Technology:
Blessing or curse?

By Francesco Nicosia
Operation Manager @TablO Ltd (former I.T analyst in Italy)

"Hello, how may I help you?". This used to be the standard reply when answering the phone until 1998 when we had no idea who was at the other end of the line.
Communications used to be via cable only (fixed line or telex), and it was only by the end of the year that the number of mobile phones doubled. Nowadays, there are almost 5,1 billion people with a mobile device, forcing to change the standard phone reply into a more direct "Hello, where are you now?".

Nevertheless, connectivity comes with a price. When we post pictures while on holiday, we are telling the world that we are not home. When we want to show off our newly bought car, we might be showing its plate number and even the address of the house beyond it. We communicate our next moves in advance to the whole world, by making sensitive information easy to access, without considering the potential threat behind such actions. Nowadays, it is possible to rob a car digitally between 15 seconds and 3 minutes. Electronic keys are no longer safe, especially if not protected properly. We are turning our mobile phones into electronic wallets: almost 70% of the people interviewed in China feel more scared of losing their phone, rather than their wallet.

However, connectivity also enables parents to monitor in real-time their baby and streaming allows us to check on our beloved pets while keeping a constant eye on our house while on holiday. At the same time, we can accomplish work duties beyond the standard business hours, on a plane or on our sofa during weekends, or on a sunbed on a tropical beach. 20 years ago we would wander around with our phone in our hands searching for a line signal, like contemporary Pokemon hunters, while today we pay expensive detox clinics constraining us on weekly offline programs just to do something we could do on our own, whenever needed.

Technology really changed the way we live. Italy ranked third in the worldwide list of mobile owners compared to the overall population, just beyond Hong Kong and South Korea. Every Italian spends an average of 6 hours per day connected on the internet. Most of the times, without knowing anything about technology, without having read any user manuals, without any technical training, and making each one of us subject to online crimes and frauds.

This is just an example to remind ourselves that technology is an outstanding tool, only if used properly and only if first, we get the answers to the key WH-Questions : Who, When, What, Why, Where?

Alessandro Bisagni is the Founder and President of BEE Incorporations, a sustainability engineering consulting and technology company specializing in the creation of green and healthy buildings. BEE is a GBCI recognized LEED Proven Provider and part of USGBC's LEED User Group for Retail. The company specializes in building simulations, commissioning, green building certification, and cloud-based building data management for ensuring ongoing performance. Alessandro has managed over 200 LEED projects, across 25 countries, with a combined GFA of over 35 million square feet. BEE is one of the most experienced green building consultancies in the retail sector worldwide.

Alessandro has been recognized by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) as a Top 40 Under 40 professional class of 2016, and Tatler Hong Kong Generation T List class of 2017.

Alessandro Bisagni

Founder & President

BEE Incorporations
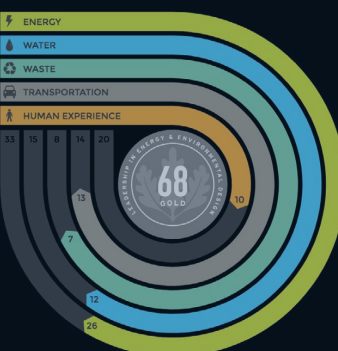
Big data and machine learning:
What they mean for greener space operation

In a climate where customers and stakeholders demand environmental sustainability, technology can help retailers make more sustainable decisions. After all, owners are searching for innovative ways to operate their stores more sustainably across the globe — with objectives to save utility costs, optimize employee work productivity, and improve indoor environmental conditions to maximize customer experience. Stores already have the necessary energy and water usage and indoor environmental quality data. However, this data is of no use if retailers do not utilize it to improve and optimize their day-to-day store operations. As retailers collect and compile these exponentially growing amount of big data across their global portfolio, Big Data could play a key role in managing stores' environmental performance data, as well as benchmarking them against those of other brands'. For example, the most internationally-recognized environmental design standard LEED uses Arc, a cloud - based tech platform that allow retailers to collect, manage, analyze and communicate information about the operational performance of spaces, buildings, places and entire portfolios.

Arc aggregates and visualizes data from meters, utility bills and user surveys, and connects that data with green building certifications and rating systems. In essence, Big Data could influence stores operations globally to nudge every retailer in the right direction, by keeping them more informed about the impact of their operational decisions.

Take Prada. In June, Prada certified world's first LEED Operations and Maintenance (O&M) for Interiors retail project at Gold Level for its 14,230-square feet Alexandra House store in Central Hong Kong. Prada has publicly announced its corporate sustainability strategy to LEED-certify their stores across 70 countries at Gold Level. As a commitment to its goals, the luxury retailer is exploring ways to integrate innovative technologies into its store design and operations. For one, it leverages Arc as a tool to monitor the real-time performance of energy, water, waste, transportation and human experience. The increased data transparency has allowed Prada to learn from their actions and quickly identify areas for performance improvement.

As part of their sustainability commitments, others are working along similar lines: retailers are using smart data analytics solutions to monitor energy, water, and indoor air quality at their stores worldwide. For instance, QLEAR's platform provides an easy solution for owners to manage their space's environmental data. As world's first cloud-based data monitoring system that integrates data directly with Arc, QLEAR's real-time indoor environmental quality monitoring, data management, and forecasting capabilities shift the paradigm in building technology. If old monitoring tech relied on simply storing and viewing data, the future of new monitoring tech lies in Machine Learning, which creates models to ensure continued performance; spot inefficiencies; and forecast future energy performance based on historical trends.

For facility managers, a combination of Big Data and Machine Learning will provide insights revealing the realities of environmental performance and projecting future operational risks. After all, we make decisions based on what algorithms choose to show them.