



## First Came the Smartphone, Now Comes the Smartoffice | @ThingsExpo [#IoT]

Every innovation or invention was originally a daydream. You like to imagine a "what-if" scenario. And with all the attention being paid to the so-called Internet of Things (IoT) you don't have to stretch the imagination too much to see how this may impact commercial and homeowners insurance. We're beyond the point of accepting this as a leap of faith.

The groundwork is laid. Now it's just a matter of time.

We can thank the inventors of smart thermostats for developing a practical business application that everyone can relate to. Gone are the salad days of smart home apps, the early chalkboard drawings that imagined equipping the refrigerator with a speaker that would bark you orders to add milk to your grocery list.

Much has already been written about Google's Nest device. Nest is a thermostat that comes equipped with sensors that can detect the presence of people and learns to program itself. Already competitors like Ecobee and Honeywell are offering similar devices. (Check with your power company as some are offering \$100 rebates on these \$249 Wi-Fi devices.)

Nest is also selling smart CO2 and smoke detectors. This got me daydreaming. Engineers can fit a 14-megapixel digital camera into the corner of a smartphone. Why not put that lens into a ceiling-mounted smoke detector then let the camera flash photos of all the equipment and furnishings in an office? A perfect inventory is achieved for any future claim. With today's Big Data algorithms, associating a price with every piece of office content is par for the course.

### **Better Yet: Smart Pipes**

Making the office "smart" is all about the sensors and where you place them. A burst pipe or leaky gas hose could trigger an alarm. A sensor could alert you to a below-freezing drop in water temperature to avoid that burst pipe. The alert arrives as a text message. This is a practical application of telematics. Tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars in property damages can be avoided.

Some of our insurance clients are thinking about these sensors. Perhaps they will offer business incentives to install these. Once prices drop, perhaps insurers will mail them freely to their policyholders for self-installation, offering a drop in their premiums for doing so.

It's certainly a fun time to be in the insurance business. The Internet of Things will ensure that moss won't grow beneath our feet. The IoT trend is accelerating at such a pace that businesses now have "no choice" but to pursue it, according to the research firm Gartner. This year we can expect nearly 5 billion connected "things" to be up and running. Over the next five years there will be 25 billion connected devices, says Gartner.