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CORPORATE REAL ESTATE & WORKPLACE

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App helps Capital One employees engage more with real estate

Imagine an app that simplifies and consolidates a whole range of real estate services for employees, from finding a conference room to use, to submitting a work order for a burned-out light bulb. That was the goal behind @Work, an associate-facing mobile workplace app developed last year by Capital One when it teamed up with Modo Labs to develop a way for associates to engage with the company's real estate in a more meaningful way.

Samantha Fisher, director of workplace experience for Capital One, tells us more about @Work in this Q&A.

What initiated the app's development?

Fisher: The app really spawned from the question, "How do we help our associates engage with real estate in a way that's meaningful to them, and that feels natural, and that emulates the way that they engage with other services in their daily life?"

Before, it meant engaging with a bunch of disparate systems. As an organization, we're moving to digital formats and leveraging the way people engage with their life today that's mostly around mobile devices. We're focused on being a technology company that offers financial services. We asked ourselves, how do we leverage this approach from a real estate perspective?

An idea that continually rose to the top was, "What about an app?" We had three or four suppliers come in and present options to us. They ranged from off-the-shelf products to a custom-design solution. We focused on potential partners that were already delivering an experience to an audience similar to the one we wanted to reach and focused on user experience, a key requirement for us. Modo Labs was already providing an app for some of the top universities in the U.S.

What does the app do?

Fisher: The app is intended to help our associates be more productive in how they navigate and engage with their physical workspace. To enable that, we use geo-location services, so you only get info relevant to your location. If I'm in our headquarters building in McLean, Virginia, it only gives me info that's relevant to our McLean location. Our app is delivering some key functionality that is important to our associates. The information is arranged as modules within the main app and includes "What's Here," "Find It," "Eats," "Transit," and "Fix It," to name a few. Again, the information delivered to our associates via these modules is location-specific so it is an incredibly useful tool for helping our associates plan and decision their days.

The "What's Here" module tells our associates what amenities are available at their location, where to park, and things like specialty information about fitness centers. It's not immersive and it's not touch-enabled; it's just a quick overview.

"Find It," a map module, is essentially a floor plan that we have converted into a map. If you're in the building and you're looking for a conference room, this module presents that information in a touch-responsive form, so you can navigate to see where conference rooms are, coffee spots, bathrooms, and any other amenities on that floor.

What's
Here

Find
It

Our “Eats” module is all about the food and beverage spots – what are the available places to eat and/or drink.

“Fix It” was actually a module we collaborated with our partner on to meet our business needs. It enables our associates to submit work orders for things within their facility that are broken or not working – too hot, too cold, a chair is broken. These are requests that historically our associates would have had to go to their laptop/desktop to submit, but “Fix It” makes it easy to submit the request while on the go. It also supports the upload of pictures – something our facilities team really likes in pinpointing the issue.

Because we purchased an existing solution, there is a lot of native capability as well as the ability for us to build capabilities into the app with our partner. A nice side benefit is that we can decide what to deploy, when to deploy, and how to deploy. It creates a pipeline of continued new functionality releases.

Is it just for campus locations?

Fisher: No, we provide this same experience for all of our major people centers – be they campus or single-tower buildings. In single-tower locations, like New York or San Francisco where we are multi-tenant, we only deliver information for the floors we occupy.

Let's say I'm going down to your McLean campus, can I find a place to work through the app?

Fisher: We don't use hot-desking at any of our locations, so while you couldn't find a specific desk through the app, you could find a conference room for your meeting or other spaces where you can touch down for the day, like a coffee bar. Additionally, we are working on an improvement for the “Find It” module – data-driven maps can help us capture real-time vacancy for our non-reservable spaces and convert that data into useable information for our associates. That feature will be live in our 2.0 version.

Can I find a person if I'm looking for someone?

Fisher: That type of functionality comes when you add authentication, a functionality we don't have yet. It is part of our 2016 roadmap and version 2.0 release, where we will have (Microsoft® Outlook) Exchange active directory connections. This functionality will enable our associates to search for other associates in our active directory and see their assigned location. From there they can look up the location on a floor map and navigate their way to the assigned office/desk location.

How long has @Work been up?

Fisher: We launched the Apple version in September 2014 and we launched the Android and Universal Apple versions in December 2014. Folks really love it. We had huge waves of adoption during our initial launch schedules, due in part to a stellar marketing and communication campaign.

We continue to review metrics like page-dwell times and bounce and abandonment rates to understand what are the most important features/modules to our associates. Hands-down the “Eats,” “Transit,” and “Find It” modules continue to be the best-performing for us.

What percentage of population is using it?

Fisher: This metric is difficult to calculate since we don't have the app tied to people and some of our associates don't have corporate devices. But we estimate that about 20% of our population is using it regularly based on the number of downloads, the number of corporate devices, and the number of page views.

Is it growing over time?

Fisher: When we launched we did a fairly sizable marketing campaign around it so that we could get people to adopt and use it. We had about 15,000 downloads, and 5,000 people on average using it daily. We are now over 21,000 downloads and, since January 2016, 18,000 active sessions, over 100,000 page views, and a 4-minute dwell time in each session. The bounce rate is also really low, around 10 percent.

As we work to develop features and functionality for 2.0, we have seen a bit of decline in downloads but expect that to tick back up with some improvement capability.

How would you describe the results in terms of engagement with real estate?

Fisher: Our services run the gamut, everything from designing and building a new building to changing a light bulb. The way we were engaging associates was through an Internet portal that essentially outlines all of our services as, “here are the 25 services that we offer.” It wasn't integrated, it wasn't simple, and our associates didn't know who or how to engage. In many cases, there were a lot of folks who didn't understand all of the services we offer and how we can help them. It has really simplified that for their needs.

It has enhanced the overall perception of real estate and the associates can see that we're forward-thinking in solving what matters to them. Real estate is slow moving; construction doesn't happen overnight. It's not like technology, where you can develop a new app overnight. By developing and deploying an app, we have shown our associates that we're a different type of real estate organization. It's addressing what our associates need immediately and is propelling our organization forward, highlighting our ability to be flexible and nimble.

I would imagine Millennials are using this app a lot more than Boomers? Can you extract that data?

Fisher: We can't right now because it's tied to your location, not to you as a person. The app doesn't know that I'm Samantha Fisher. That's coming in round two, along with a new and enhanced user experience.

What are the biggest benefits you've seen since deploying it?

Fisher: For the real estate organization, it's really been our ability to show an integrated solution. We have all of these services where the app has helped us streamline those processes, and we've found great technology partners that have helped us deliver these services in a great, new way. For our associates, we're helping to solve a very complex, sometimes ambiguous experience – submitting a service request, for example – so they can focus on their work.

From the corporate side, do you find that you're able to attract staff? Do you see increases in productivity?

Fisher: We don't have any data saying that our app is attracting talent, but in general, Capital One is trying to attract that software engineer, developer-type talent and, for them, a company with an internal-facing associate app that creates a seamless user experience for engaging real estate services is pretty cool. It has also created a level of visibility within the organization that we didn't have before; again, we were the concrete-and-bricks people, but now we reach all of our associates. That is a compelling story for other Capital One app developers who want to reach the same population.

The app also gives us a common language of communication, enabling real estate to speak that language with our clients and have them feel like they are an integral part of their workplace design.

How has it affected your engagement with your IT department?

Fisher: The partnership we developed with our tech team was instrumental to our delivery of the app. We worked in a very close partnership with them to identify solution options and determine our mobile roadmap and how to leverage other mobility plans for the organization. We also looked at ways we could deploy the app that would meet our strict security requirements. We continue to have a great relationship with that team and, in the instances where a new capability has not aligned with our supplier's roadmap, our internal tech team has stepped in to help develop the capability for us and tie it into @Work.

Has data privacy come into play at all in development or use of the app?

Fisher: Data privacy is always paramount for us. Our partner's access to our associates' information is limited to their name and employee ID so we can match the experience to the associate. Similar to other apps, @Work is reliant on the W-iFi and Bluetooth® connection being "on;" associates can self-select to turn those functions off. Since we are completing the authentication portion of the new release, we are still partnering with our internal teams to understand what communications we need to share with our associate population regarding what data will be collected, how it will be leveraged for decisions, and their options to opt out.

We hear a lot about "big data" these days. How are you incorporating other resources to scale up the app's functionality?

Fisher: Yes, this is an area of explosive growth for us. We are looking to tie @Work into our Exchange platform for meeting room reservations and are considering connecting it to our building-automation systems to enable our associates to potentially provide feedback on HVAC and lighting. We are also investigating the options to leverage proximity and sensing information, in conjunction with the app, to automate meeting room releases and HVAC changes based on occupancy changes in the environment. Modo Labs utilizes Google Analytics as its big-data platform, and we have already integrated @Work specific data into our business-intelligence system to help us understand what are the most useful modules. This will ensure we are orienting our designs for new capabilities to create value for our customers.



Samantha Fisher is an accomplished real estate professional with Capital One's Workplace Solutions, leading their Workplace Experience team. She has over 15 years of experience in guiding and managing programs including retail operation transitions, facility service integrations, service process re-engineering, and technology adoption at Fortune 500 companies.



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