

Tyler Carmody: Welcome back to UCX USA Talks. I am super excited for today's episode as I am joined by Mark Whittaker, who is the Smart Collaboration Technical Consultant for Lenovo, one of our wonderful sponsors for UCX USA. Today, we are going to be talking about how shared desktops are powering the office of the future, something that is extremely timely and is going to be super exciting to talk about. Lenovo actually has an awesome new product that is definitely going to help push that future office forward, so I'm really excited to learn about it. Let's get started. But before we go, Mark, if you want to tell us a little bit about yourself, let's hear all about you.

Mark Whittaker: Thank you, Tyler. Thanks for having me on, by the way. Yeah, so I'm Mark Whittaker. I'm the Smart Collaboration Technical Consultant. So what that means is I'm responsible for all the technical side of our Smart Collaboration Product Portfolio. If you have questions about how it might integrate or what it might need to do in the background to get things going for you, you'd always reach out to me and I'd be able to try to help you out as best as I can. My background is actually in the AV industry, in all honesty, and I've been in the business since about 2001. I've been through every facet of the whole installation side and the whole integrator side, so I know all about just about everything having to do with that side of the business.

And I made the jump over to Lenovo about two years ago. And I really saw an opportunity here because it feels like the whole industry is moving towards that Zoom room and Teams room solution environment, and that's really where our Smart Collaboration Portfolio thrives well. In addition to that, I've also been an educator. I've taught at the university level for the last 20 years, so I really have a passion for educating and it's my hope that if you have questions, I can not only just provide you answers, but also educate you on why things are the way they are.

Tyler Carmody: Awesome, Mark. We are so excited to have you and we will get started right with the first question. Can you tell us, but mainly me because I'm not too sure about it, can you tell us exactly what a shared desktop is?

Mark Whittaker: Absolutely. Now, when you say to the average person that, hey, a desktop, what comes to mind is maybe a computer and the desktop on the computer, but that's not what we're talking about at all. What we're actually talking about is a physical shared desk space environment. This has actually been around for much longer than most people might realize and started off probably 10, 15 years ago as an office trend. And really the Silicon Valley guys really started kicking that off a long time ago. But it kind of spread throughout the industry. And ultimately what it is is it creates open environments where you have shared desk spaces so that everybody can communicate with everybody all the time like it's a giant scrum. And it becomes a very efficient way to tackle team problems and share content and communicate and collaborate with people on the very small level on your office floor plan.

Now, in addition to that, it literally is sounding what it is. It is a shared desktop, meaning it is physically a desk that is owned by me in the morning and then, Tyler, by you in the afternoon, or perhaps me today and you tomorrow. But the idea is that this one desk can have different users throughout the course of a day or throughout the course of a work week.

Tyler Carmody: Got it. I know that the concept of sort of like a shared space and an open floor plan has definitely been around since before the pandemic, which we'll refer to as the before times, but I would love to know how the concept of the shared desktop has changed since the start of the pandemic.

Mark Whittaker: Sure. So ultimately it's actually kind of a weird beast, like you mentioned, that it's been around since before that, so it'd been kind of evolving slowly. And then when the pandemic hit and everybody went home, it kind of just sat there. And you had office environments realizing, "Hey, wait a minute, if we have all these spaces everywhere for all these employees and they're not always here, why do we need to have all of them have their own individual space?" And so the pandemic started realizing or helped companies and corporations, generally speaking, realize that there's this opportunity to be able to have the desk shared by multiple people throughout the course of the week.

As a matter of fact, I actually had a client years ago who started this journey and what they did is they realized that if they allowed everybody to go home or work from home two days a week, this is in the before times as you mentioned, if you allowed them all to go home two days a week to work, the office was 40% empty on any given day. So what they actually realized is that they could actually capitalize on a reduction of real estate costs as a function of being able to downsize buildings and combine all these desks into the shared desktop environment.

So we started that way a long time ago ultimately, and really as it evolved, we got halfway through the pandemic and people started coming back into the office. And I think there was a little touch of, what's the word I'm looking for? There was a touch of skepticism about sharing devices at that point in time still, but as our understanding of the virus has kind of evolved over time, it's become less and less of a stigma to be able to share all these things. And so I think as a function of combining those offices and starting to have shared desk environments as a function of reducing office sizes, physically from a real estate perspective, there is the possibility that this whole thing is junk and we should just delete it out. So just forget that I said the whole thing.

Tyler Carmody: Got it. So do you believe that a shared desktop could be an attractive way to get people back in the office now that we're seeing a huge return to the office?

Mark Whittaker: So Tyler, that's actually a great question. It's one I've actually been thinking about for a while now, and that actually goes back to a very, very larger picture question that needs to be answered, and that is ultimately what actually brings people back to the office. And what I've actually done through all the research

I've read about and seen, et cetera, et cetera, from magazines and publications, et cetera, et cetera, is that ultimately it's people that bring people back to the office. So nobody wants to go back to an office and have it be empty, right? And you want to meet with your colleagues in the office. So people ultimately drive people back to the office.

Well, unfortunately, that doesn't necessarily give you a real answer to what you just asked. So what I think is the real answer to that question is whether or not that shared desktop environment really can help drive, and the technology can help drive the people back into the office. I think ultimately what we're trying to do is make work easier, make people come into the office to make work easier, and that's where that shared desktop environment really helps drive that adoption of coming back into the office.

Tyler Carmody:

Yeah. Something that we've talked about a lot is sort of the phrase that technology begins with people. So it seems like the shared desktop needs to work in tandem with the culture and with the people, so it's definitely going to be super exciting to see how the shared desktop works with culture to bring everyone back into an office space. And so I'm super excited for this next question because I actually had the opportunity to read through a bunch of literature and see this product in action. We're going to be talking about the Lenovo ThinkSmart View Plus. So I want you to tell me all about it and how Lenovo is helping hybrid employees have the best return to office possible.

Mark Whittaker:

Absolutely, and thank you for bringing in the View Plus here, the ThinkSmart View Plus. The ThinkSmart View Plus is a 27-inch all in one display that has the Android compute built into it along with the camera, microphones, and speaker bar. So here you can see the ThinkSmart View Plus. This is currently set up as a shared desk environment, so you can see that QR code right there. And ultimately what happens is that you send the device an email saying, I'd like to, it's actually you send the device a calendar invite and then it becomes reserved for the day. So you can see Reserve View Plus. That's actually a meeting I had set up as a weird subcategory, one of my alter egos within my test environment. And what ends up happening is that I could sign into this device with that via QR code, or by actually hitting the little button right down here that says sign in on this device.

And once you do that, you sign into the device and the device becomes you. So you can see I've signed in here as the hot desk user, and you can start to see some phone functions. You can see calls that I have available and my calendar and so on and so forth. And if I hit that calendar, all of my meetings show up right over here, and in order to join them, it is just one touch join into those meetings and you're good to go. Now, the fun part about this device is that you don't even necessarily have to sign into it. Because it's a 27-inch display, you can actually take it and connect the USB-C cable to your laptop and it becomes a second display for you. So in the event that you didn't really want to sign into a device or you just didn't have time, you just need something quick, you can just

find one of these devices on your floor, plug in that USB-C cable, and it becomes your second monitor.

Now, what's really cool about that is that the camera, speaker bar, and microphone, so you can see again camera up top, speaker bar and microphone are down the bottom, you can see those become part of your laptop system, so that becomes valuable. The output from your display, from your laptop, goes to that display, and this is actually touch and interactive right now. So if you needed to start a white whiteboard session or something to that effect, you could start the whiteboard session and annotate directly on the ThinkSmart View Plus.

There are other modes to go through, but those are really the two good hot desking modes. This can also become a personal device where if you needed it and it would just happen to be part of your home environment or home office environment, you definitely could just sign into it and it becomes yours in perpetuity. You don't have to sign out and sign in all day long. Incidentally, as it turns out, when you sign in as a guest, like I have right here, what we have is it'll allow you to hold the device till the end of your time and about 15 minutes before the end of your time, it'll ask you if you'd like to extend it or sign out. And you can just ignore it and at the end of your time, it'll sign you out automatically and then that's the end of your session.

Tyler Carmody: Well, Mark, now that we have seen that amazing product in action, I really appreciate you showing me that. We are at our final question, which is what do you believe is the future of the shared desktop?

Mark Whittaker: Ultimately, I think the future of the shared desktop is a big question mark. I think there's lots of room for expansion and improvement along the lines of that. I also think that some of the best products we're going to see are potentially available right now in terms of the View Plus, at the very least. But really what happens is that when you start to think about what's going on in that evolution, what's next, where do we go from here kind of thing, what it boils down to is that the more enterprise management you have over these devices, I believe the better off you're going to be. The ThinkSmart View Plus is enterprise managed. It also has the ability to log into our ThinkSmart Manager tool, which is extraordinarily valuable.

So why is that important, you might ask? It's actually important because having IT be able to govern those devices is an extraordinarily powerful thing to have. Instead of just having random peripherals throughout the office and then somebody saying, "Well, what do I do if it breaks," and say, "Well, you're on your own, sorry," having it governed by IT is an extraordinarily powerful proposition because now you say as a user, "I don't get it. It's broken," an IT member can actually fix it for you as opposed to just kind of guessing as to what's going on with your peripherals.

Tyler Carmody: Yeah, so it's definitely empowering for sure.

Mark Whittaker: The bottom line on that is I think the more we get down those lines and being able to have those enterprise management solutions for the desktop environment, I think that's really what's next. I do also think that the evolution is going to be a matter of a real estate evolution. I think it is going to become much wider adopted across the industry, across all enterprise everywhere, and it's not necessarily just enterprise. It could also be S&P, it could also be Fortune 500, it could be healthcare, it could be any number of different places.

But I do think that that's going to be adopted more and more frequently. Because when you think about the real estate question associated with this, the real estate is the way it is, and the reason why that market hasn't collapsed yet is because all those companies and corporations are signed into long-term leases. What happens in a few years when those leases are up? Everything's going to condense. We're going to have a problem with the real estate market, but we'll get there when we get there. But the bottom line on it is that these devices like our ThinkSmart View Plus are going to become extraordinarily valuable for those hot desking scenarios.

Tyler Carmody: Yeah. Well, I'm super excited to see it roll out. I think it's shipping out soon, correct?

Mark Whittaker: It actually should be shipping by the end of July.

Tyler Carmody: There we go. Well, that's perfect. Well, Mark, I really appreciate you taking the time to speak with me today. Like I do with all of our speakers, before we sign off, do you have any final takeaways or anything else you want to tell the audience?

Mark Whittaker: Sure. I appreciate the opportunity here, Tyler, to come talk with you about this great product. But in addition to this one product, we have a whole line of smart collaboration products that are Teams and Zoom-enabled. They'll help you get that environment or your office environment up and running very quickly, very easily. We also have the ability to do Google Meet systems, which is something that not everybody can do, but that's a story for another day. The bottom line on all of it is that we are here, we're here to help you, and we'd love to earn your business. So come on by, check out all of our products. One particular website I challenge you all to go take a peek at is our very own North American website, smartcollab.us, spelled just like it sounds, smartcollab.us. And that will show you all of our products, lots of fun technical information. Our quick reference guide is right on that website. Lots of great information about our products right there.

Tyler Carmody: Cool. Well, I'm sure you can catch me and everyone else at the Lenovo booth when we come to UCX USA this September in Austin. Mark, thank you so much for joining me today, and thank you all for watching. As always, you can follow us on social media at [@ucxusaexpo](https://twitter.com/ucxusaexpo) and [@ucxusa](https://twitter.com/ucxusa), and check out our website, ucxusa.com. And we will see you next time. Have a good day, Mark.

Mark Whittaker: Thank you, Tyler. You have a great day too.