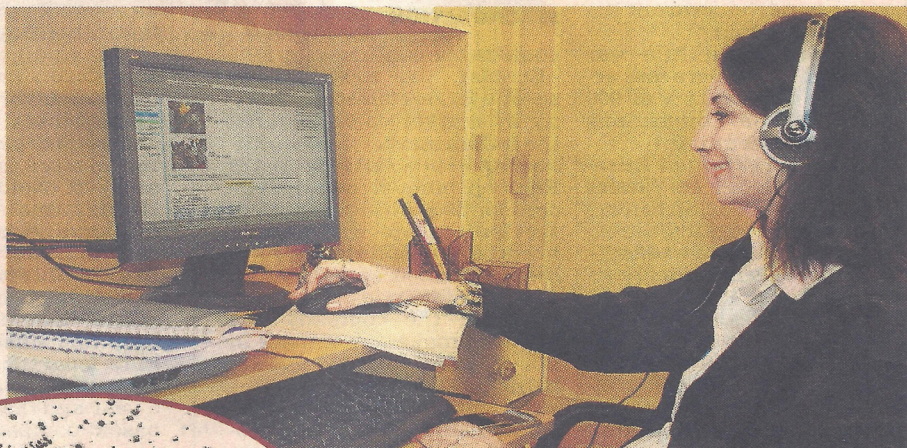


The office essentials

It is essential for an SME to ensure that the workplaces keep up with the technological advancements

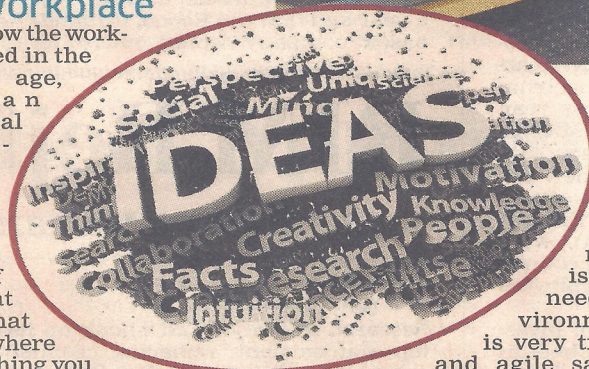
NEHA BHATIA

As physical boundaries are being bridged, a complex and competitive world focusing on collaboration, innovation and creativity is being developed, a world which is fast experiencing the emergence of intelligent growth zones. Smart offices - A place that makes life easy for employees and customers, empower employees and increase their ability to stay connected through use of remarkable technological tools and solutions has fast become the need of the hour.



Changing Workplace

Talking about how the workplace has changed in the information age, Madhusudan Thakur, regional vice president - South Asia, Regus shares, "For me, technology has brought the concept of work outside of the office. What this means is that work isn't somewhere you go, it's something you do. All of this is enabled through the adoption and implementation of new technology platforms. For me, a smart office is a physical and technological platform that allows you to work anywhere." According to McKinsey, in India today there are only approx 80 million internet users, but this will rise to 400 million within the next 3-5 years. As India goes online, mobile and flexible work will really take off. Srimathi Shivashankar, associate vice president - Diversity & Sustainability, HCL Technologies points out, "A smart office is one that ensures optimal and effective utilization of physical infrastructure and IT resources. A defining characteristic of modern day workplaces is that they rely heavily/wholly on information technology and use very little or practically no paper. In other words offices in today's era of information tech-



nology are automated." With technological advancement, there is for sure a need for an environment which is very transparent and agile says Neeraj

Mediratta, managing director, Ace Data Devices Pvt Ltd. "Definitely in the information age the workplace has completely changed and today's worker is a knowledge worker and is well aware of the industry and its surroundings. This has made adoption of smart processes a must."

Aiding communication

Technological achievements of the past decades have re-shaped the role of a corporate office from pre-requisite for work to an enabler of smart and effective work. "Office automation (facilitated by LAN, WIFI, printers, scanners, fax and Xerox machines, EPBX's etc), among other things, facilitates real time communication and easy documentation. Needless to say this translates to better efficiencies at

the workplace," avers Shivashankar. "Office automation allows the systems to be become more transparent and enables information sharing more openly, thereby creating an opportunity for making an informed decision which creates an impact across the functioning of the business. The effective automation or use of communication tools, the output of an organisation showcases the positive impact on the bottom line over a period of time," adds Mediratta.

The way ahead

Convergence along with privacy will be the two major aspects for the growth in this sector. "The future trend in office automation is largely convergence whereby there will be multipurpose devices that can do the functions of individual devices. Moreover office automation systems of the future will be engineered for better privacy. For instance printers will have user codes. Furthermore, automation systems of the future will complement document management systems," says Shivashankar.

Work is becoming something you do, not somewhere you go asserts Thakur, "The technology is here, and has been for a while, but economic and demographic drivers are making it clearer that the future is indeed mobile and flexible."

Courtesy The Economic Times