

ICE ROBOTICS®

The 3 Most Important Tech Trends for Property Managers in 2023



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State of the Property Management Industry

Property management companies faced many uncertainties as they worked to weather the pandemic. How and when would people return to work? What changes would need to be made to commercial buildings to support better health and wellbeing? Would the way people work ever resemble what it was before the pandemic?

While the answers to these questions are not entirely clear, it is fair to say the way we work and subsequently live has changed.

For many, going back to work outside the home is a priority. However, building safety, cleanliness, sustainability, and job flexibility, including hybrid and remote working options, are all growing concerns and preferences.

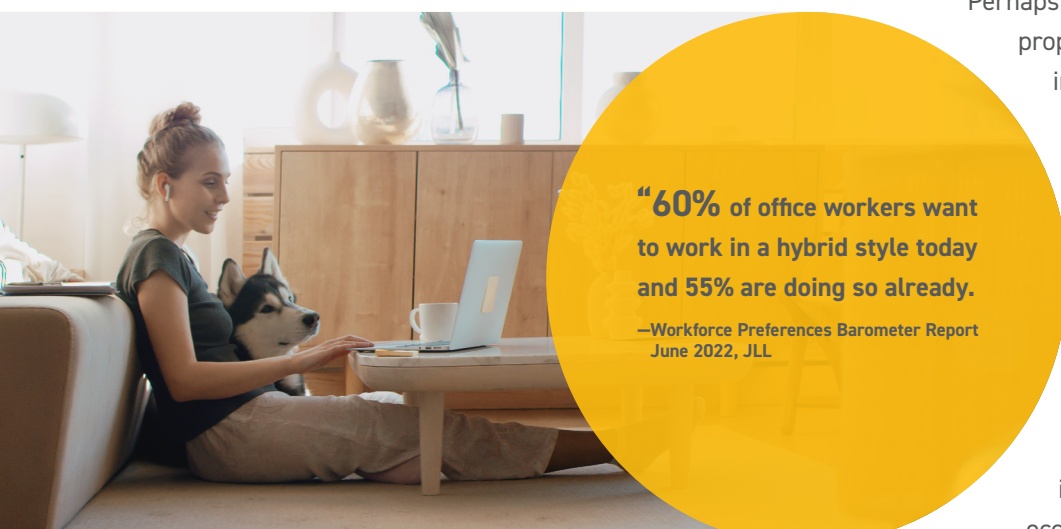
For example, determining whether a building is safe to return to is largely linked to the perceived cleanliness of the space.

According to [JLL](#) one of the largest commercial property management companies in the U.S. "In a recent survey, 75% of company executives in New York cited office cleaning as the most important factor determining staff's willingness to return, according to the Cleaning Coalition of America."

In addition, flexible working conditions are now a priority for most. Recent research from the third edition of [McKinsey's American Opportunity Survey](#) found that "when people have the chance to work flexibly, 87 percent of them take it. This dynamic is widespread across demographics, occupations, and geographies."

Perhaps the most notable change impacting property management comes from the increase in hybrid and remote working schedules, causing unpredictability in building occupancy.

This makes it necessary for a reevaluation of how office and living spaces are utilized and this leads to a reimagining of layout, use of technology, and a better understanding of what is necessary to support building occupancy.



"60% of office workers want to work in a hybrid style today and 55% are doing so already.

—Workforce Preferences Barometer Report
June 2022, JLL

Re-evaluating the Built Environment

Property managers are feeling pressure due to unpredictable use of space. On any given day, the number of occupants in a building can change dramatically from the previous day. There are two main reasons for this: Hybrid Work and Remote Work.

- ▶ **1. Hybrid Work:** Property managers and employers are assessing what the office environment needs to provide for hybrid workers.

In most cases, hybrid workers do not have one spot or cubicle to report to but instead move around between locations.

This means, the amenities they are in search of include access to secure and strong wireless connections, a quiet space for more concentrated work, as well as spaces where they can meet with clients or co-workers. In addition, they need easy access to tools that provide secure wireless connections and easy communication with co-workers, so they can plan to meet and work together.

The space also needs to feel warm, welcoming, and suited to a hybrid workers lifestyle, which may mean additional amenities like gyms, coffee shops, and cafeterias or restaurants. The hybrid worker is on the go and is looking for built spaces that support their movement.

“Employers should be aware that when a candidate is deciding between job offers with similar compensation, the opportunity to work flexibly can become the deciding factor.” [McKinsey](#)

- ▶ **2. Remote Work:** Remote workers have property managers assessing what residential spaces should look and feel like as remote workers increasingly want to be able to comfortably live and work in the same spot.

This means reevaluating layouts and amenities in apartment complexes to address these changes and draw people to the property.

Apartments now need to be easily connected to high-speed wireless services in addition to offering a “work” space inside the living space.

In addition to rethinking working and living spaces, the health, safety, and sustainability of the built environment is more important now than it ever has been to more people. All this draws into question how will property managers address these changes and create buildings of the future?



Buildings of the Future

To evolve and stay ahead of transitioning work and lifestyles, property management companies will continue to rely on technology.

As the CEO and co-founder of Mashviser, a real estate data analytics company, Peter Abualzolof, pointed out in a recent article for Forbes,

“Despite the turbulence of the last couple of years, I think it is safe to say that the real estate industry as a whole has weathered the storm relatively well, and this is—at least partially—owing to technology advancements and tools that supported all stakeholders during these tough times.”

He goes on to note “Agents, investors, homeowners, lenders, property managers and real estate entrepreneurs are all better off because of technology.”

Technology is behind buildings of the future.

Without technology, weathering the pandemic would have looked different. While it was not perfect and there were issues—bad internet connections and zoom calls gone wrong- twenty years ago, these options would not have been available.

As is true across most industries, the pandemic accelerated many of these shifts. Technology has played a vital role in the transformation of buildings and how we work, but the pandemic accelerated the pace of the transformation.

As a result, the property management industry is now faced with keeping pace and quickly adapting buildings to address the future of work and relieve some of the uncertainty related to unpredictable building occupancy.

To do so, it will be important to continue to integrate technology and keep pace with new advancements to provide work and living spaces conducive to these changing needs.

“Without technology, a property management firm won’t possess the efficiency, competence and capacity to scale up to allow owners to achieve profitability.”

—Managecasa

“Employers are wise to invest in technology, adapt policies, and train employees to create workplaces that integrate people working remotely and on-site (without overcompensating by requiring that workers spend too much time in video meetings).”

—McKinsey



Top 3 Technology Trends Property Managers Need in 2023

IoT (Internet of Things) Connected Buildings

At the start of it all is the on-going use and expansion of IoT (internet of things) technology and connected buildings.

Commercial Real Estate (CRE) investors and managers rely on collected data to help them better manage properties.

According to [Planon](#) ***“IoT allows RE and FM professionals to better understand how well their buildings, workplaces, and assets actually operate. This opportunity can help RE and FM professionals to enhance and improves asset performance as well as the services they provide to the people within their facilities.”***

Data collected by interconnected sensors and devices can help reduce costs in overall management of the building, help track and plan for routine maintenance, and in general help property managers be better in line with tenants by meeting their needs and expectations.

According to [ManageCasa](#) ***“The demand today is for all-in-one cloud-based platforms that are easy to learn and use. Full SaaS platforms aid in workflow automation, meet changing rental regulations, optimize financial management, and offer lease driven accounting and expense management which reduces administration and improves confidence in financial and operations reports.”***

A key benefit to connected buildings is the access to data. For CRE and PM professionals, much of the data linked to building management used to come from sifting through lots of paperwork or physically visiting sites.

Due to connected devices, data is tracked and available across platforms, giving CRE and PM professionals access to information in near real-time and without having to visit an actual site.

“IoT is one of the most essential technologies of the modern business world, and it will continue to gain popularity as more businesses recognize its potential to keep them competitive.”

—Impact QA





Additionally, platforms that allow clients to pay bills or communicate directly with a property management company provide both parties the opportunity for faster communication and solvency of any issues.

Examples of some of these data generating connected devices are smart lighting systems that power on and off when tenants enter a room, or HVAC systems that use temperature sensors to detect activity in a space and can automatically adjust the temperature and even IoT connected security systems.

These types of data can help with money management, facilities maintenance management, and to meet tenants' needs and expectations more quickly. When the data is monitored and acted upon, the relationship between the PM and client relationship can be better maintained.

“Other than allowing CRE to expose wide segments of the universal population to IoT technology, these advancements will provide property owners to have direct relationships with the users. This would lead to building relationships with customers as well as strengthening tenant engagement.” —Impact QA

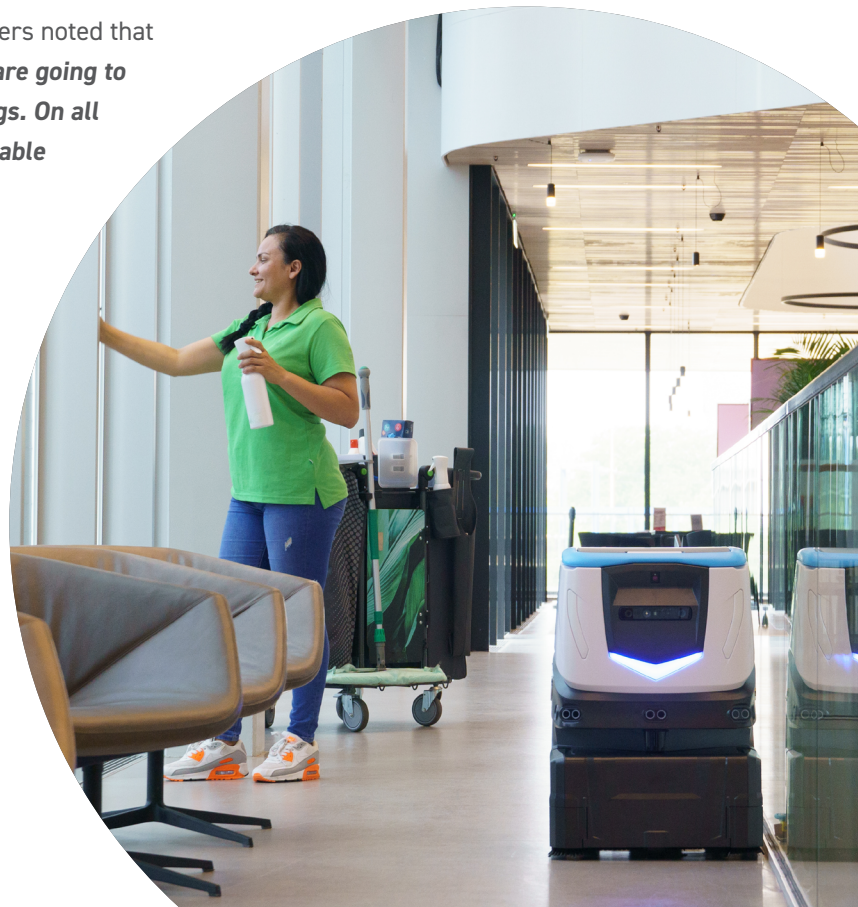
In addition, IoT connected buildings can support the users of the space as well. As hybrid work continues to impact how business is done, it has become even more important for building occupants to have access to information regarding the physical use of buildings.

For many businesses, offering employees access to an app that allows them to connect with co-workers when on site or to reserve a space at the office ahead of time is a big plus.

In a recent a podcast hosted by [Real Comm](#), the speakers noted that property managers ***“Have to understand how spaces are going to be utilized both in rental properties and office buildings. On all levels people need amenities that make them comfortable and excited to work for the company.”***

The speakers also noted people want to enjoy the experience of coming back to the office and want to get back to comradery and mentorship with colleagues.

Keeping employees engaged and willing to come into the office is now based on how well the office space supports different needs. Whether it is easy access to a space to work, highly efficient wireless access, or planning to meet up with co-workers and colleagues while on site, the use of technology is at the center of these decisions.



AI (Artificial Intelligence) - Business Predictability

There is more than one way AI is reshaping how property managers manage and care for properties.

As the future of work continues to pan out, buildings of the future must keep pace. Artificial Intelligence plays a significant role in this as AI platforms continue to analyze data faster, making the information more user friendly.

According to [CBRE](#), up and coming AI platforms will help to manage “volatility” and use of space. For example, ***“As AI platforms become more sophisticated, they will eventually start managing workflows and job creation in organizations (they already are in some leading organizations).”***

The article goes on to point out ***“Ultimately, these platforms will be better equipped than humans to understand headcount volatility and predict long-term trends, allowing for smarter real estate strategies. AI will not stop unpredictability – just help us understand and manage it better.”***

In other words, AI platforms analyze and manage data in ways that help predict future business needs including data related to staffing in response to new job requirements and roles that may be necessary in the future. The AI Software can analyze data to help a company make more efficient job creation and headcount decisions, which have a significant impact on the future of the business.

In addition, AI software programs can help by collecting renter information and crafting a list of properties that best suit the prospective client. This can help PM's as well as clients save time. It also helps PM's get a better sense of what types of properties and amenities clients are most interested in, which can help with future property buildouts.

And lastly, one other way AI software is helping PMs with business predictability is through client conversion improvement.

According to [David Bitton](#), the CMO and co-founder of [DoorLoop](#), ***“Aside from the increased use of these marketplaces, real estate professionals will also maximize AI-enhanced tools to analyze the sales funnel and generate targeted campaigns to improve conversion.”***



AI & Healthier Environments

AI will deliver in other ways too. Autonomous equipment is increasingly being adopted to augment the labor force and keep up with building maintenance.

Cleaning is a prime example. While in the past cleaning teams worked “after hours” (pre-pandemic), cleaning time is now flexed based on when the space is used, and cleaning teams are positioned to be in the building when it is occupied.

This comes from increasing concerns about building cleanliness. Those returning to work want to feel safe knowing their workspace is being cleaned and maintained. Because of this cleaning is no longer done in the shadows, it is out in the open.

Autonomous cleaning equipment elevates this sense of safety because cobots (collaborative robots) can be deployed to run routes and clean floors, while cleaning teams focus on other high-priority work, like wiping down high-touch surfaces, meaning more areas of the space are being deep cleaned.

Cobi 18 by ICE Robotics is a compact autonomous scrubber, designed to work alongside cleaning teams. The cobot can navigate complex environments and be started with three simple clicks, making it easy for staff to start and move on to other work. Plus, the easy-to-use design helps keep training to a minimum so facilities maintenance managers can quickly train new staff and keep everyone on task.

By deploying cobots like Cobi 18, facilities managers also gain more insight into the daily cleaning as the cobot is IoT connected, and the data can be tracked in near real-time through an app. For property managers, this is another way to access information that can better help them manage their property and report the information to tenants to confirm the work is being done. Cobi 18 collects data through i-SYNERGY fleet management software giving end-users the ability to improve processes and increase efficiencies across properties.

“51% of organizations plan to start using industrial robots for cleaning, maintenance or security by 2025, as they become ever more sophisticated thanks to AI.”

—JLL

AI & Sustainability

Additionally, AI technology can help with sustainability. By using AI powered sensors and algorithms smart technology can help reduce the use of energy consumption by detecting when people enter and exit rooms in a building.

From smart lighting that detects when a person moves in or out of a room to more energy efficient HVAC systems that also use sensors to detect a person in a particular area of the building, these tools help to save resources by moving between low and high-power modes, or heating and cooling based on temperature in the space.

“Implementation of intelligent HVAC systems can reduce overall energy consumption by up to 10% and smart lighting can reduce usage by as much as a whopping 45%” according to [District Tech](#).



Virtual Reality

The use of virtual reality has been a game changer for the property management industry. During the pandemic showing properties in person was not an option. Because of this, virtual reality tours became the default, especially among investors; the trend has stuck.

Using virtual reality allows property managers to give a tour of the space without the prospective buyer or renter having to be physically present.

Matterport, a virtual reality company, released preliminary findings from a study showing that listings “with a **3D virtual tour** sold for up to nine percent higher and closed up to 31% faster. Over 90% of the listings with 3D tours used Matterport.”



While the research is based on their own technology, the benefits of virtual reality are hard to negate.

- ▶ 1. It allows prospective buyers or renters the ability to access more listings faster. For investors, or those that need to make decisions quickly, there is more information that is easily accessible.
- ▶ 2. It is more convenient—property managers and clients can spend less time travelling between properties and more time discussing details.
- ▶ 3. It is safer. For anyone concerned about frequent contact with many people or venturing into inhabited buildings, a virtual tour can be done from the safety of home.

Beyond making property management investment easier, VR can also play a vital role to businesses and their employees.

CBRE recently reported that businesses are using VR to help employees with change management. The research noted the use of VR and AR (augmented reality) to help employees who have a tough time adapting to change.

Through VR and AR, companies can provide brief introductions to changes being implemented and this can help some employees adapt more easily.

“By transforming the concept of workplace change into a vivid reality, AR and VR are more likely to help create enthusiastic change champions who will share their experience with colleagues.” —CBRE

Similarly, businesses can use the technology to help with training and building maintenance. **CBRE** notes, ***“Facility managers are also starting to use AR and VR tools to enhance fire safety, space maintenance and new hire trainings. According to EON Reality’s research reports, trainings that use the AVR platform are 2.7 times faster and 63% less expensive compared to traditional training methods.”***

Conclusion

For property managers, technology and connectivity is key to future success and happy tenants. As businesses work to adapt to the preferences of employees and the changing roles people take on, technology is at the center of making it easy and inviting. Property managers need to be at the forefront of this technology to make sure their buildings are rented and that occupants utilize the space.

ICE Cobotics is a leading cleaning equipment and technology solutions provider specializing in subscription services and autonomous equipment. Cobi 18 is an autonomous floor scrubber designed to clean in complex real-world environments. Contact one of our Automation Experts today to learn more about Cobi 18 and how you can start implementing autonomous solutions across your properties.



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