Optimizing device life cycles for people, the planet and productivity (Ep. 49)

Weston Morris (00:00):

Welcome to the Digital Workplace Deep Dive Podcast video edition, the first one, and hopefully a series where you get to see us instead of just listening to us. I'm your host, Weston Morris. One of the things that the listeners of my podcast have shared with me is that providing end-to-end services for digital workers is hard. So, I thought it would be great to gather some of the top experts on my team. They look at different parts of the digital workplace and see if we can figure out why it's so hard. Then, maybe we can come up with some answers and tips to help us move things forward in the digital workplace. My first guest today is Timothy Rashkin. First of all, he leads all aspects of support. Think about what services are needed when something goes wrong: service desk, in-person support, touchless. He's got it all covered. Tim, welcome to the show. I know it's your first time.

Tim Rashkin (01:02):

It's great to be here. Thanks so much.

Weston Morris (01:04):

I'd also like to welcome Stacy Harder. She leads our seamless collaboration services, which include managing meeting rooms, M365, smart buildings, and other similar services. This is the second time we've had you on the show, but the first time with a camera. Welcome, Stacy.

Stacy Harder (01:18):

Thank you. Glad to be here as well.

Weston Morris (01:20):

And Simon Wilson, the first-time guest on my show. Simon focuses on proactive experience, a topic we have discussed quite a bit on this show, but XLAs and experience management. This is the first time for you. Simon, welcome to the show.

Simon Wilson (01:38):

Thank you very much, Weston. Absolutely delighted to be here.

Weston Morris (01:41):

So, with the introductions behind us, let's talk about the conflict. What seems to be creating this conflict in creating a great digital workplace? And one of the things many of you have brought up is those in procurement. They're focusing on the device; they're focusing on cost. They seem to be missing focus on

maybe the business and people to some extent. Another challenge is us in it. I can think back to one of our customers when we talked about employee experience several years ago. They said, "Hey, we're not in the happy business. Our job is to figure out what's best for our employees. We know best. We're going to deliver that technology to our customers." And that doesn't fit in today's digital workplace, does it?

Weston Morris (02:30):

Another factor we're seeing is that the digital workplace is complicated, right? One size doesn't fit all. We've got hybrid workers. There's this mandate now for returning to the office, remote workers, and road warriors. And what about those frontline workers? You've heard us talk a little bit about them on the show in the past as an ignored or forgotten part of the workforce. During the pandemic, we all moved forward with technology. We had Teams or Zoom, great cameras, microphones, and big screens. And then everyone in the frontline workspace, whether retail, factories, or hospitals, didn't get any of that. And now they're even more left behind, and they have special needs. They use shared devices and ruggedized devices. So, how do we take care of those? In addition to that, there are additional workforces at play here.

Weston Morris (03:18):

We're seeing this, especially in Europe. Tracking and reducing carbon consumption is important, though it is something that we should be looking at everywhere. So, the end result is all of these forces coming together. There's the potential for no one getting the digital workplace tools they need to be a hundred percent productive. So that's the question we're going to tackle today. How can we bring these lifecycle services together and bring them into focus through the lens of experience management? So that's why I'm surrounded by these experts here. I'm so glad you're here with us today, Tim, Stacy, and Simon. Let's start off with you, Tim. We talked about the problem. What is the answer in your mind?

Tim Rashkin (04:01):

Yeah, we have to start at the beginning. You talked a lot about some of the different workers in the environment today, some of whom have been left behind in the past. And it starts with our perspective on what makes up a persona, right? Everybody's heard this magic word of personas. People think very differently about what it means and how to support them. You see, it starts with what we would like to consider a more complete persona at the end of the day, right? Who is it? What's the role in the company? What do they need, devices and otherwise? Where are they? What are the various external factors that come into play that affect their day-to-day operations? And frankly, what's their purpose, right?

Tim Rashkin (04:46):

How do they line up with the company's overall business objectives? And what do they need at their fingertips to get that done every day? What motivates them? It's about figuring out the who, what, where and why of that complete persona and how we can support that through digital workplace IT technologies. And how do we manage the stakeholders to what Weston said before about procurement,

IT, security, and sustainable elections? How do we manage each stakeholder group to best position that persona to deliver what it needs to do?

Weston Morris (05:26):

I like that idea of a complete persona. We've talked about personas for a long time, but you are expanding this. The who, what, when, where, why, right? So maybe we can dig into that. I think we can all talk about the user journey. We'll make up an imaginary person here. We'll call her Natalia. She's in sales and just starting her first day. Does it make sense if we start talking about her first day on the job, Tim?

Tim Rashkin (05:55):

Not so fast, sir. I would say we have to look at what the onboarding experience is in the first place, right? If you're a brand-new person looking at this company like Natalia two, three weeks in, and two or three months before, what would our potential normal start date be based on HR guidelines and country guidelines? It all starts with how you make Natalia realize right off the bat whether she's the right fit for the company, right? What are her aspirations? What are the values of the company that matter to her at the end of the day? And how can the company embrace those values and put her in the best position to succeed? On top of that, we have to think about logical and physical provisioning as well, right? Depending on the role that she has within the company, if she's a hybrid worker, maybe she's on the go frequently because she's in sales, or maybe she's on the supply chain. It's all about understanding what you need to bring to bear that complete persona for her to feel good and also to deliver value for the company at the beginning.

Weston Morris (07:06):

I see that we're having to take a step back and bring procurement into the picture, which is good. We want them to understand this. So, what are some things that go into the decision-making process to figure out this complete persona?

Tim Rashkin (07:18):

Yeah, it comes down to that complete persona and the who, what, where, when, why, how. Throw everything at it, and think about it again; for the user, what do they need to do to be effective, right? Think about the device. There are so many different kinds of devices out there, right? You have tethered knowledge workers, and you have high-performance machines. If they're developers, folks on the go, do they want to be lugging this behemoth of a laptop with a monitor and all these things when they're on the go all the time? They're going to want maybe a two-in-one type laptop. It's all about understanding what their responsibility is and how they operate in the environments. Then, let's start to look at the kinds of devices, the peripherals, and what their needs are. And let's rightsize those, right? Let's look at telemetry data through our XMO capabilities. Let's work with our partners and come up with a rightsize device catalog that actually matches their requirements. And then let's make sure we keep watching that over time. If an application needs change, let's keep using that telemetry data to validate that catalog and make it an evergreen catalog.

Weston Morris (08:31):

So, we've done all this behind-the-scenes procurement and IT work together. That's great. We've figured out the complete persona for Natalia as well as the other complete personas in the company. I think now, Tim, we're ready to talk about Natalia's first day on the job in our onboarding, right?

Tim Rashkin (08:47):

Well, we're still not quite there yet. We have to do a couple more things to get Natalia up and going correctly. Think about it now: we're getting a bit closer to her start date. Maybe we're two weeks out from now. There are still a few more things that we need to keep in mind. One certainly is around the actual provisioning execution work. There's some HR workflow that she's going to need. Maybe she can do some early training to ensure she's up and running on day one. Again, there are some companies where if workers are not ready on day one, money's already going down the drain. So we need to make sure they're ready to go. And let's not forget that Natalia here has a certain disability. So, from an accessibility perspective, it's critical that we consider her needs, too. If we go back to the complete persona again, who she is and what she needs, as well as the external and internal factors, those are all important things. And let's think about what that experience is going to look like. We can do very ADA-compliant things, driven, accessible, and friendly activities that make that a positive personal experience for her as well.

Stacy Harder (09:58):

That may have been good in the past, but if we think about today, we must provide engaging and collaborative experiences that seamlessly interlock with Natalia's work life. And AI is going to play a key role in this. For example, with AI in Microsoft Copilot, we will be able to curate personalized training experiences for Natalia. The AI will analyze her learning style and then adapt her training over her career to ensure that she's constantly engaged. Let's also think about prompt engineering and organizational change management for her. These are critical to helping Natalia understand how to curate and create prompts that will be engaging and will guide AI to give Natalia the desired outcomes that she's looking for, but at the same time, keep her motivated and aligned with the company culture and goals.

Stacy Harder (11:08):

And then Tim, as you mentioned, if anyone has accessibility or inclusion needs, the advancements that AI is bringing to this are astounding. Think about AR and VR; think about being immersed into a world where it doesn't matter what your capability is; you're all together, no matter where you are globally. And then also what AI is bringing to the forefront, which I think is exciting, is natural language processing. So if Natalia is from, say, Sao Paulo, Brazil, and training is going on in the company in Italy, the AI is going to be able to translate that for her into her native language, making it so much easier for her to learn and understand and be included. And I think these are key driving factors for us.

Weston Morris (12:07):

Stacy, I'm thinking back. If we were to have recorded this in 2023, we wouldn't be talking about AI and Geneva the way you brought it up here. I love that you brought up the point that we need to have. We need to be thinking about prompt engineering training on prompt engineering if people like Natalia are going to be able to make use of that in her daily work improving things. Yeah. I love that. Great. Simon, you've been kind of quiet so far. What do you think about Natalia's onboarding process from an employee experience perspective? What are some of the things that you would be recommending we pay attention to here?

Simon Wilson (12:46):

So I think there's a number of things here, actually. So, the first one is about using our experience-level agreements. By using those, we can measure the onboarding experience of Natalia, make sure that her apps are working properly, she's got the right device, and she's getting the help where she needs it. Also, capture sentiment from Natalia in terms of how she feels about her onboarding experience. But I think, as well, there's a thing we're missing here, which is actually Natalia picking up another persona that we're not even talking about, which is the persona of a new joiner. A new joiner doesn't have the expertise of the business. They don't necessarily know where to get help. They don't know which apps they will be asked to use. There's a thing here about using the data to measure the journey of a new starter as a new persona.

Simon Wilson (13:29):

HR can use that data to understand the expectations of a new user. When should we expect them to use teams the first time? When should we expect them to use other apps? What should the journey look like? And I think another thing we can do in terms of experience is, as that employee Natalia uses those apps for the first time, we can interactively present her with help on that app. So we won't overload her on the first day or the first week, but when she uses those apps, she'll get the help she needs. And I think that's where the experience data can help.

Weston Morris (13:58):

You know, Simon, I like that you brought up another organization here as we think about the end-to-end user journey, end-to-end lifecycle, and HR, right? Usually, IT and HR aren't having much of a conversation, but you're bringing them together. I love that. And this whole idea of an XLA measuring, onboarding experience, wow. That's, that's quite powerful. Very good. So let's go back to Natalia here. Her complete persona, I suppose, is one of the things we know about her; we've already mentioned she's got a mobility disability. She's in sales, she's in Brazil. We know she's a hybrid worker on the road, sometimes working from home. Stacy, I'm thinking, I've got a question for you here. So, let's play things forward a few months. She's a salesperson and has landed her first potential client. She comes into the headquarters, which she doesn't frequent very often. She's going to use the fancy conference room. She walks in and finds a bunch of cables unplugged in the room. And it's like, oh my God, how's she going to, how am I going to have this, this, this important meeting? It's going to be a failure, but what are you doing? What are we thinking about to help her in that part of her experience?

Stacy Harder (15:04):

If we think of Natalia in her special case, we are creating three different capabilities for her. The first one is if she comes into the conference room and doesn't even know how to use the equipment, because as we've all experienced, even if you're in the same company, you can go into several different rooms. They each have several different pieces of technology and OEM equipment for their meeting rooms. The first thing we want to do is make sure she understands how to use it. So, we created a QR code that she can scan with the mobile device. And what that'll do is that'll bring up knowledge, documents, and videos. So right then and there, she doesn't have to leave. She doesn't have to come back another day; she can just look at the videos right then and there and understand how to start up the meeting, how to pull other people in, et cetera.

Stacy Harder (15:55):

As you said, if they walk into a meeting room and cables are unplugged, something is not working, and they don't know what to do, we'll also have a QR code. We'll have a QR code on the display; if the display is not working, it'll also be in paper format, hanging in the room. And it's specific to service. So, what they would do is scan it with their mobile device. It would first log a ticket in the ServiceNow portal, and the ServiceNow portal would automatically see if it can detect an issue and maybe do an instant reboot. If not, and you need assistance, we're using Help Lightning, an AR-VR type of tool that'll be on the mobile device, giving Natalia the ability to have a remote subject matter expert help her figure out what the issue is. She'll be able to show them exactly what the problem is instead of trying to explain it to them on the phone or wait for someone to show up. It's having a virtual person walk through the issue to start it back up with you. So it's the QR code on display, a service-specific QR code, and the training QR code.

Weston Morris (17:09):

I want that QR code for my home office. Stacy, set me up with that. Good stuff. And I love the use of merged reality there, too. That's instant help. Natalia can now set up that conference room, and even if there's a problem, she will succeed with that sale. Let's move forward a little bit further in Natalia's journey. There may be a time when she needs additional peripherals. And so Tim, I'm thinking about your area on the support side of things. Maybe even swap out a device that can be a pain, especially for a remote worker. What are some things that you recommend that we put in place for Natalia here?

Tim Rashkin (17:49):

Yeah, I love it. Where to begin? There is a lot of stuff that we can cover. If you think about touchless experience solutions, this is historically a very heavy interruption experience that cuts off hours potentially of productivity, if not longer, depending on what the need is. Think about things like smart connected, integrated asset lockers, threshold-driven, smart dispensing vending machines, and the example from just before around merged reality. How about virtual tech cafes where, whether it's 3:00 PM or 3:00 AM, she has something critical coming up that morning with a major customer or an outage plan, and there's no time? How do I get in touch with somebody? My machine just blue-screened, or it fell off a cliff, or who knows what.

Tim Rashkin (18:48):

So how am I going to get support? Well, that's no problem. You go up to the virtual tech cafe or up to the locker, you connect with a remote agent that's 24/7 coverage, and while you're on the screen seeing their friendly face trying to help you out with what your issue is, they can immediately unlock one of the locker bins. You can immediately get a brand-new asset right then and there to keep going and minimize that interruption. Or worse yet, you mentioned that the cable was magically missing, and her phone is down to two percent battery life. Now it's like, oh my God, what am I going to do? Nobody is around for me to get my phone charged, and I will need that to join a call in a little while.

Tim Rashkin (19:32):

Well, think about the smart dispensing machines. Based on what her persona is, again, based on the kind of worker she is, we can drive very personalized pre-allocated, pre-authorized vending capabilities where it says, based on your persona, you have X dollars per month, or these are the peripherals that are relevant to you, especially at the new joiner stage. These are the three or four things that this persona needs. Swipe your badge, and it all spits out right then and there. And again, let's not lose track of the fact that she has very particular accessibility requirements. And that's the other great thing, right? These are ADA-compliant capabilities, easy access for Natalia to get her hands on and exactly when she needs it.

Weston Morris (20:14):

Stacy and Timmy gave us some great things to think about to improve her experience. Simon, I'd like to get back to you quickly because you mentioned an onboarding XLA earlier. Is that the only place that an XLA will come into place? Is this just a buzzword? What's the reality here?

Simon Wilson (20:31):

No, the XLAs apply across that employee's lifecycle and their device and applications. With XLAs, it's around the performance and reliability of the device, for example. But I think it's about being proactive as well. I think most organizations are trying to be more proactive. And for me, proactivity comes in a number of forms. And I think what we can do for our employees and the employees of our customers is to make sure that, firstly, we are being preventative, that we're making sure the device is fit and healthy and all of those things that keep it healthy and safer and in place. We mentioned things like making sure the user has the right device in the first place. That's huge in ensuring that users have everything they need to do to crack on with work, not be impacted, and have the capacity they need.

Simon Wilson (21:18):

And I think the next is about only 20% of the environmental issues get reported to the service desk now, and that's only after somebody's normally had an issue for a long time. Maybe they've tried to fix it themselves already; a lot of time has been wasted by users. Nobody calls the desk for fun. It's normally when you need help. Being proactive is about looking for those issues under the waterline, looking at the 80% of issues that aren't reported. And remember, we have those issues where people have an issue and don't report it to us. We have to find those as well. And I think some people have issues and don't know it as well.

Simon Wilson (21:55):

For example, you've received your device, and the log-on time is five minutes for the next two years. For you, that five minutes is how long it takes. That's your context. How would you know that the person next to you, with a similar device logging on in the same way, in the same environment, is logging on in 20 seconds? You have to consider that as well. People don't always know that or even appreciate that they have an issue and they're suffering from it. This is why proactive monitoring and having plans in place to make sure that we're constantly looking for those issues under the waterline, as well as being much smarter about being reactive in terms of diagnostics and right-click automation at the service desk, removes the need to remote on. All of those things together, from a marginal gains perspective, actually improve the performance of the devices, the applications, their reliability, and the overall experience of the end users. And I think that's what we measure through the XLAs.

Weston Morris (22:52):

That helps us better understand its value. And then I think about the time you can return to them to do their job that they're not wasting. Hey, so let's move forward to three years now. Natalia's been with the company. She's not a new joiner anymore. So that means three years have gone by, and it's time to replace her laptop, right?

Simon Wilson (23:13):

Not necessarily. We're all used to having our devices for three or four years. Their warranty runs out, and we get a new device. It doesn't matter whether that device is working well or not. That's the timeframe. But I think that by using the data we have, we can much more safely and securely retain that device for longer, so we can meet ESG requirements and strategies much more easily. You can retain that device for longer and more safely because we can monitor that it is performing within tolerance, that it is healthy and safe to be on the network, and that it's updated and patched correctly. We can do all of that kind of stuff. But we can also make sure that the right person has the right device again because your persona may change through your ownership of a device.

Simon Wilson (24:01):

So two years in, you get a new job, you're now in the analytics team, and you're crunching huge amounts of data. That device you had when you joined two years ago is no longer suitable. How about we, as the IT department, let our users know a new device is coming because we've seen that you need a new device, and for the business, we are telling them that the employees are going to be more productive because they've got the device they need. There's a side benefit of that as well, which is that for those who have devices that are way too powerful for them, we could also redeploy those in other places. It's not just a question of taking devices away and increasing the length of time a user has a device, but it's about smarter allocation across the whole life cycle.

Tim Rashkin (24:45):

Yeah. Simon, amazing points. I'd be remiss if we didn't start breaking out our calculators here because there are some interesting statistics if you want to talk about it. This is probably one of the most important subjects we've talked about: our commitment as a society to sustainability at the end of the day and how, as professionals, we can make a contribution. We can across every single level of scope of missions you could think of with our partners, ourselves, and customers. Natalia herself and every one of us play a role in that. If you think about some of the things Simon says about intelligent PC refresh planning and cascading of devices, one statistic to keep in mind is that every new device deployed has at least 330 kilograms of carbon emissions.

Tim Rashkin (25:40):

If we even delay some percentage of those asset refreshes because we can recall a device, refurbish it, cascade it out, it will have a fractional impact on the environment at the end of the day. And if we can be smart with things like our touchless experiences, as we talked about before, and we're cutting out hundreds of kilograms of emissions worth of dispatching activity, if we're thinking about the right size device catalogs, where do they need that super beefy machine? If you think about hundreds of those, that's dozens, if not hundreds of kilograms of emissions right there, too. And if you think about it, even for a customer that's maybe 10,000 users or something, and if we start applying each of these steps along the entire device lifecycle experience, guidance of products, logistics, planning, self-locking, compostable packaging materials, you're talking thousands of tons of kilogram reduction of emissions just by being more careful with how you think about sustainability at the core of our asset lifecycle.

Weston Morris (26:49):

Yeah, Tim, I'm glad you brought up the sustainability side. We'd be remiss if we ignored that in our lifecycle. Now, we've talked about Natalia, an information and hybrid worker. That's one persona. Stacy, you've done a lot of thinking about frontline workers. I'm just wondering how much of what we discussed with Natalia might apply to a frontline worker in a manufacturing facility.

Stacy Harder (27:16):

Thanks, Weston, for mentioning frontline workers, as you may or may not know who's ever listening. They're 80% of the global workforce. And usually, when creating our solutions, they're the persona we least think of. We're always used to thinking about a knowledge worker or someone with desktops or beefy computers. And these people aren't tethered to a desk. They're either in a manufacturing plant or in front of customers, retail or restaurant workers. They need to be mobile and, in most cases, hands-free, but they also need to be connected. We do that by providing them with the right device for the right job so they can perform what they need to do and be successful. In some cases, it could be a headset with a push-to-talk button that enables them to talk to not only the employees they work with but maybe a pre-programmed button for them to get help or training.

Stacy Harder (28:13):

We also provide mobile devices. Perhaps they need to put the headset into a docking station, pick up a mobile device or a tablet, do their work, and do training. They can do training on the go. They're not

necessarily relegated to sitting in a back room somewhere in a stuffy closet, trying to take training while the manufacturing plant is going on or the restaurant is busy. They can take that device and do it whenever they are available to do it, wherever they can do it. This is one of the great things about frontline workers. What we're trying to bring forward with a lot of our offerings is how we can make sure that they're a persona included with Copilot and everything else we're doing today.

Weston Morris (28:58):

Yeah. Thanks for educating us on the frontline worker, Stacy. Now, taking a step back. Tim, I think I see a couple of business models here. One is this whole end-to-end life cycle management, where an enterprise buys devices outright and adds managed services. I'm seeing another one where maybe all of this is packaged up, and everything is in a paper use or monthly subscription. Are both of these possible or do they conflict? What's the story there?

Tim Rashkin (29:25):

Fantastic question. Short answer: yes. But that's very boring. Let's talk about how we can harness the question you just asked into something more valuable to the business at the end of the day, right? If we think back to what we started around a complete persona, what we don't want is the purpose of how Natalia needs to function in the business and the assets she requires to be a ball and chain, something that's holding the company back from focusing on its business priorities. And so, depending on what their financial expectations are, what their preferences are, the intent is to be as flexible as we can be, as we all can be at the end of the day, to make sure that the company can operate effectively for what their business outcomes are, right?

Tim Rashkin (30:17):

So yes, there are options. If a company wants to purchase assets outright, that's an option. If a company is looking for more of an all-in capability where they can operationalize all of their costs around the digital workplace and normalize what that budget looks like, drive more consistent refresh, manage all the services that we've been talking about, proper device experience management, and intelligent refresh planning and cascading of devices, instead of them having to wrack their brains around all these different pieces. I have to manage all this. I have to pay them over here. I have to pay them over there. It's crazy, right? How are they supposed to focus on what they're normally working on? That can all become a subscription model focused not just on hardware and leasing hardware, but how can we figure together how to transform the entire device life of cycle experience for the workforce and Natalia's?

Tim Rashkin (31:16):

That's our objective. How do we bundle all that up and deliver in a way that can drive strategy, which is the exciting bit? Let's say the company intends to do VDI or something like that a couple of years from now. But they have no idea how many; they've thought about particular groups. Maybe it's contractors or interns. They don't know when, maybe 18 to 24 months out or longer from now; they want to do a phased plan. Do we want to lock ourselves into devices that we own right now? And that's a big burden

on our balance sheet. No, you don't. So we can leverage flex options as part of a subscription model and say, you know what, in two years from now, we can already have pre-planned that you can return all those assets at zero cost. You can immediately shift into a virtualization strategy but still meet your business and users' demands right now. So, let this kind of subscription modeling help facilitate your business strategy.

Weston Morris (32:16):

Well, we covered a lot here today. Maybe just a little recap. The first point that I gathered was the idea of a complete persona. We talked about that in the beginning, thinking about who the person is, where they are working, and there might be multiple places throughout the day or the week. How they're working, and what their job is. And if we can get procurement and IT, maybe even HR, thinking about that upfront, then that will make it possible for us when they are onboarded that they're able to have a great working experience. And it doesn't end there. I'm hearing about measuring experience, providing training, thinking about accessibility, and thinking about sustainability, that all of these things can be wrapped up and made part of an end-to-end lifecycle experience. So I would like to thank my guests, Timothy Raskin, Stacy Harder, and Simon Wilson, as you've joined us here today. Thanks for taking the time to educate us on this topic.

Tim Rashkin (33:13):

It's been a pleasure. Thank you so much, Weston.

Stacy Harder (33:16):

Yeah, thank you, Weston. It's been a great session.

Simon Wilson (33:18):

Thank you for having me. Thank you very much.

Weston Morris (33:20):

And thank you. You've been listening to the Digital Workplace Deep Dive, and I should say, not just listening, but viewing this time, the first time we've done this. I'm your host, Weston Morris. Thanks for joining us.