KASTLE

The Power of Connecting Workplace Apps to Building Systems

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A few years ago, there was a seemingly impenetrable wall separating building technology from the apps and software that empowered tenants to do their best work. Building systems controlling everything from HVAC and lighting to access control and emergency alerts couldn't find a purpose to justify closer connections with tenant tech stacks. Integrations were custom, expensive and often didn't fulfill their promises.

But now, buildings and individual workplaces have a problem in common: getting people back in the office regularly. With weekly occupancy still hovering around 50 percent of pre-pandemic levels across the United States, landlords and their tenants are moving their attention beyond office perks and policies to deliver an in-office experience that's more enjoyable and worthy of a commute. Technology can enable these elevated office days when building amenities are built directly into the workflows define people's workdays.

For most office buildings, connecting building systems to the workplace apps that people rely on every day to do their jobs is an untapped opportunity to improve what 'going to work' means.

Mapping What's Possible:
The Spectrum of Connection Points

First, let's define our terms. Building systems encompass both the hardware and software used to run a building and keep tenants happy. Workplace apps are the cornerstone software used by a company, whether on laptops or mobile: email, calendar, team messaging, HR management, accounting, etc.

The Spectrum of Workplace-to-Building Connections

Building Systems

Air quality	HVAC	Lighting
Elevators	Access control	Visitor Management
Emergency management	Amenity reservation	Building management system

Workplace Apps

Email	Calendar	HR
Accounting	Hotelling/Desk reservation	Productivity i.e. Slack/ Teams
Web Conferencing	Room management	

Just as there are opportunities to connect one building system to another – access control and emergency management, for example – there's power in integrating building-side systems with tenants' business-critical workplace tools. Some of these integrations may be unilateral, only pushing data from one technology to another, while others will feed data back and forth depending on the use case.

Building System	Workplace App	Integration Direction	Functions
Visitor Management	Productivity App (Slack or Teams)	Bilateral	Add visitor directly via Slack app, get notification of visitor arrival in Slack
Amenity Reservation	Calendar	Bilateral	Book shared building workspace directly in Outlook Calendar, amenity availability is updated in real-time
Access Control	HR Management System	Unilateral, HR directory to Access Control	Building access privileges are instantly updated in the Kastle app when new staff is added, or existing staff is terminated

The Right Front Door

Depending on the landlord, people usually have multiple ways to inform and interact with building technology even if they aren't directly connected. Instead of relying on emailing or calling the building management office, most portfolios give tenants some type of access to building systems. This could look like access to individual technologies, like adding a hot/cold complaint directly to a work order system, or a more unified tenant experience app.

Tenant experience apps empower tenants to interact with multiple aspects of the building with a single login. While this experience is more streamlined than being forced to remember multiple passwords or having to

email building management, connecting building systems to workplace apps without anything in the middle is the ultimate experience a building can provide its tenants. The closer a building can get to the tenant's natural workflow, the more likely they are to engage with whatever building management is trying to provide as an amenity or perk.

To make these more direct connections, a building must have a technology stack that's open and accessible to other programs, with trusted, reliable integration points. In today's built environment, that means partnering with technology providers that have proven experience doing integrations, like Kastle, rather than building them from scratch.

The Nuances of Build vs. Buy

Five years ago, building technology companies often provided custom, one-off integrations for specific landlords, buildings, and even tenants. However, they were labor-intensive for all involved and these custom connection points are becoming more difficult to justify. In addition, most landmark tenants' IT teams have rolled out stricter requirements for any application that wants access to their tech stack.

These factors make debates about building vs. buying entire applications and individual integration points lean in favor of buying the right software systems that have an open API and readymade integrations available for use by both buildings and tenants.
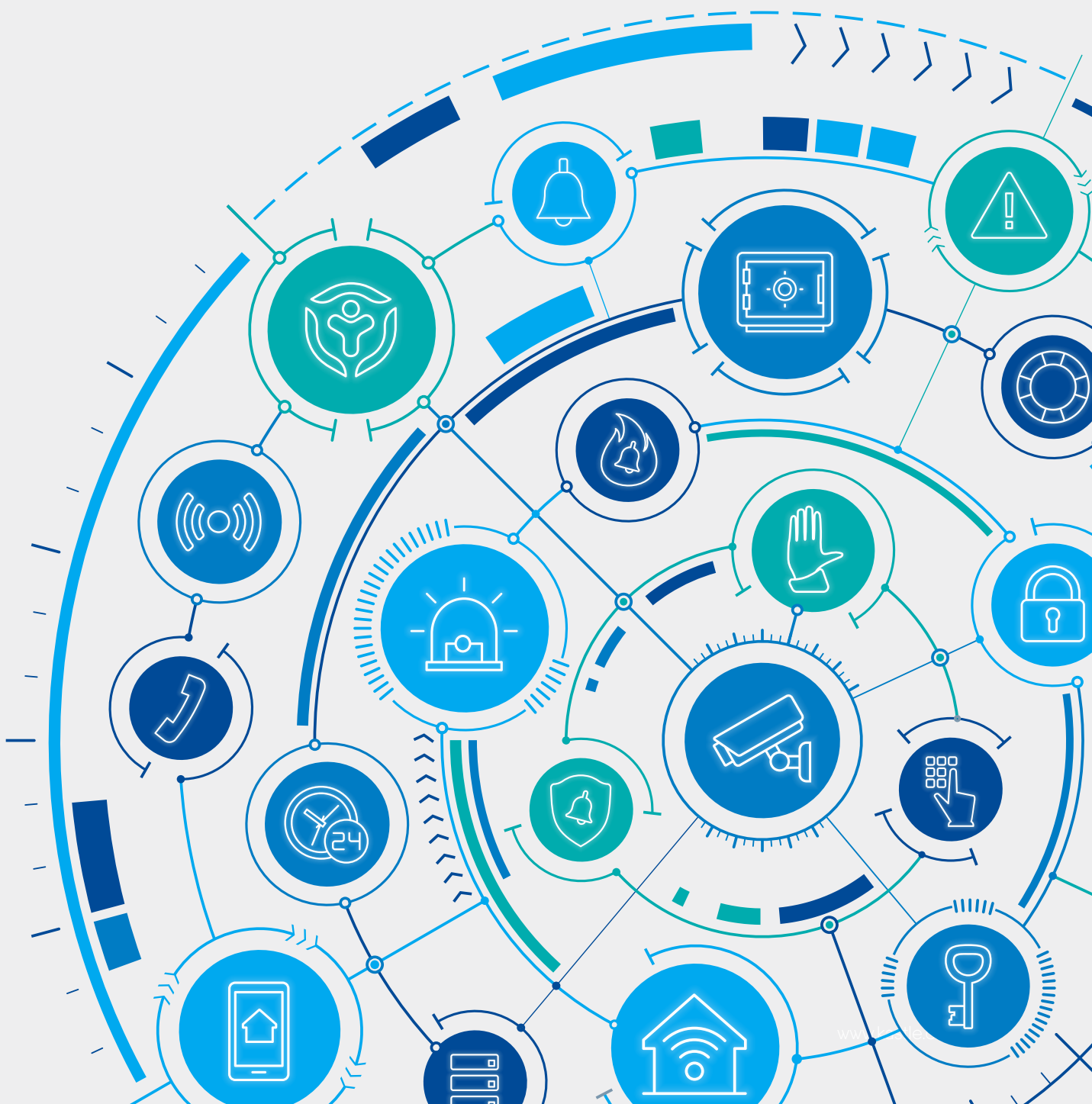
Matching the Right Integrations for Each Tenant

Not every integration will bring equal value to every tenant. With a clear picture of what's possible, the focus shifts to understanding which tenants are good targets for integration opportunities, and which of those integrations are best to recommend.

Assessing Tenant Readiness

Tenants' appetites for integration will vary based on three main factors: their current technology stack, hybrid work approach, and how centralized IT decision-making is.

Current Technology Stack

Some technology stacks are primed and ready for integration and others just aren't. A precursor for most integrations today is the ability for software applications to feed into each other via an API. The good news is that the big names in workplace technology – Microsoft Office, Teams, Slack, Salesforce, etc. – today all give customers access to an API. It's inherent in their offerings. One caveat: API access may hinge on the subscription level that your tenants have i.e. a basic software subscription does not have API access but the enterprise version does. If tenants are relying on any homegrown or proprietary software, the ability to integrate with those programs is not guaranteed.

Hybrid Work Approach

For tenants that are only in the office 1-2 days a week (or less), the building is already battling for relevance in the eyes of occupants. They no longer interact with the office each day, so giving them easier ways to reserve a conference room or register a visitor has limited value. Tenants who spend more time in the office and have a higher actual weekly occupancy are worth prioritizing in terms of offering and implementing integrations. The exception to this rule: larger tenants investing real

dollars – think five to seven figures – into revitalizing the workplace and making it a welcomed destination again. For tenants in that category, technology integrations can help drive people back to the office, allowing them to see when spaces are available and when their coworkers are there.

Centralized vs. Decentralized IT

IT structure and formality vary based on the size of a company. For larger, multi-office organizations, another variance is the technology department's willingness to offer different tech experiences for employees based on each office location will ultimately determine what a building can or can't offer that tenant. This is less of a factor for tenants that turn to one landlord for all office locations across their markets and tenants that only have an HQ.

Once you understand how these factors impact tenants, you can place them into one of four buckets to guide how you convey the value and function of integrations.

Matching a tenant's goals with integration value

Rather than presenting every integration possible to each tenant, buildings can tailor these conversations based on how the company is interacting with the building as a whole and their overall approach to technology. Most tenants will mirror one of these personas.

The Innovators

Up-and-coming startups and tech-forward companies who embrace what technology can do for their team's productivity and ability to thrive. Their tech stacks include the best of the best – think Microsoft Places, Teams, Gmail, Slack, Notion, and Calendly. You don't have to convince them about the power of integrating and streamlining technology; this is already their ethos.

Potential Integration: When a tenant is hosting a client meeting, any guests are automatically added to the visitor management system when an employee creates the meeting invitation for that event. Guests are also sent an email with a barcode for the turnstiles and parking garage. When visitors arrive, the meeting host is notified via Slack. In addition, given past building access and space reservation history, a tenant receives a notification asking if they'd like to book their preferred desk on their in-office days for next week and reserve their chosen conference room for meetings on those days.

The Security-Conscious

High-liability companies like banks, legal and accounting firms can't risk the security of their IP and client data just for a minor productivity boost. However, they are interested in ways to make their organizations more secure both from a workplace and a technology perspective.

Potential Integration: The employee directory from a tenant's HR management system integrates with the building's access control system. When a new employee is added, security credentials are automatically created and sent to that person. When an employee quits or is fired, all security credentials are immediately revoked.

Matching a tenant's goals with integration value

The Office Obsessed

These companies aren't struggling to get people back into the office. Most, if not all, of their employees spend at least 3-4 days a week at work, rather than at home. Their workplace management teams want to ensure that employees have the best experience possible at the office because it's one of the reasons why people love working there.

Potential Integration: Employees can view the availability of shared tenant amenities directly in their work calendar app alongside bookable spaces in their company's suite. Those employees can also book, reschedule and cancel tenant amenity reservations from their calendar view, with no need to log in elsewhere.

The Marquee Logos

Iconic, big companies often rely on more traditional workplace tools, but that doesn't mean they aren't willing to evolve their approach. It's just more complicated. Decisions about workplace and productivity tools are centralized through IT, and they want to understand not only the value of new technology but how it is different from functionality that may already exist in their ecosystem of tools.

Potential Integration: Notifications and reminders of building events are added directly to the tenant's internal wiki and shared calendar. Building procedures and tenant handbooks are also added and updated automatically in the tenant's system of record.

Moving beyond the leasing contact

To make these integrations possible, building management needs to nurture relationships beyond their leasing contact or the office manager. Functional leaders and IT are the new players to get on your side. Depending on the integrations that map to the tenant in question, your key contact list may expand to include operations, people/HR, accounting, or sales.

The first task at hand may be convincing them why they should even meet with the building team. Those leasing contacts and workplace managers play an important role in getting these conversations on the calendar, but you have to empower them with a value proposition to share with their peers. Rather than talking about the benefit of these integrations from the building's perspective, the focus should be on how it will improve the tenant's organization and in particular, the department in question.

- [ ] Identify which department is responsible for the connection point

- [ ] Ask leasing or office contact for an introduction to that department head

- [ ] Email a description of the integration's value proposition (suggested structure: integrating WORKPLACE TOOL with BUILDING SYSTEM will enable the team to LIST VALUE PROP ACTIONS)

- [ ] Schedule a meeting to discuss the integration

- [ ] Prepare for meeting

  - [ ] Be ready to discuss examples of like tenants using this integration

  - [ ] Have technical documents ready to explain the integration setup

  - [ ] Compile a list of additional information needed if the tenant wants to proceed

- [ ] Hold introduction meeting

- [ ] Follow up with the tenant contacts via email. Be sure to include:

  - [ ] Clear next steps to move the integration forward

  - [ ] Any technical requirements

  - [ ] Optional: a video or explainer about how the integration will work from the tenant's employees' perspective

Ensuring Integrations are Actually Used

At the end of the day, these integrations hold little value if people in the building aren't using them. This is arguably any software's biggest challenge, but it's essential for integrations as companies pay closer attention to the connection points they allow into their technology stacks. Much like measuring a building's occupancy, net operating income, and tenant renewal rate, software integrations have their own metrics worth tracking.

Three Performance Indicators of Workplace-to-Building Integrations

1. Active Users per Time Period

Active users in a given period will lend insights into how many people use each integration, when, and how often. Given the average occupancy in the office market today, measuring weekly and monthly active users is appropriate for most integration types. Ideally, usage data should show steady, average use when comparing different time periods at a minimum, but an increase in use is always better.

2. The Velocity of Users

As new tenants start to use each available integration, you'll want to see how quickly (or slowly) new users access the integration for the first time and then ideally become repeat users represented in daily and weekly active user data. If there's a significant gap between the time an integration is deployed for a tenant and when or if those occupants ever use it, that lag indicates the tenant does not see immediate value. When the building can proactively address these adoption users, it mitigates the risk of unhappy tenants.

3. User Workflow

Going one level deeper than pure usage data answers two key questions: What steps do users actually take when utilizing an integration? And, does it match or differ from what was intended? Understanding user workflow helps pinpoint if documentation on how to use the integration explains the intended process easiest enough for people to follow. It also gives you insight into any unexpected ways tenants are using the integration, perhaps directing future use case development to add more value to the tenant experience.

For landlords and building managers, another important benefit of having this level of integration is better measurement of a tenant's engagement with the building. For example, Kastle clients can track building access by tenant employees, by time, by day, or even by amenity space. By understanding how often people are booking shared tenant amenities or even experiencing their office suite, building management can have more informed conversatrions with tenants about lease renewals, expansions or even a shift to flex space. The key: understanding their space utilization and work patterns.

Getting tenants on board

While figuring out which integrations to offer each tenant based on their needs may feel like a process in itself, getting a tenant's employees to use those integrations is when the real work kicks in. Unlike the Field of Dreams, most integrations don't immediately entice action from their intended end user just because they exist. Instead, building teams need to partner with their tenant-side contacts to figure out where to put announcements, instructions, and resources about new integrations so they get viewed.

This challenge is slightly easier when an integration is automatically installed in the workplace tool by the corresponding department or IT. For example, if the building amenity reservation system is connected to a tenant's Outlook Calendar for easier booking, can IT enable that connection in Outlook for all staff at that location?

Some tips for rolling out integrations successfully include:

Frequency of Communication

Most integration announcements have an initial cadence of outreach: a mass, introductory email, reminders from managers, and a 'last call' type reminder that this new functionality is available. Each of these touchpoints typically happens within the first week of an integration's life. Instead, these communications should be expanded beyond that initial time period to include reminders and links in communications that a tenant's employees are already reading. Think office wide emails, mentions in team standups, etc.

Trusted Influencers

The next step revolves around who can be influential stewards of your message. Most often, these are managers of large teams and individual contributors who are admired by their peers. They can be equipped to show others how an integration point has improved their days at work.

Multiple Mediums

"The same information, in many ways" should be a guiding light when creating materials to educate tenants about the value and how-tos of any given integration. Email and messages in workplace tools like Slack capture people at a moment in time while codifying guidance about new integrations in workplace guides and internal wikis create resources with longevity.

The bottom line: If integrations aren't used, they aren't valuable

The importance of understanding how and when tenants use these integrations serves as a bigger reminder for embarking on this type of work: only offer integrations where there is real, measurable value to be gained. That means knowing how your tenants view the role of technology in their company and their goals for the workplace today.

Tightening the connection between landlords and tenants isn't revolutionary, but the willingness to do this with the technologies that are so central to running both buildings and workplaces is something we're seeing for the first time as an industry. For buildings that can actually deliver on this promise, they will have an easier time attracting tenants that seeking out a modern, quality workplace. For tenants, these integrations can reconnect their teams with the power of the workplace for more productive, happier days at work. That's the promise of what's to come next: better, more united experiences at the office.

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