

March 01, 2016

Allstate bringing 400 tech workers downtown



JOHN PLETZ ON TECH



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Beam Suntory

Merchandise Mart

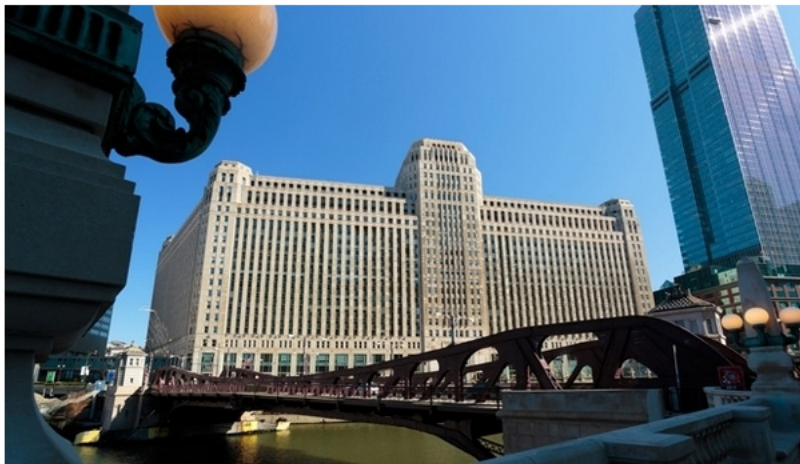
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The Merchandise Mart

Photo by Erik Unger

Allstate's 45,000-square-foot space will house workers from the company's quantitative research and analytics and connected-car teams. Moving downtown will give Allstate access to valuable pools of talent.

Data scientists and analysts tend to be clustered downtown, working for startups such as Uptake and established companies like IRI. There also is a pool of **engineers and other workers involved in the connected car** stemming from Here, as former digital-navigation company Navteq is now called, as well as BMW.

Like other insurers, Allstate relied on big data before it was called big data. And insurers are keenly interested in connected-car technology—smartphones, wireless technology, sensors and software—to provide data about drivers to better assess risk.

ALL ABOUT LOCATION

Suburban companies have wrestled with attracting talent, particularly tech workers, such as programmers. Increasingly, they've decided to follow the talent.

Companies also value downtown's central location for meetings. Several, including **Whirlpool, Kraft** and Motorola, have opened customer centers or satellite offices there.

After it was acquired by H.J. Heinz, **Kraft moved into the Aon Center** downtown. And **Motorola Solutions plans to move** its headquarters downtown.

Last year, Allstate signed a **small, half-floor lease in River Point**, a 52-story tower under construction along the Chicago River, for executives to hold meetings downtown.

The Mart became a tech hub for startups when 1871 opened nearly four years ago, but it has since become a destination for big companies, starting with Motorola Mobility, **which moved its headquarters to the building in 2014.**

Since then, ConAgra **said it would relocate its headquarters** from Omaha, Neb.

Allstate is opening an innovation center in the Merchandise Mart that will bring 400 technology jobs downtown.

The Northbrook-based insurer is just the latest in a growing conga line of suburban employers that have either set up satellite offices or moved their entire operations downtown in search of fresh talent.

Many of them, including liquor maker **Beam Suntory, have moved to the Merchandise Mart**, which has become a hub for both tech startups and established companies.

"It is beyond clear that all these suburban HQs are not attractive any longer to digital or creative tech workers who don't want to commute at all and certainly not for hours a day," says Howard Tullman, CEO of startup incubator 1871, located in the Mart. "Also, they want to work in innovative places with other similarly motivated and talented people."