

Office Window of the Future? Two Case Studies of an Augmented Window

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INTRODUCTION

Current capabilities of HDTV display technologies allow for the re-conceptualization of what counts as a “window.” We investigated this proposition through two case studies of an installation that displayed a real-time image of a local outdoor scene in a nearby interior office.

METHOD

We mounted an HDTV camera on top of a university building that over-looked a beautiful public plaza and fountain area on the campus and displayed the real-time image on 50” plasma displays in the participants’ interior, windowless offices. (See Figure 1). In these case studies, data was collected over a 17-week period: 6 weeks with the interior office “as is”, 6 weeks with the plasma display, and 4 weeks following the removal of the plasma display. Across the 17 week period, each participant completed (a) 7 30–45 minute interviews, (b) 10 work satisfaction surveys, (c) 10 mood surveys, (d) 10 office perception surveys, (e) journal entries, and (f) responses to email queries. In this poster we report on the themes that emerged in two of the case studies: Nina, a 45-50 year-old, female Lecturer; and Daniel, a 30-35 year-old, male staff member.

FINDINGS

Nina largely found the display beneficial both psychologically (e.g., increased sense of connection, mental break) and

socially (e.g., collaboration, status). Daniel, too, found the display psychologically beneficial but differed from Nina’s unified and largely positive experience. As time progressed, Daniel’s reflections on the installation suggested a dissonance between the benefits (e.g., aesthetics, tool for work, connection to outside) and harms (e.g., surveillance, unreliability, distraction). (See Table 1.)



Figure 1.
Office Window of the Future?

IMPLICATIONS

The findings suggest that some workers can benefit psychologically and in terms of performance by having an augmented window in their windowless offices. For some individuals, however, such benefits may be at least partially diminished as they increasingly worry about the harms caused by the installation to indirect stakeholders (the people whose images are captured by virtue of their walking through the public plaza). The appearance of harms over time highlights the value of conducting long term field studies such as this.

Table 1: Daniel’s Reasoning and Overall Judgment about the Display over Time

Domain	Benefits Identified, Week	1	7	8	10	12	13	17	Harms Identified, Week	1	7	8	10	12	13	17
Personal-psychological	aesthetically pleasing	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	technology is unreliable				•	•		
	connection to the outside	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	“hypnotic like a TV”				•	•		
	tool for work	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	artificial framing of nature				•			•
	mental break/stimulus	•	•	•	•	•	•	•								
Social-conventional	perceived as tech-savvy							•	distracting office dialogue		•	•				•
	prestige/status							•								
Moral									sense of surveillance		•	•	•	•	•	•
									lack of informed consent							•
									co-opts image of others							•
Overall Judgment	screen is beneficial	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	screen is harmful							•

RECOMMENDATIONS

More research – which the authors are pursuing – is needed on two fronts: (1) a larger number of case studies are needed to determine the extent of variability in people’s interactions with the installation, and (2) assessments are needed of the views and values of the indirect stakeholders. With such data in hand, it may be possible to recommend versions of this installation when people are confined to windowless environments.

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