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10 characteristics of an Immersive Workspace

What is an immersive workspace? Why do they matter?
And what should you ensure yours contains?

Defining the immersive workspace

As there is no formalised definition of an Immersive Workspace, with our 10+ year experience in Shared VR and immersive technology, we've had a go at writing one ourselves.

immersive workspace

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A technology-rich meeting space, equipped with wraparound sound and vision, that enables project teams to collaborate more effectively and to engage more intuitively with a full range of digital content and data

The rise of the Immersive Workspace

We've been noticing something of a trend over the last year. Several enterprise clients have been commissioning Igloo Immersive Workspaces - multi-purpose Igloo set-ups, enabling a range of office-based use-cases like immersive data visualisation, video conferencing, presentations, prototyping, and ideation.

In 2019, Gartner started touting immersive workspaces as a technology CIOs should be actively investigating. They're about to make their way through the Gartner Hype Cycle.

And, they're part of a wider Evolving Workspaces trend, in which "immersive technologies, such as augmented and virtual reality are ready for mainstream businesses for training and immersive conference room services".
Then in its technology predictions for 2020, NTT talks of immersive, responsive 'phygital' spaces, where the physical world blends with the digital.

Finally, in Deloitte's technology trends for 2020, it describes how digital reality is changing how we engage with technology, "through augmented, immersive and 360° experiences that

are at once intuitive and data-rich, and which put the human user at the center of design."

But what is an immersive workspace? And what does it actually represent for your business?

> " Our new immersive workspace has had an incredible impact on collaboration and productivity.
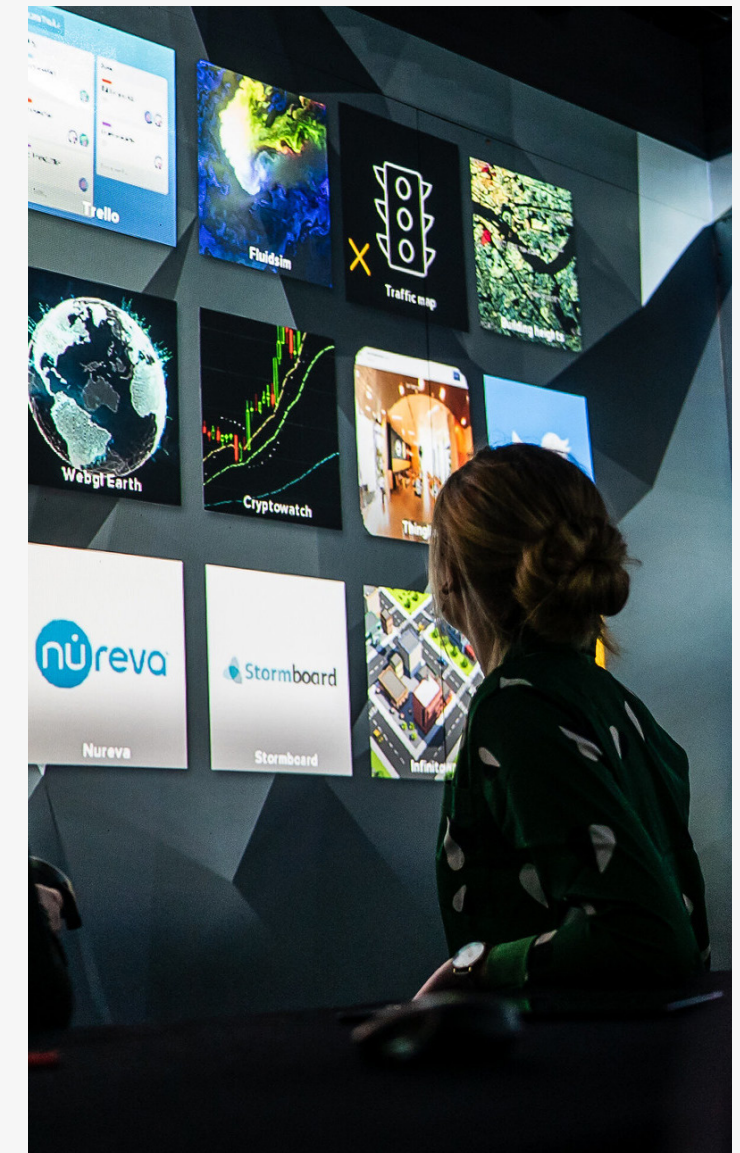
What are the benefits?

Still, it's easier to lay out the many possibilities of what an immersive workspace can do than trying to nail it down to any one definition. What we've found from our clients, businesses in every sector, is that they're using Igloo Immersive Workspaces for applications such as:

Team briefings & project updates - with your usual collaboration tools

An immersive workspace is a ready-made collaboration space where you bring remote and onsite team members in a single setting.

Remotely-based colleagues can be engaged with on video conferencing feeds. Project documentation, metrics, photographs and designs etc. can be viewed across a vast 360° canvas. Screens can be shared from several devices all together and in real time.

The same bread-and-butter tools used in the office as well as enterprise or consumer grade video conferencing tools can be captured and shared via the Igloo system - Office 365, Google Suite, Adobe, Teams, Slack, Zoom, Webex.

Sit-up and take notice presentation formats

If you can use PowerPoint, you can create a 360° deck, and these can be used in any situation you may ordinarily use a presentation. What's even better is that they use the same presentation tools you would in the office -- PowerPoint, Google Slides, Prezi, Keynote. These are particularly effective when combined with easily obtainable library 360° video or photo content, or when you have detailed content to work through like timelines or infographics.

By encouraging a more active and mobile presentation style, making use of a whole room, they provide a great alternative to 'those' tedious PowerPoint sessions.

Data visualisation and interrogation

If your organisation generates data or deals with analytics, (and these days, which ones don't?) an immersive workspace is an ideal way to explore, visualise and interrogate by providing a vast 360° space to work with. Senior teams can get right inside your data, in a self-contained environment, with no extraneous distractions.

We've noticed clients can use a range of tools for data visualisation:
- Specially commissioned 360° animations
- Web-based tools like Tableau, Flow, Virtualitics and Esri
- Others use sector-specific tools like, in Oil & Gas, Petrel and Abyssal
- Utilising the 360° screen for showcasing spatial data like subsea visualisations, or AEC projects
- Data overlays like BIM, or Geospatial applications

Ideation & innovation workshops - with web-based apps

An immersive workspace is the perfect way to engage with the new generation of web-based ideation, brainstorming and whiteboarding tools - including platforms like Stormboard and Trello (which, in an Igloo Immersive Workspace, will work out-of-the-box, and automatically format themselves across the 360° canvas).

It's an engaging and impressive environment, which uses the new range of web-based tools to their best advantage in a self-contained environment. Facilitators have complete control of how they want to lead and steer their sessions.

Corporate storytelling with 360° stings, sizzlers, and scene-setters

Immersive storytelling uses a professionally produced piece of creative content to make an impact - maybe giving a visceral sense of a strategic theme, a brand value, a new proposition, etc.

It's the perfect way to engage and inspire. It can be created with a combination of video, animation, and computer-generated imagery (CGI), accompanied by a stirring spatial-soundscape. Audiences can be immersed into a situation where your brand/propositions/products can make a difference (e.g. a hospital, self-driving car, etc.) and an experience can be created that clients or teams simply could not have elsewhere.

Getting inside a VR Headset (with Igloo VR Spectator)

Organisations that work regularly with VR Content use an immersive workspace for engaging senior

teams with the rationale and benefits. Everything that's happening inside the headset can be displayed, in real time, in the round - so everyone can see what's happening. This works particularly well with Unity-based VR projects - and can also be made to work with Unreal-based projects.

This allows for group discussions of VR content, and avoids the discomfort some may feel with donning VR headsets.

Team building and down time

For senior-level team building and R&R, and also for entertaining visiting dignitaries, Shared VR offers a gaming experience like no other. Senior colleagues, partners and stakeholders can take part in a fun, immersive, one-of-a-kind experience.

From what we've seen of how clients have used our Igloo Immersive Workspaces, the potential is limitless:
- Cinematic gaming and simulator experiences (essentially, anything built using eyefinity technology)
- A growing range of web-based games (almost anything built using WebGL)
- Specially commissioned 360° gaming experiences (reflecting your brand, people, operations, or products) using Unity or Unreal.

The 10 characteristics of an effective immersive workspace

To live up to the promise, there are ten prerequisites for an effective immersive workspace

1. Is equipped with a vast, wraparound 360° screen and surround sound.

2. Enables you to engage and interact with any digital content, in any format, from any source.

3. Allows you to tile together many different types of content, from many different sources, all at the same time.

4. Is controlled by a full range of everyday input devices, like tablets, phones, keyboards, VR controllers, and even voice and gestures.

5. Is equally well-suited to immersive, 360° or XR content, as well as conventional flat-screen and legacy content.

6. Integrates with the full range of communications and collaboration technologies - including all the usual video conferencing and VoIP packages.

7. Is compatible, out-of-the-box, and works natively with all your existing business tools (like 3D design packages, CAD software, data visualisation tools, Office software, etc, etc, etc).

8. Is easy and intuitive to operate.

9. Fits entirely within the envelope of the corporate IT network (fitting-in with everything from room control systems to security standards).

10. Is easy to make good quality content using standard technology tools - like the Office, Google and Adobe suites.

The anatomy of an Igloo immersive workspace

Projectors
Typically, an array of 4-6 ultra-short-throw projectors, retracted into the ceiling

Controls
Intuitive control via a choice of wireless devices, and a customisable interface for simple content access

Versatility
Can be retrofitted into most meeting rooms, conference rooms and workspaces

Glass windows, walls and doors Any existing glass can be covered by a retractable, colour-matched blind

Media Player
Can be housed in a nearby server room and fit within the envelope of the corporate IT network

Sound system
5.1 immersive sound system, with the option to upgrade to a fully-spatialised ambisonic system

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For more information

Igloo Vision is the Shared VR company

Stepping inside an Igloo immersive space is a bit like stepping inside a giant VR headset. And, because anything up to 750 people can get inside, it is always a shared experience. In our ten-year history, we have worked on several hundred assignments for many of the world's biggest brands. Based in the UK countryside, Igloo also has offices in London, the USA (both in the New York metro area and Los Angeles), Canada and Australia.

Our clients have included:

• Accenture
• Crowe
• NTT
• AECOM
• BP
• Skanska
• Lendlease

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