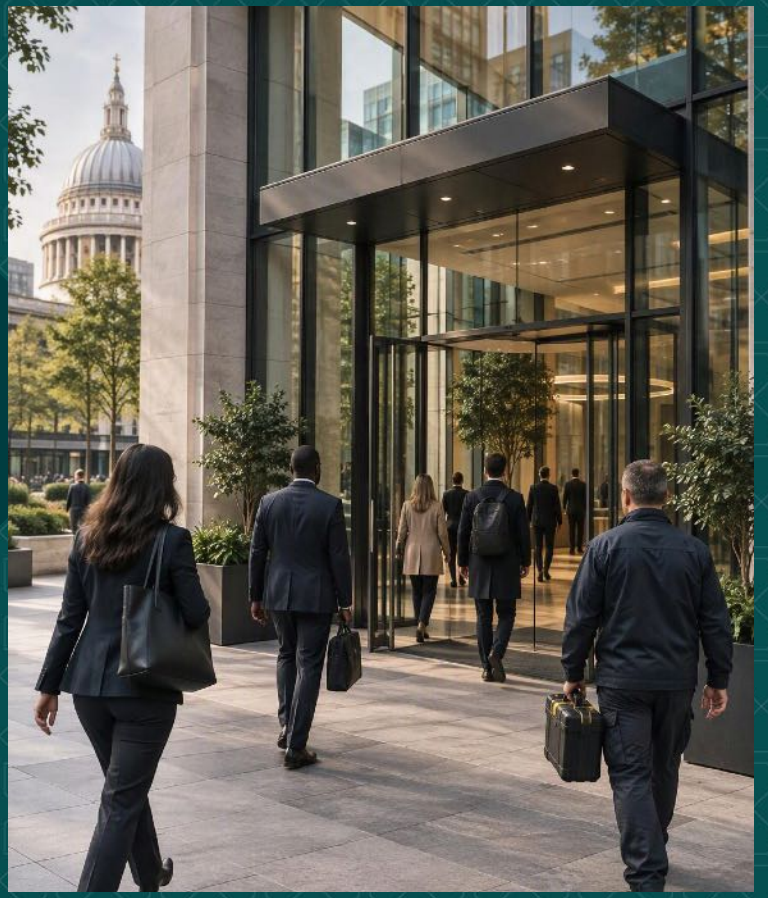
Smart Buildings Show, London

Why Smart Buildings Need a Narrative Before a Solution

Stop buying technology. Start defining the experience.



Ross Powell
Technology Director, Property Management
Knight Frank

Your partners in property

The industry starts with the wrong questions

Which platform?

Which sensors?

Which app?

Which AI?

Which digital twin?

Who is this building for?

And what should their experience be?

“I don’t want a smart building. I want a better day.”

Easy access, including visitors

A desk or room that is available

Reliable connectivity

Comfortable air and temperature

A workplace worth travelling to



People experience whether the building works

“Help me act before the complaint arrives.”



- One usable version of the truth
- Faults found before complaints
- Maintenance informed by condition
- Less manual reporting
- Faster diagnosis, prepared engineers

A smart building should become easier to operate

“Give me clarity, not complexity.”

A clear brief built around outcomes

Systems that serve the building’s story

Realistic integration requirements

Proper commissioning and maintainability

Structured data and usable handover



A building is not smart if its maintainers cannot support it after practical completion

“Prove performance.”

Investors and owners buy outcomes, not dashboards.

An asset that is easier to let, operate, report on and transact

Energy and carbon
Evidence with clear boundaries

Occupancy and utilisation
Insight into real use

Operational risk
Dependable service and support

Leasing and retention
A better proposition for occupiers

Asset performance and client visibility
Secure client access to reliable, usable data

Four stories, one building

Knight Frank

Occupiers and visitors

A better day and an effortless arrival

Investors and owners

Evidence of performance and lower operating risk



Operators

Earlier insight, simpler operation
More Automation

Contractors and engineers

A clear brief and maintainable systems

Start with the story, not the stack

Five questions before buying anything

1. Who is the building for?
2. What experience are we creating?
3. Which operational and commercial outcomes matter?
4. How will we measure success after occupation?
5. **Which engineering and technology do we genuinely need?**

Define the experience

Design the operation

Deploy the technology

People don’t experience sensors. They experience buildings.