it can involve lengthy conversations that can ultimately still result in an incorrect change, with the process then having to be repeated. Through the use of elitedali, the changes can be made whilst having the conversation, with the changes impacting immediately and therefore easily corrected.

Also, through the integration with the IoT, device level data can be accessed from each light fixture, providing real-time information for any analytics to be undertaken. A significant benefit for end-clients, the device level data can be used to calculate the cost of the working environment as well as which lights are used more frequently.

Through providing a simple and easy to access lighting control system, not only are costs reduced from the offset, with the initial investment required lowered due to the utilisation of the building's existing BMS, but on-going service and maintenance is also reduced.

By providing an instantly adjustable lighting system, office tenants and employees can rest assured that the lighting will not have a detrimental impact on their health or productivity.