

Return to Service

WORKPLACE RE-OCCUPANCY

In order to return people to the workplace, immediate steps should be taken to create a safer work environment. These steps are based on what we know now about the spread of coronavirus and based on CDC and WHO guidelines. While the priority focus is on decontamination and disinfection, a successful return will also rely on addressing individual and group behaviors as well as workplace culture.

- / RETHINKING WORKPLACE
- / REVISING DISINFECTION + CLEANING PROTOCOLS
- / RECALIBRATING BUILDING SYSTEMS
- / RESETTING BEHAVIOR
- / RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE + MANAGEMENT
- / REVISITING TELEWORK
- / REASSESSING SITE SELECTION
- / REEVALUATING DISTANCE
- / RETHINKING MATERIALITY
- / RESETTING BUILDING SMARTS
- / REVAMPING CAPITAL INVESTMENT/FUNDING
- / RETHINKING THE FUTURE OF WORK

RETHINKING WORKPLACE



It has long been said “nothing is constant but change” although in most instances, change has been incremental or iterative and not thrust upon us in a manner that challenges the very foundation of our workplace and workplace ecosystem. In our urgent need to reopen our economy, we need to act swiftly and collectively—identify the urgent and immediately implementable solutions without **compromising our overall fiscal and economic well-being** in the long run.

With new information on the novel coronavirus emerging every day, the sheer scale of the behavioral and spatial implications across all scales and building typologies is overwhelming. Through methodical and collective action, we can emerge from this crisis stronger than ever with a new set of values and goals and a renewed emphasis on the safety, wellbeing, and performances of our people.

RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE + MANAGEMENT

WHAT TO DO NOW:

- Immediately stand up a return to work organizing team with clear decision making protocols
- Create return to work strategy integrated with a business change management strategy
- Prepare, legally assess and publish company-wide health, safety and density operational protocols
- Create a prioritization strategy for determining the most beneficial, lowest risk return pathway
- Establish data sources and key performance indicators that enable the monitoring of the phase by phase return with business objectives
- Create a transparent communications cascade pathway that devolves implementation to your individual business units

LONG TERM:

- Determine the success or otherwise of what was accomplished during the response period
- Identify the business implications of how your market has shifted
- Create a prioritization strategy for investment in market response initiatives
- Determine your medium and long term new business objectives



Your leadership has been required to navigate dramatic, short term change, but emerging stronger from this crisis will require equally organized and decisive management. New organizational structures that with the capabilities and data to align will be required to prioritize and implement integrated business change in the return to work initiative.

REVISITING TELEWORK

WHAT TO DO NOW:

- Ramp up your technology infrastructure to support the integration of large scale remote working
- Develop a means of assessing critical on-site activities (not necessarily departments or specific individuals)
- Designate “in-office days” for these critical activities and teams

LONG TERM:

- Design meeting rooms to accommodate at least one remote participant
- Evolve the idea of structured flexibility, building upon the lessons learned from the initial split shift concept adopted at initial re-occupancy
- Recognize that different teams need different levels of in-person engagement, and it may change over time. Embrace the flexibility



Remote or virtual work (telework) has long been part of a comprehensive workplace strategy. Volumes have been written and many success stories exist of the organizations who have embraced it. Once thought only plausible for some types of organizations, certain industries, and specific cultures—coronavirus has forced the world’s largest remote working pilot. And while it must be acknowledged that some industries are struggling, this global experiment has forced even the biggest detractors into realizing its plausibility, efficiency and effectiveness.

Coronavirus has forced the world’s largest remote working pilot.

RESETTING BEHAVIOR



Some of the most fundamental cultural norms have shifted overnight. Given this new world in which we live, they will continue to evolve along with our understanding of coronavirus. Wearing masks became socially acceptable overnight, just as shaking hands in greeting became socially unacceptable. It's reasonable to expect we will continue to shift even the most basic of our ingrained behaviors in an effort to protect ourselves and those around us.

WHAT TO DO NOW:

- Establish a culture of cleanliness where it is commonplace to sanitize shared surfaces after use
- Identify protocols and availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Develop a system of Personnel Monitoring (temperature checks and/or testing) prior to reentry
- Establish a committee of “Re-occupancy Ambassadors” or “return to work readiness” team to serve as liaisons to the leadership and act as the voice of the occupants
- Engage! its important employees know they are being heard and prioritized in the decision making

LONG TERM:

- Educating the employee population leads to empowerment of action and participation in collective solutions
- Continuous engagement, improvement, and refinement as technology and understanding advances
- Raising awareness of the importance of air quality to human health is important beyond the current focus on coronavirus. Empowering our people to be part of this conversation will change priorities and expectations of the design and operation of our buildings.

REEVALUATING SPACE/DISTANCE

WHAT TO DO NOW:

- Develop a means of assessing the “critical onsite” employees
- Understand perception and expectations of your employee population so you can solve for what is most important to them
- Prepare communications and messaging strategy
- Model spatial scenarios to assess the “maximum capacity” in a given floor plate during this initial re-occupancy phase

LONG TERM:

- Develop planning scenarios and cost modeling
- Avoid any long term decisions with regards to physical redesign. A solution is likely to emerge which is outside our current design thinking.



Workplaces historically have existed as a place that gives people the tools to complete their work. In the past few decades, technology has enabled a third of the workforce to perform work from any location, yet almost all employees still use company offices. Our workplaces now hold an enhanced role of creating community, establishing culture, and driving collaboration. Given the density of our urban centers, building accessibility, and office throughways, maintaining social distancing protocols for an entire employee population onsite is implausible as well as impractical. Moving forward in this transitional time, offices need to balance the mix of social and work functions as a driver of space use.

REVISING DISINFECTION + CLEANING PROTOCOLS

WHAT TO DO NOW:

- Transition from cleaning to disinfection and decontamination
- Implement enhanced cleaning contracts—multiple times a day
- Implement periodic decontamination cycles through the air handling systems
- Identify and integrate antimicrobial materials and industrial decontamination products into a holistic procurement process
- Leverage smart building infrastructure to display disinfectant cycles and other pertinent HSE info
- Identify decontamination spots
- Communicate revised workplace protocols to all building occupants

LONG TERM:

- Provide additional training and ongoing monitoring practices for all building operations
- Use antimicrobial products where possible



It will no longer be enough that cleaning crews and custodial staff do a high-level sweep over the office, empty garbage cans, and wipe down common surfaces two or three times a week. Real estate and facility leaders will need to invest in far more comprehensive cleaning and disinfection services. It is clear that occupants will need to see a demonstrable effort from employers to ensure the health and safety of their workforce prior to returning, at a minimum. As our understanding of this virus advances, so too will our understanding of liability, governing authorities and requirements around operational maintenance.

REVAMPING CAPITAL INVESTMENT

WHAT TO DO NOW:

- Gather facility ownership, utilization, condition, efficiency and productivity data
- Create a scored elements prioritization methodology incorporating post coronavirus business drivers
- Undertake an accelerated scenario planning and risk assessment process to test targeted consolidation, new remote working policies and/or expansion strategies
- Create a phased reinvestment plan that covers short term operations enabling work as well as longer term acquisitions, disposals and shared uses

LONG TERM:

- Conduct more thorough financial analysis and prioritization of capital projects
- Conduct financial scenario modeling based on varied paths to return to service and long term shifts in work patterns



Rethinking your approach to capital planning is one of the most important short term initiatives that involves uncertainty and long term consequences. To mitigate this risk, capital planning of the future will be a dynamic process, driven by real-time data inputs which simultaneously allow you to understand the viability of your current assets, predict your future needs on the basis of market trends and test the implications of capital investment decisions.

REASSESSING SITE SELECTION



Prior to coronavirus, real estate teams were tasked with finding sites that would help to retain and attract the best talent. Post-pandemic, this mission will not change, however we can expect dramatic shifts in the criteria we use to judge success, at least in the short- to medium-term. Centralized headquarters may give way to distributed sites, to provide staff coverage in emergency situations. Employees, wary of traveling on public transit, will require alternative commute options—biking, driving, walking to maintain their isolation. Multi-tenant buildings may require enhanced base-level criteria for all tenants to ensure safety for a wide population. Together with touchless building doorways, no-contact security checks, and dedicated air systems per tenant, we now have a new “must-have” list for corporate real estate.

WHAT TO DO NOW:

- For multi-tenant properties, work with landlords to determine landlord vs. tenant responsibility for ensuring a healthy environment
- Assess the viability of a distributed/decentralized model, identifying those teams that must be co-located
- Survey current staff on preferred commute options and locations
- Establish minimum base building cleaning and maintenance criteria

LONG TERM:

- Ensure digital infrastructure is adequate for the enhanced connectivity required in the new distributed work model
- Set up site redundancy to allow critical staff a secure workspace in the event of contamination
- Emphasize fluid lease terms in future negotiations and overall occupancy costs to provide increased flexibility for varying occupancy
- Reduce the value placed on the common amenity model
- Reassess site selection criteria—ensuring employee health as top priority for future lease renewals

RECALIBRATING BUILDING SYSTEMS

WHAT TO DO NOW:

- Deploy sensors to detect occupant density and air quality, and make results visible to occupants
- Revise elevator queuing algorithms to minimize wait times and stop at fewer floors
- Audit existing HVAC systems and rebalance to maximize outdoor air intake, to increase the supply of fresh air to occupied spaces, particularly when common systems service multiple tenant spaces
- Upgrade existing filters and where possible install new UV-C filters to each supply air stream to eradicate viruses or pathogens from the air stream
- Install wall- or ceiling-mounted air purification units at occupied spaces such as conference rooms, collaboration areas and workstation clusters to provide increased air change rates and enhance contaminant removal
- Reseal waste-water pipes and reroute (where possible) to reduce the risk of pathogen transfer to adjacent air streams when routed through the same space

LONG TERM:

- Redesign ventilation systems to maximize outdoor air, reducing the risk of recirculating pathogens. Adjust building cores and air handling units accordingly
- Utilize underfloor displacement ventilation systems to introduce clean fresh air at the occupant level. Air particulates will follow thermal gradients, and therefore will be drawn away from occupants and their neighbors
- Deploy enhanced filtration systems that combine both physical and UV-C filtration at centralized HVAC systems
- Explore the potential to utilize local ceiling-mounted air purification systems in conference rooms and open airs to boost air changes, and provide localized UV-C filtration
- Separate plumbing and HVAC risers to reduce risk of pathogen transmission

Almost 90% of our building aren't designed to maximize fresh air, limiting the ability to purge airborne contaminants.

RETHINKING MATERIALITY

WHAT TO DO NOW:

- Evaluate existing materials and surfaces for antimicrobial replacements
- Analyze current in-house building material standards program
- Review material “cleanability” checklists
- Consider, where possible, to remove high traffic/high touch materials
- Consider antimicrobial retrofit for high traffic/high touch areas

LONG TERM:

- Reevaluate of company building material standards and/or guideline development
- Develop selection process for materials in the built environment—almost anything can be coated
- Replace materials
- Analyze hard surface vs. soft surface materials
- Develop new product with inherent/organic antimicrobial properties



Cleanability and durability of the surfaces will be paramount in the design of our spaces. Material selection can help promote a healthy, highly cleanable space without compromising aesthetics. Sanitation and cleaning guidelines issued by the CDC and WHO are likely to begin to dictate material selection.

RESETTING BUILDING SMARTS

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Adopt next level “Bring your own Device” approach
- Non-touch engagement with building
- Digital feedback to building users on environmental quality
- Smart building security protocols

While the capabilities that are available through the deployment of “smart building” technologies has advanced significantly in recent years, it has remained very much in the “nice to have” box.

In a world where shared surfaces have become a primary concern, the idea of smart buildings is not longer a convenience, rather its quickly becoming a necessity in our efforts to return to work.

Beyond the touchless interaction with the building’s elevators or meeting room booking system, the smart building systems also provide the reassurance needed by our people on what they cant see—air quality and other workplace environmental factors—through a digital feedback loop.



RETHINKING THE FUTURE OF WORK

As leaders from all disciplines and subject matter expertise come together to ideate solutions to one of the greatest challenges of our time—a plethora of ideas and plausible solutions are being generated, evaluated, discussed, and implemented.

One thing we know to be true, from great challenge comes great innovation, and this innovation is underway. As a resilient society, we will emerge from this time with a transformed set of values and renewed emphasis on protecting the most important aspect of our organizations—**our people.**

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