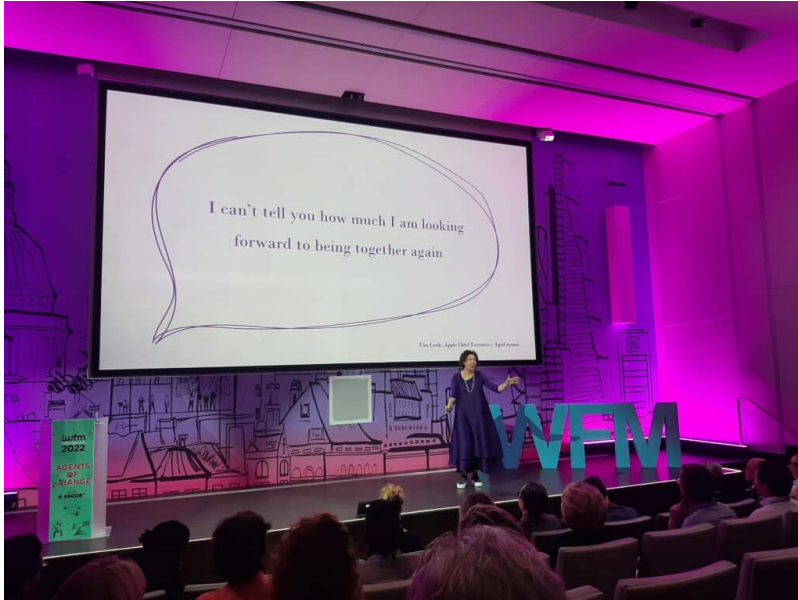


300 North at the Annual IWFM Conference

3 years ago



At the start of June, [300 North](#) attended the annual IWFM Conference. This year's focus was on the theme "[Agents of Change](#)". It was an opportunity to meet many colleagues in person again, and to see the keynotes and guest speakers who promoted the good in the profession and the way organisations in the sector can move to push FM forwards to meet our various goals and targets on sustainability, the future of work, and innovation, amongst other things.

Keynote speakers at the Conference were [Yewande Akinola MBE](#) (Engineering Designer and Innovator), [Christine Armstrong](#) (Writer and Consultant), [Kevin Fong OBE](#) (Consultant in Anaesthesia), [Matt O'Neill](#) (Futurist) and [Ruby Wax](#) (American-British Actress, Comedian, Writer, Mental Health Campaigner, and Lecturer).

There were also three breakout sessions throughout the day including sessions from [Richard Bellairs](#) (Product Marketer, Planon), [Chris Havers](#) (Principal Sustainability Consultant, SFMI) and [Mark Catchlove](#) (Director, Global Insight Group, MillerKnoll).

Keynotes

Yewande Akinola MBE (Engineering Designer and Innovator), 'Agent of Change'

Yewande's keynote focused on the regeneration of the built environment with particular attention to sustainability. She noted that 80% of 2050's building stock is predicted to already exist, therefore, change and innovation in retrofitting current stock is of paramount importance. She gave examples of new, innovative buildings with incredible sustainability credentials which have been created carbon neutral, self-sustaining and with living walls and roofs, etc., however this is not the predominant stock we expect to be dealing with in the next 30 years.

With retrofit and regeneration projects, setting buildings up with the right tech *now* to discover and implement the right changes for the future will ensure a more intelligent and sustainable built environment in 30 years. We must also consider changes to the world of work, as 27% of people will save money on energy and commuting and due to hybrid working, some people intend never to return to the office.

This balancing between improving the current building stock and bringing people back into an office requires communication. In a recent retrofit project case study, the company involved spoke to all 400+ members of staff in order to spec out their office in the way their employees wanted. Wellbeing and culture is increasingly becoming part of the FM remit, and it's important to work with other staff members to create spaces that are inviting and foster community in business.

Christine Armstrong (Writer and Consultant), 'The Future of Work: Navigating the Next Workplace Frontier'

Christine Armstrong picks up on the point about the changing workplace commuting and home working in her talk on the future of work. She asks, "where is the edge of work?" now that it has become so synonymous with home and more a part of life away from the office. There now seems to be no way to leave work in an office and this is largely down to increasingly digital ways of working as well as the changes brought about by the pandemic.

This calls for the reintroduction of boundaries to protect our mental health. According to Christine's work with businesses, people are looking for flexibility from their employer, whilst also having predictability, clear strategy and boundaries they have set for themselves in collaboration with management so that they still know what is expected of them.

These boundaries are crucial in creating healthy workplaces that look after employees which has become increasingly necessary in the current recruitment market. There are currently 1.3 million job vacancies in the UK, and with 69% of people currently feeling confident to change their job, it is essential that employers adapt and create ways of working that will suit all their employees to retain their talent. The workplace therefore needs to be a place where people want to come to work, that encourages them back into an office, rather than creating an expectation or return to office ultimatum. And there is real innovation out there with some companies having 'work from anywhere' policies and just bringing teams together once a month or once a quarter rather than having people in an office at all.

Kevin Fong OBE (Consultant in Anaesthesia), 'From NASA to the NHS: Risk and Decision Making for Leadership'

Kevin took a look at the work of FM's in specialised, highly pressurised environments such as hospitals in the NHS during COVID. He demonstrated how FM feeds into highly strategic situations with increasing demand on logistics. As an anaesthetist working in healthcare throughout the pandemic, and as a logistician brought in by the government to help plan the COVID response, he knew oxygen was going to be vital, but he and the clinical staff had not considered how it was delivered into the ICU before. It was at that time facilities and estates were brought in to explain the supply and show floorplans of how the oxygen came from the delivery points into the ICU. They also provided the delivery schedules and it is a testament to them, said Kevin, that not one of his hospitals ran out of oxygen.

Matt O'Neill (Futurist), 'Game Changers: FM's Role in Creating Effective, Sustainable Workplace Change'

The penultimate keynote of the day was given by Matt O'Neill on a futuristic view of the future of work,

and what technologies we can expect to be adopted in the workplace in the next 5, 10 and even 50 years. Automation will increase in many areas, and young people will be increasingly used to interacting with automated AI. Voice recognition technology will become more commonplace with gait and facial recognition tech on its heels, likely becoming part of security measures for offices. Things that seem super futuristic are already here, or close to reality, including things like VR and AR meeting rooms and using bioluminescent trees as streetlamps. The prospects are boundless and innovations are constantly being made.

Ruby Wax OBE (American-British Actress, Comedian, Writer, Mental Health Campaigner, and Lecturer), 'Reconnecting: How to Get Free from our Frazzle'

Ruby Wax spoke on mental health and wellbeing in the workplace, including how businesses can foster their employees' good mental health. She also mentioned the some of the community projects she had worked on and encouraged community support and engagement as something that businesses could implement from a social value and wellbeing perspective.

Break-Out Sessions

Richard Bellairs (Product Marketer, Planon), 'The Impact of Smart Building Technology on the Future of Work'

On the topic of innovation in the workplace, Planon Product Marketer, Richard Bellairs thought the implementation of smart building technology was key to strategy going forward with integrated CAFM solutions and a rise in sensor and other workplace technology to improve efficiencies.

Chris Havers (Principal Sustainability Consultant, SFMI), 'Scope 1, 2 and 3 the Important Role of FM to Achieve Net Zero'

Chris Havers engaged predominantly with Scope 3 emissions, their measurability and having a top-down approach to measuring company carbon footprint in order to best understand where they can impact and reduce carbon. FM is a mobile industry as it works within so many other sectors with an impact outside of its boundaries, allowing FMs to make meaningful changes across business sectors and lead the way to a net zero future.

Mark Catchlove (Director, Global Insight Group, MillerKnoll), 'Looking Forward to The Future of Work and Place'

Moving back to the future of work, and changes in that area, workplace design brand MillerKnoll had put together some research on the return to work. Mark Catchlove began by stating it starts with human needs – purpose and achievement. They found 81% of office workers say they won't be returning to the office 5 days a week therefore workplaces need to be built to attract people. And for Mark this begs the question, if your buildings aren't giving you a competitive edge, why have you got them?

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