

Smart Work Center

An Innovative *Connected and Sustainable Work* Pilot by the Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG) and the Cities of Amsterdam and Almere

Background

In recognition of the profound trends of urbanization, climate change, and innovation at the beginning of the 21st century, Connected Urban Development (CUD) was born from Cisco's commitment to the Clinton Global Initiative to participate in helping reduce carbon emissions in cities. Launched at the end of 2006, CUD consists of building partnerships with cities worldwide to focus on applying information and communications technology (ICT) to promote innovative practices for reducing carbon emissions, while fostering economic growth and improving the quality of life. Innovation is transforming urban life, and is making it possible to design and manage cities in radically different ways. With the advance of broadband, wireless, and increasingly smart city infrastructures, collaboration and connectivity are becoming essential to urban sustainability.

CUD envisions that the same principles of openness that have made the Internet a thriving ecosystem over the past 20 years can be applied to make cities a smarter platform for people, products, and services. This global, open-standards approach will support all urban and natural environment-related applications, tools, and technologies. It will provide real-time, tangible information to enable citizens, communities, cities, countries, and business organizations to make smarter decisions and to develop policies that improve the sustainability of cities. Following are the program's urban technology principles:

- Wired communications provide infrastructure
- Wireless communications provide mobility
- Miniaturized, inexpensive electronic devices provide access points everywhere
- Digital memory and processing power provide intelligence everywhere
- Software and online content provide new functionality and services

Through its partnership with the cities of Amsterdam and Almere, CUD has created a global best practice—the Smart Work Center—that provides flexible and scalable workplace options with a myriad of benefits for employers, employees, and the environment. It will be replicated across other CUD cities and scaled around the globe.

Overview

Smart Work Center (SWC) is a landmark innovation and a key element of CUD's Connected and Sustainable Work framework. Launched in September 2008 at the CUD Global Conference in Amsterdam, the SWC pilot is a collaborative effort involving Cisco IBSG—the global strategic consulting arm of Cisco—and the cities of Amsterdam and Almere. The

organizations are jointly applying an urban services platform approach toward which visionary cities and the ICT industry are moving.

Now, more than ever before, knowledge workers¹ are opting for more collaborative and flexible forms of work that allow them to contribute when they want, from virtually anywhere, and with almost anyone. At the same time, the speed demands and complexity of knowledge work have increased significantly, driving the need to collaborate and engage a broader workgroup to obtain needed results. The convergence of these factors is spawning new paradigms for how work gets done, along with great opportunities to innovate. One such innovation is the Smart Work Center.

An SWC is an office center in close proximity to a residential community, providing space to workers in individual or group settings. Through the use of ICT, all work processes are fully supported and enhanced. Employers can take advantage of this collective setting to provide workers with flexible and scalable workspace options. The use of SWCs benefits workers by providing a physical workspace close to their residences, resulting in reduced transportation demands and increased productivity. The SWC features a wider “cloud” of services that not only allows for seamless work experience, but also aims to optimize worker’s daily lives.

Figure 1. Launch of the Smart Work Center Pilot in Almere, September 23, 2008, Featuring (Among Others) Amsterdam Mayor Job Cohen and Almere Mayor Annemarie Jorritsma



The SWC pilot, based in Almere, features 34 fully equipped workstations, 30 lounge workstations, dual Cisco TelePresence² CTS-1000 units, a childcare center, a restaurant and ATM, and specific function rooms. E-work stations are retained by customers on a subscription basis; current agreements involve a one-year price of €7,800 per e-workstation. More flexible, per-hour usage of the SWC is currently being introduced into the pilot. In

¹ Knowledge workers deliver information rather than goods.

² Cisco TelePresence is an innovative technology that combines rich audio, high-definition video, and interactive elements to deliver a unique, “in-person” experience over the network. It is designed to bring users closer to the important people, places, and events in their personal and professional lives.

addition, the effort is currently being expanded, with 10 or more SWCs expected to open in the Netherlands during 2009. Amsterdam is presiding over establishment of an “umbrella” organization for all SWC providers in order to centralize marketing of the concept, and to encourage agreement on service-level standards, interoperability, and collective, multimodal reservation systems.

Early results³ from the pilot have been positive:

- The SWC has received an approval rating of 7.7
- Users have saved an average of 66 minutes per day by using the SWC instead of commuting to their companies’ offices

Powered by an Urban Services Platform

CUD ultimately envisions the SWC as part of a global urban services platform approach for—and among—cities. Services will include, but are not limited to, citizen engagement, collaboration, community-building, professional geo-referential data, real-time environmental and energy metering and monitoring, simulations for real estate development, transportation planning, location marketing, and city scenario planning. Incorporating SWC into this platform approach will enable the city of Amsterdam to offer services that reduce the city’s carbon footprint, while creating a framework that can be replicated by other cities around the world.

Key Features

The SWC is a flexible concept with multiple applications, depending on the needs of various user groups. The value proposition can be as basic as a flexible workstation with connectivity, or as sophisticated as a pervasive collaboration environment sustaining online and offline communities. Broader services include access to interaction technologies such as high-quality videoconferencing, as well as daycare for children, high-end catering services, and financial services, supplemented by easy access to highways and public transportation. SWCs are also equipped with open workspace lounges and larger public areas.

- The Smart Work Centers in the Netherlands, as piloted under Connected Urban Development, have been conceived as constituting a *program* that addresses a wider work ecosystem, as opposed to being concerned solely with providing facilities offering cubicles, coffee, and connectivity. Governance, culture, and incentives have been at the top of the agenda from the outset.
- SWCs address mobility and traffic congestion by providing an alternative to public transportation or working from home. SWCs, however, should not be viewed as a substitute for either one.
- SWCs meet new demands that require high bandwidth, flexible work schedules, and a convergence of one’s work and private lives.
- SWCs function as true community centers to neighborhoods, allowing for social cohesion and social services. SWCs also support aging professionals and residents, allowing for more life-long learning facilities and continued inclusion in work processes, while offering flexible hours and a decreased need to travel.

³ User research study conducted by Telematica Instituut: www.telin.nl. Further details on the research study can be found in the CUD Solutions Toolkit at www.connectedurbandevlopment.org/toolkit.

- SWCs have been designed to optimize workers' daily lives, as opposed to functioning primarily as "satellite" offices for a given company.

Figure 2. Smart Work Center Concept



Citizen, Employee, and Company Benefits

- The more SWCs emerge as part of an SWC "grid," the larger their intended impact:
 - Having many smaller SWCs close to/in residential areas (as opposed to a few larger ones) allows SWCs to function as community centers.
 - An SWC grid allows for optimized transportation substitution as the availability of SWCs in close proximity to workers' residences increases.
 - As SWC "coverage" expands in larger urban and suburban areas, employers increasingly view them as viable workplaces for their employees.
- The SWC can deliver benefits to two key stakeholders:
 - **"The SWC Enterprise":** In this scenario, the SWC—set up as a private business—rents out flexible workspaces to organizations and individuals on a subscription or service-agreement basis. The SWC offers basic packages that include workstations, connectivity, and hardware, with additional services that can be offered by third parties (e.g., child daycare or a restaurant). As such, the SWC becomes a marketplace for services that workers value.
 - **Resource Optimization for Employers:** Once the SWC has been integrated into the employer's mid- and long-term resource planning, the emerging, blended model reduces costs of office space, energy, centralized services, and more. High-end e-work stations with full services and TelePresence access operate at 50 to 70 percent of the costs of traditional workspaces per employee per year.

Partners

- Cities of Amsterdam and Almere
- Cisco
- Quality Centre
- H4O Investments (Real Estate)
- Almere Kennisstad (Almere Smart City Foundation)