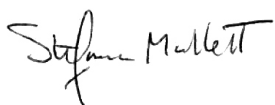# Handbook for a COVID-Smart Return to Work

Six industry leaders offer expert guidance for reopening offices and other workplaces.

Reopening your office or workplace is about making your employees feel confident and safe: being COVID-smart.

Reopening your office in a COVID-smart way means:

- It has to be **legal**.

- It has to be **logistically possible** (e.g., safe access to food and public transportation, required PPE and supplies, proper social distancing).

- It has to **support personal circumstances**. You can't have a successful return unless your people can balance it with their other needs. Some are parents without child care. Some need to take care of parents, or live with (or are) immunocompromised individuals.

- It has to make **immediate sense** to your employees. Otherwise it can't be followed or enforced. Make broad, simple, consistent decisions, and trust your people to do the right thing. Help them do that.

- And it has to be **communicated**. Clearly and directly. Use every communication channel you have. Clarity fosters reassurance.

To create the standard for reopening a workplace during a pandemic, we curated content from experts from real estate, office essentials, COVID-19 testing, technology, and risk management. The result is this Handbook for the Return to Work. We hope it, combined with your local, state, and federal guidelines, supports your safe and successful return.

Stefania Mallett

Stefania Mallett
Co-Founder & CEO, ezCater

The guide includes content from the following:

CBRE

MARSH & McLENNAN AGENCY

Staples

ez cater

Quest Diagnostics™

Google

Develop a Plan
for Each Phase
of Reopening

CBRE

Develop a Plan for Each Phase of Reopening

All work environments—whether owned or leased offices, warehouses, labs, retail stores or manufacturing facilities—will require careful consideration and tailored plans.

Mobilizing a Cross-Functional Recovery Team

It is critical to establish a centralized, multidisciplinary task force as soon as possible to help plan and oversee recovery efforts across the portfolio. Consider including leaders from the following disciplines:

Multidisciplinary Recovery Management Team – Recommended Disciplines:

- Executive Sponsor
- Program Lead
- Business Leadership
- HR/People
- Health Safety Environmental (HSE)
- Operations
- Real Estate & Facilities
- Finance
- Legal (Corporate, Regulatory & Employment)
- Technology
- Workplace Strategy
- Procurement
- Security & Crisis Management
- Communications

Planning for the Return to the Workplace

Our experience supporting clients in Asia suggests that reopening workplaces and commercial establishments is not straightforward. Forethought is critical as important activities must be approached in fundamentally new ways. Some of these key areas include:

Safety, Health and Wellbeing:

Businesses should prepare for a more discerning workforce that will expect continuous, credible assurances that they are working in a safe environment. This will include clear displays of updated safety, health and wellness information and resources for employees, visitors and occupants throughout the building and specific workplace.

Stakeholder Engagement:

Relationships with key stakeholders should be reset, as companies mobilize to come back to the workplace. Consider this preliminary list of stakeholders with whom to communicate and coordinate prior to reopening a facility or workplace.

Occupier stakeholders

- Business Leaders

- Functional Partners (e.g., HSE, HR)

- Employees

- Contractors

- Supplier Partners

- Landlords

- Amenity Providers

Property owner stakeholders

- Tenants/Occupiers

- Property Managers

- Supplier Partners

- Amenity Providers

Business Requirements and Work Arrangements:

Early lessons from Asia indicate bringing teams back "full throttle" is unwise and inconsistent with most public health guidance, which recommends that social distancing measures be reduced in a gradual and thoughtful manner. Employers should establish a plan that enables gradually increasing the number of people who return to work.

Procurement and Financial Considerations:

Both occupiers and landlords should give serious consideration to new levels of service, materials and activities necessary to facilitate a return to the workplace. Examples of areas that may require advanced sourcing activities and increased funding include enhanced cleaning; introduction of new access protocols (e.g., temperature screening); increased quantities of supplies such as hand sanitizers, wipes, gloves, masks; reconfiguration of work environments and associated technology and equipment; utilization tracking technologies; touchless technologies, and more.

Portfolio and Workplace Strategy:

Occupiers should conduct a holistic review of business requirements and portfolio implications to assess and optimize their medium- to long-term positions and options considering anticipated changes to workplace strategy in a post-COVID-19 world. We anticipate most occupiers will settle on a balanced approach that builds in greater resiliency by introducing a spectrum of physical and virtual solutions based on business needs.

Bringing Employees Back to Work

Preparing to reopen requires the development of detailed plans for each location, reconfiguration of the physical environment to support social distancing practices, and continuous communications.

Facility Readiness:

The facility readiness process is extensive, and no detail is too small to consider. It entails conducting a comprehensive assessment of the physical building and taking steps to prepare for reentry where controllable. In leased locations, occupiers and property owners should openly communicate a plan that will support the back-to-work process.

Reconfiguration:

Public health guidance strongly suggests that social distancing measures should be stepped down very gradually. Occupiers and property owners can convey their safety efforts to occupants by taking tangible steps to change the physical environment that support physical distancing and other safety practices.

- For those properties that have common area workspaces or lounges, provide social distancing guidance through communication and signage

- Monitor traffic flow and consider limiting the number of people that can occupy the common area(s) at one time

- Clean these areas multiple times per day

- Adopt signage to guide people to follow the protocols

- Reduce seating capacity in meeting rooms to increase distance

Ongoing Management and Workplace Evolution

Reoccupying work environments for the long-term should be approached as a "reset" of ongoing soft services to support the workplace environment. It also entails continuous and frequently updated communications to employees and occupants to provide education and awareness of safety, health, and wellness initiatives underway.

Visit CBRE'S COVID-19 hub at **cbre.com/covid-19**

CBRE

Operations:

Conduct a comprehensive review of all operational activities and services that occur in the work environment.

Continuous Response and Readiness:

Once the space has been reoccupied and work resumes, occupiers and landlords should remain vigilant and quick to respond to unexpected or unwelcome events. Both parties should remain aware and keep protocols in place if exposure concerns return. Everyone should be prepared to return to "response" mode in the event of a suspected or confirmed exposure concern.

Communications:

Communicating with all constituents is more critical now than ever before. Leading organizations are putting a heightened focus on this, recognizing that this must be an ongoing, deliberate, thoughtful effort that touches and engages all key stakeholder across both physical and virtual work environments. Ongoing employee and stakeholder feedback will be critical; continually review and adopt best practices and new ideas to demonstrate an active and ongoing commitment to a safe and healthy workplace environment.

Fiscal Strategy:

Lastly, you'll need a finalized budget in place in anticipation for increased expenses for reopening your environments. As previously mentioned, additional costs may include the purchase of cleaning, sanitizers, Personal Protective Equipment, screening services and increased communications as well as space reconfiguration and changes to furniture, fixtures and technology components to support your post-COVID workplace.

All of CBRE's COVID-19 related materials have been developed with information from the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (and similar global organizations), public health experts, industrial hygienists, and global subject matter experts across CBRE and our

strategic suppliers. Guidance and requirements from public health and governmental organizations vary by geography and should inform decisions in specific locations. Our materials may not be suitable for application to all facilities or situations.

CBRE does not endorse or guarantee the efficacy of any particular brand or type of products. Product information from the manufacturer is shared by CBRE in order to assist clients in their selection of the right products for their particular situations. These products may contain manufacturer representations or warranties, but CBRE makes none. CBRE further disclaims any warranty express or implied, of any nature, including but not limited to the implied warranties of merchantability, noninfringement and/or fitness for particular purposes.

Ultimately, occupiers and landlords must make and implement their own reopening decisions for their individual stakeholders and facilities. CBRE's guidance is intended to help facilitate those discussions and expedite the implementation of those decisions once made by the client. We make no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy or completeness of these materials. CBRE cannot ensure safety and disclaims all liability arising from use of these materials.

How CBRE Can Help

CBRE is the world's leading full service commercial real estate firm providing solutions to property owners, investors and occupiers with clients across various property types and industry sectors. For further insights, solutions or to connect, visit **cbre.us**.

Define and
Communicate
Office Policies

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Define and Communicate Office Policies

If an employee becomes sick at work

- Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor that they are ill and stay home.

- Employees who appear to have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should be sent home.

- Employees who are ill should be encouraged to follow the steps listed below recommended by the CDC:
  - Stay at home, get rest, stay hydrated.
  - Communicate with their healthcare provider.
  - Be sure to get care if they have trouble breathing or if they think it is an emergency.
  - Employees should not return to the workplace until the criteria to discontinue isolation are met in accordance with healthcare providers, state and local health departments, and company policy.

- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and maintain quarantine in accordance with healthcare providers, state and local health departments and company policy

> Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and maintain quarantine.

Learn more about Marsh & McLennan Agency's
Employee Health and Benefits options

MARSH & McLENNAN AGENCY

If an Employee Tests Positive for COVID-19

- Direct the diagnosed employee not to return to the workplace and to seek appropriate medical care.

- Identify all employees who may have come into close contact with the diagnosed employee while at the workplace.
  - The CDC defines "close contact" as being approximately six feet from an infected person for more than a 10-minute period. Close contact also includes instances where there is direct contact with infectious secretions. Close contact generally does not include brief interactions, such as walking past a person.

- Human Resources should reach out to the diagnosed employee to identify who they felt they may have been in close contact with at work.

- The identity of the diagnosed employee should be kept confidential. Discrete knowledge of the employee's identity may be needed to identify and notify impacted employees.

Ways to Maintain Social Distancing at Work

- Stagger work shifts if possible

- Limit amount of employees in breakrooms, restrooms, lunchrooms, meeting rooms, etc.

- Follow the policies and procedures in place related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, as well as work meetings and travel.

- Employees should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. (Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.)

- Employees should remember to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

- Employees should cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and the individual should immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. (If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.)

- Frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs should be cleaned frequently. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection.

  - Individuals should avoid using other individuals' desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, whenever possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.

  - Practice social distancing by avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible. Strategies that may facilitate social distancing include:

    - Implementation of flexible worksites (e.g., remote work)

    - Implementation of flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts)

    - Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite

    - Increasing physical space between employees and customers (e.g., drive through, partitions)

    - Implementation of flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone non-essential meetings or events)

    - Downsizing operations

    - Delivering services remotely (e.g. phone, video, or web)

    - Delivering products through curbside pick-up or delivery

Employee Responsibilities When Employees Return to the Workplace

- All employees should follow established CDC preventative procedures for preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

- Employees should report any potential occupational exposure to the COVID-19 virus to management, human resources, or their operations manager.

Learn more about Marsh & McLennan Agency's
Employee Health and Benefits options

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- Employees should be strongly encouraged to inform their physician of any signs or symptoms of the COVID-19 virus and follow their healthcare provider's instructions.

Management Responsibilities When Employees Return to the Workplace

- Management should understand and communicate all safety hazards to employees, including those that may be related to COVID-19 or other pathogens.

- Management is responsible for enforcing the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and social distancing protocols.

- Management works with the safety committee to provide any resources necessary as it relates to safety and the policies set forth in this program.

- Management should remind employees of their access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other resources that may offer additional support.

Employer Strategies to Mitigate COVID-19 in the Workplace

- Employers can take several strategies to limit the potential of having an employee enter the workplace with COVID-19. Some strategies vary in cost and efficacy, but are more costly and less effective than others, however the most effective and least costly continue to be:
  - Social distancing
  - Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces
  - The use of masks while in common or high traffic areas

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Employee Health and Benefits options

Strategy	Implementation scale (easy to difficult)	Effectiveness score (low 0–high 5)	Cost
Social Distancing		5	$
Cleaning/Disinfecting		4	$$
Masks		3-4	$
Employee Communications		4	$
Enhanced paid sick leave policies		4	$$$$
Screening Questionnaires		2	$$
Temperature Screening		2	$$
Antibody Screening		2	$$$$
Virus Screening (i.e. Diagnostic)		3	$$$$

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Employee Health and Benefits options

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If an employer chooses to implement temperature checks at a worksite, they can use the following steps as an example:

Employee Arrival

- Space employees apart by 6 feet while they wait.

- Employee will sign in and provide a signature for consent (each day). Screener will have multiple pens available and will disinfect between each participant.

Temperature Check Guidelines

- Screener will take employee's temperature via infrared thermometer

- All employees will be asked the following questions:
  - Do you have any of the following symptoms (fever/feverish, chills, dry cough, difficulty breathing, digestive symptoms, vomiting, abdominal pain)?
  - Have you traveled within the last 14 days?
  - Have you had close contact with a confirmed/probable COVID-19 case?

- If employee answers YES to any of the questions:
  - If the employee's temperature reads over 100.4 F, the employee will be asked to return home out of an abundance of caution.
  - If they have a fever, flu-like symptoms, shortness of breath, etc., the employee will be asked to seek medical attention – telehealth is the first option for immediate care.
  - Employee will be instructed to stay home until they are free of a fever for at least 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing or other medicine and/or any respiratory symptoms (cough and shortness of breath) have improved for at least 72 hours. Employee should contact employer prior to returning to the workplace.
  - If an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, employee needs to contact their manager or human resources immediately.
  - Anyone who was in close contact with a diagnosed employee will be provided a flyer about COVID-19 and asked to connect with their employer/HR representative with additional questions as needed.
  - Screening vendor to provide report to employer.

Learn more about Marsh & McLennan Agency's
Employee Health and Benefits options

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How Marsh & McLennan Agency (MMA) Can Help

Marsh & McLennan Agency (MMA) is a full-service insurance, retirement, and risk management firm dedicated to serving the insurance needs of middle market companies in the United States since 2008. As a subsidiary of Marsh, the world's largest broker and risk advisor, we provide clients with unparalleled access to local service, regional expertise, and global resources. We operate independently, offering business insurance, private client services, employee health and benefits, surety, and retirement consulting to clients across the US.

MMA Solutions

MMA Financial Impact Tool (no cost)

MMA has developed a financial impact tool for employer health plans through 2021. The tool takes into consideration the reduction or increase in care as well as the impact of furloughed employees and employees who have been laid off as a result of COVID-19.

MMA Return To Work Brainshark "Doing Your Part" (nominal cost)

MMA has developed a customizable Return to the Workplace Brainshark for employers to distribute to employees when they return to the workplace.

For these tools, visit our **Coronavirus Resource Page**.

Learn more about Marsh & McLennan Agency's
Employee Health and Benefits options

MARSH & McLENNAN AGENCY

Create a Healthy and Safe Workspace

Staples

Create a Healthy and Safe Workspace

Treating Surfaces to Protect Health

Treat Surfaces as if Contaminated

Follow recommendations of CDC and other governmental agencies. Current best practices include:

If a person is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 in a facility

- Close off areas visited by the ill person

- Open outside doors and windows and use ventilating fans to increase air circulation in the area

- Wait 24 hours or as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection

Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas

- Office work areas

- Breakrooms

- Restrooms

- Elevators and stairwells

- Common areas (lobbies, conference rooms, fitness areas, etc.)

- Shared electronic equipment like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls and ATMs

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Cleaning Recommendations

Hard (Non-Porous) Surfaces

- Clean surfaces with multi-purpose cleaner

- Disinfect with EPA-registered disinfectant (follow label directions)

Soft (Porous) Surfaces

- Remove visible contamination before using appropriate cleaners indicated for carpet, rugs and drapes

- Launder items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions using the warmest water setting available and dry completely

Electronics

- Remove visible contamination and follow manufacturer's guidance, if available

- Consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect touch screens

- Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids

Guidance on Maintaining a Healthy Environment

Suggestions to Consider

Support respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene for employees, customers and worksite visitors

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles

- Promote soap and water for hand washing or alcohol-based hand sanitizer (>60% alcohol)

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- Place hand sanitizers in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene

- Post signs encouraging hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette at entrances and other key locations

Update cleaning and maintenance routines

- Provide training to cleaning staff on new procedures

- Reinforce with written and visual materials like posters, manuals and safety data sheets

- Give full cleaning instructions on floors, carpets, furniture and surfaces

- Make sure the facility looks and feels clean AND safe

Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system

- Increase ventilation rates

- Clean vents and "cold air returns"

- Increase percentage of outdoor air circulating into the system

- Be sure air filters are being changed on a regular, frequent basis

- Consider air purifiers to improve air quality

Discover all the benefits of a **Staples Business Advantage program**.

Staples

Recommended Supplies by Office Area

Provide a strong first impression for employees and visitors, and enable safe spaces for productivity while distancing.

No-touch pedestal and wall-mounted hand sanitizer dispensers at key locations; pump dispensers at desks & meeting rooms

Elevator	Entrance/ Lobby	Restroom	Meeting Spaces	Conference Room	Breakroom

Facial tissue and no-touch disposal receptacles available for visitors and employees in key locations

Elevator	Entrance/ Lobby	Restroom	Meeting Spaces	Conference Room	Breakroom

Face masks

Elevator	Entrance/ Lobby	Restroom	Meeting Spaces	Conference Room	Breakroom

No-touch soap dispensers and towel dispensers provide the most sanitary experience

Elevator	Entrance/ Lobby	Restroom	Meeting Spaces	Conference Room	Breakroom

Disposable sanitizing wipes for tables, counters, desks and other hard surfaces

Elevator	Entrance/ Lobby	Restroom	Meeting Spaces	Conference Room	Breakroom

Recycle and compost bins for appropriate materials in break rooms and in copy/printing stations

Elevator	Entrance/ Lobby	Restroom	Meeting Spaces	Conference Room	Breakroom

Pre-wrapped or "one at a time" dispensed plastic utensils

Elevator	Entrance/ Lobby	Restroom	Meeting Spaces	Conference Room	Breakroom

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Ongoing Hygiene Considerations

Easy ways to create a healthier environment

Touchless restrooms

- No Touch paper towel dispensers

- No Touch soap dispensers

- No Touch hand sanitizer dispensers (properly placed in the facility)

- Automatic toilet and urinal flushers

- Automatic sink faucets

- Toilet Seat Covers

- "Touchless Door Openers"

Re-thinking your cleaning regimen

- Cleaning/sanitizing/disinfecting – do you and the staff know the difference?

- Improved product selection for better performance – faster kill claims

- Improved equipment – more productive cleaning allows for more effective cleaning

- Enhanced training – workers need to understand how to clean and disinfect properly

- Leverage your resources on improved systems

Encourage Good Hygiene

Example Communications

- Poster to let employees know what is being done to help them be safe in their workspace

- Company intranet and e-mails with best practices and what's being done for their employees

- Hand Wash and Cough / Sneeze best practices reminders

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How Staples Can Help

Staples, The Worklife Fulfilment Company, has 34 years of expertise helping businesses of all sizes be more productive, connected and inspired — however and wherever they work today.

With Staples, get peace of mind with a cost-effective program that covers all your business needs. Plus advice from the industry experts, so you can focus on the health of your organization instead of procurement.

Visit **StaplesAdvantage.com** to shop the full assortment of essentials for preparing to return to work.

Our commitment to customer success

- Free delivery, no minimum and classified as an essential business provider

- Industry leader in installation of sanitizer, soap, and other dispensers for health and safety

- Managing high-demand items with precautionary measures for deliveries while not raising prices

- Ability to add unlimited users and addresses plus providing your employees with discounted pricing on items for home and family

Discover all the benefits of a **Staples Business Advantage program**.

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Food for work.
Done responsibly.

ez cater

Food for work.
Done responsibly.

As offices reopen amid this pandemic, companies face a new challenge: ensuring that employees have safe, convenient access to food every day.

Companies of every size across the U.S. have fed more than 125 million employees and guests reliably and responsibly with ezCater. Now, ezCater is also helping leading companies get COVID-smart meals for internal meetings, sales calls, training events, and employee lunch.

We recommend this overall approach to food at work.

Minimize contact with the outside world

Many companies are encouraging their employees to stay in the office once they arrive. Employees who venture out for lunch face long waits for reduced-capacity elevators, and potentially lengthy exposure at crowded restaurants.

- Recommend to your employees to have food delivered, and to combine their delivered meals into a single group order.

Avoid close contact among employees

You can't eat or drink while wearing a mask, so social distancing in common eating areas is critical.

- Limit the size of groups, arrange common areas for appropriate social distancing, and stagger lunch times so fewer employees use break rooms, kitchens, or other eating areas simultaneously.

Find COVID-smart food solutions for your office at **ezcater.com/rtw**.

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- Some companies are providing dividers (even of cardboard) between eaters.

- Some companies are closing their common areas entirely and requiring employees to eat at their desks to ensure separation.

- Employees who bring their lunch can avoid common areas altogether by packing no-refrigeration, no-reheat meals.

Keep eating spaces clean

- The CDC recommends that you clean and disinfect eating spaces between each use, or at least every two hours.

- Provide disinfecting wipes for employees to clean tables and chairs.

- Eliminate shared utensils, shared snacks, and self-serve family-style food.

> It's obvious but bears repeating. Eating brings your hands to your mouth, so it's essential to make sure your hands are clean.

Provide an employee meal solution

Pre-COVID, companies provided food to employees and guests in support of specific meetings or events. Companies also ordered in (or made available on site through cafeterias and the like) employee lunches, breakfasts, or other meals and snacks as a perk. In the COVID era, safe access to meals at work is a matter of health, risk reduction, and efficient operation.

COVID-smart, safe access to meals at work is possible. There are solutions that are flexible, affordable, and easy to implement.

Find COVID-smart food solutions for your office at **ezcater.com/rtw**.

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Company-managed meals

With corporate catering solutions like ezCater, companies can arrange meals for the entire office and payment can be fully company-carried, employee-carried, or anywhere in between. Individually packaged meals (such as boxed lunches or simply individually wrapped food) are built for social distancing: no shared utensils, and people can quickly grab and go.

> 58% of ezCater orders now contain individually packaged food (up from almost nil before COVID-19). Boxed lunches are our #1 ordered item today.

Individually ordered meals

With Relish by ezCater, employees can order personal meals as they wish, choosing from new options each day. As with ezCater's corporate catering solutions, Relish meals can be company-paid, partially subsidized, or entirely on an employee opt-in (and pay) basis.

> Sophisticated services like **Relish by ezCater** label each meal clearly to avoid people opening each lunch to see what's inside.

All of these solutions bring the food to the workplace, with the minimum number of deliveries. The world largely stays out, and employees largely stay in. And the individually packaged meals in both these solutions also make it easier to accommodate everyone's dietary needs.

How ezCater can help

ezCater is the largest national marketplace for business catering: 80,000+ restaurants and caterers, 125+ million people served. ezCater provides companies of all sizes, anywhere in the country, with COVID-smart corporate solutions for food at work.

Is ezCater helping companies during COVID-19?

Definitely. Here are a few examples:

- Salespeople in many industries are feeding virtual meetings.

- Warehouses in many industries are feeding employees.

- Charities are feeding frontline workers.

- Government offices are providing up to three meals a day for essential workers.

Can ezCater meet my needs?

Most probably. We make it easy for you to find food that fits any budget, meeting type, group size, or dietary need, anywhere in the country.

- 80,000+ restaurants and caterers in 22,743 cities

- Individually packaged meals

- Contactless delivery

- 24/7 customer service

- 98% on-time delivery

To learn more about safe, flexible, and affordable food solutions for your workplace, visit ezcater.com/rtw.

What Testing Options are Right for Your Organization?

What Testing Options are Right for Your Organization?

Since the start of the pandemic, an abundance of information about SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19 disease) and related testing has been released. However, it can be difficult to understand how the different tests are used and what value they may provide to employers as they look to re-open workplaces across the country.

With a proven history of providing advanced infectious disease testing during public health emergencies, Quest Diagnostics provides a high-level overview of testing options and items to consider as you develop a return-to-work testing strategy for employees.[1] We've learned that there are certain lessons that hold true across return-to-work strategies.

Consider a customized solution.

Organizations face a myriad of decisions they must make before they can establish the right solution. Many employees are unsure where to start, which is why we recommend starting with a customizable program aligned with CDC return-to-work guidance developed for healthcare workers. This guidance includes a time-based strategy of allowing employees to return to work 10 symptom-free days after a positive diagnostic test result, or a test-based approach that includes two negative COVID-19 diagnostic tests completed at least 24 hours apart. Elements such as serology testing can be added based on specific company needs.

Learn more about SARS-CoV-2 testing options from **QuestForHealth.com**.

Quest Diagnostics®

Not all COVID-19 tests are high-quality.

It can be disconcerting to read news stories that seem to simplify the complex science of laboratory medicine. This is particularly true when the topic is a novel virus like SARS-CoV-2. It isn't enough to simply identify tests that have received FDA emergency use authorization for COVID-19. Clinician-guided care and interpretation is also important. Even in the best of circumstances, no test is 100% sensitive and specific. Testing strategy needs to consider these limitations and provide for expert guidance.

Testing requires a wrap-around solution.

Workplace testing involves more than ordering lab tests. Organizations may need questionnaires for employees to take and/or contact tracing. If offering on-site testing events, employers will need to secure PPE and be well-versed in COVID-19 cleansing practices and technologies to provide results securely to employees and required public health entities. Providers that offer agile, comprehensive solutions are critical to creating effective programs.

Types of testing

There are three main types of testing related to SARS-CoV-2: molecular (also known as nucleic amplification tests), antigen, and antibody (also known as serology). Molecular and antigen tests tell an individual if they have a current, active infection. Antibody tests indicate if an individual had been previously exposed to the virus.[2]

Diagnostic Testing

Molecular tests:

Molecular tests for SARS-CoV-2 are collected via nasal swab and are used to inform individuals whether they have an active infection and if they need to take action to prevent disease transmission. Additionally, public health authorities look at the aggregate results of this testing performed across the country to determine guidelines for public safety, community testing, and travel restrictions.[3]

Learn more about SARS-CoV-2 testing options from **QuestForHealth.com**.

Molecular testing for COVID-19 generally involves a test method called polymerase chain reaction (PCR). In a PCR test, viral nucleic acid (RNA) is amplified and detected.[3] These tests are "highly accurate" for both negative and positive results and require laboratory equipment to run.[4]

Antigen tests:

Antigen tests for SARS-CoV-2 are also collected via nasal swab and are used to inform individuals whether they have an active infection and if they need to take action to prevent disease transmission. These tests look for certain viral proteins, which are present in the specimen if there is an active infection.[4]

The benefit of antigen testing is that it can be collected and processed within minutes. However, while positive results from antigen tests are accurate, there is a higher chance of false negatives with this testing compared to PCR testing. As such, the FDA advises that "negative results from an antigen test may need to be confirmed with a PCR test prior to making treatment decisions or to prevent the possible spread of the virus due to a false negative."[5]

Recommendation: If an employer needs to test for active infection (for workers who must be on-site, especially those who are symptomatic), PCR testing should be used. While antigen testing provides value, there is a higher chance for false negatives, which may lead to unnecessary risk exposure or duplicate testing.

Antibody Testing

An antibody is a protective protein produced by the immune system in response to the presence of a foreign substance.[6] Antibody tests look for the presence of these protective proteins in an individual's blood. Presence of the proteins indicate that an individual has been exposed to the virus in a way that prompted an immune response. Public health authorities use aggregate serology testing data for surveillance and to better understand the number of SARS-CoV-2 infections in different locations and among different populations.[7]

Learn more about SARS-CoV-2 testing options from **QuestForHealth.com**.

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IgA antibodies

IgA antibodies are abundant in the linings of respiratory and digestive tracts, circulate in the blood,[6] and play a role in allergies and autoimmune conditions.

IgM antibodies

IgM antibodies are detected in the blood and occur early in the body's immune response to infection.[6]

IgG antibodies

IgG antibodies are found in the blood and are largely responsible for long-term immunity.[6] A SARS-CoV-2 IgG positive result suggests exposure and an immune response to a primary infection.[5] While an IgG positive result may suggest protective immunity, it is not yet known if someone who has developed antibodies to COVID-19 is fully protected from reinfection, or for how long any immunity lasts.[5]

Recommendation: IgG antibody testing can be useful in helping employers determine if work sites should be re-opened to non essential workers. If an IgG antibody test delivers a positive result for the IgG antibody, that means the individual was previously exposed to SARS-CoV-2 and may have developed some level of immunity to the virus. However, antibody testing does not diagnose an active infection, and should only be offered to individuals who have been symptom-free for 14 days. The presence of IgG antibodies among a population as a whole does not remove the need to practice social distancing and ensure appropriate disease transmission reduction efforts in the workplace.

Learn more about SARS-CoV-2 testing options from **QuestForHealth.com**.

Return-to-work testing checklist:

Items to consider as you develop a return-to-work protocol for employees:

☐ Determine the criteria that employees must meet to qualify for a SARS-CoV-2 PCR test and/or IgG antibody test

  ☐ You may only want to offer testing to critical business employees right away, and then open testing to all employees as more job functions look to return to the work site

☐ Work with your legal team to determine the proper consent needed from employees prior to testing to ensure HR and/or EHS can receive employee test results for disease mitigation purposes

☐ Ensure you (or your testing vendor) are complying with state and local reporting guidelines for positive and presumed positive COVID-19 infections

☐ Create a standard operating procedure (SOP) for when employees can return to work based on test results

Consider the following scenarios:

SARS-CoV-2 PCR testing

☐ If an employee tests negative for the COVID-19 virus, are they cleared to return to work?

☐ Will you require two negative SARS-CoV-2 PCR test results, confirmed at least 24 hours apart, per the CDC guidelines, before an employee can return to work?

☐ If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, how long must they wait before completing another test?

SARS-CoV-2 IgG antibody testing

☐ If an employee tests positive for IgG antibodies, are they cleared to return to work? What about if they test negative?

☐ If an employee tests negative for IgG antibodies, are there any special precautions they must take when returning to work, if they are able to?

☐ Can employees who previously tested negative complete another test? If so, how long should employees wait for retesting?

☐ Ensure the testing program and SOP for when employees can return to work are clearly communicated to all employees

Learn more about SARS-CoV-2 testing options from **QuestForHealth.com**.

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How Quest Diagnostics can help build your return-to-work strategy

Quest Diagnostics offers a nationwide employer population health program to help employers streamline SARS-Cov-2 (COVID-19) testing and care for their employees. Additionally, through our best-in-class employer population health solutions, employers have access to a variety of other testing options and health improvement programs. To learn more about return-to-work programs and other population health solutions from Quest Diagnostics, visit **questforhealth.com/covid-19-testing**.

[1] Employers must set policies for whether or not an employee may return to work in accordance with their disaster relief policies and business needs. Quest Diagnostics cannot make the determination about whether an individual can return to work. Quest can only provide clinical information regarding the employee's COVID-19 status.

[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Testing for COVID-19. May 1, 2020. Accessed May 20, 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html

[3] American Society for Microbiology. COVID-19 testing FAQs. April 29, 2020. Accessed May 20, 2020. https://asm.org/Articles/2020/April/COVID-19-Testing-FAQs

[4] Food and Drug Administration. FAQs for testing for SARS-CoV-2. May 19, 2020. Accessed May 20, 2020. https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/emergency-situations-medical-devices/faqs-testing-sars-cov-2

[5] Food and Drug Administration. FAQs for testing for SARS-CoV-2. May 19, 2020. Accessed May 20, 2020. https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/emergency-situations-medical-devices/faqs-testing-sars-cov-2

[6] Jacosfsky, David. Understanding antibody testing for COVID-19. J Arthroplasty. 2020 April 27; Epub ahead of print. doi 10.1016/j.arth.2020.04.055

[7] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID-19 serology surveillance strategy. 17 May 2020. Accessed 20 May 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/serology-surveillance/index.html

Tips for Staying Connected

Google

Tips for Staying Connected

The article below originally appeared on the [Think with Google blog](#).

The return to work is happening gradually, not overnight. Working from home is still a reality for many. Here are a few tips from Alexa Schirtzinger, Head of G Suite Product Marketing, on how to have productive video calls.

In the life of a working mom or dad, flexibility is key. And in the life of a sometimes-work-from-home working mom, technology is the reason I can be flexible. Sometimes my kid gets sick, or I need a plumber to come fix the toilet. I'm lucky to have a job that lets me work remotely in an age where videoconferencing is an acceptable way of staying on track with the day's meetings.

But videoconferencing isn't always easy. The kids climb on you, the dog barks, there's background noise … you get the idea. I've had some embarrassing moments and made plenty of mistakes, but I've learned a few things along the way. Here are my tips for successful videoconferencing from home.

Choose the right environment

When I want to talk through a complex issue or brainstorm ideas, video calls are more efficient than chat or email. They also help me get to know teammates in different time zones. But when you're on a call, give some thought to what's around you, such as the backdrop. Choose a plain wall, and avoid windows that will provide too much back light. And if you're using a laptop, put it somewhere steady. I once did an entire video call with my laptop on my, well, lap, and at the end the other participant told me that the subtle wobbling of the screen was extremely distracting.

Got video tips of your own? We'd love to hear them. Tweet us **@gsuite**.

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Invite anyone, anytime

Videoconferencing doesn't always have to be scheduled; if you're in the middle of a too-long email conversation, you can instantly set up a meeting and invite people within or outside of your organization to join. Google Meet automatically creates international dial-in codes so people can call on the phone from anywhere. You can invite people via a Google Calendar event, by email, or by phone.

Can't hear? Turn on captions

If you're in a loud place and don't have super-fancy headphones, you can use Meet's live caption feature to display captions in real time (just like closed captions on TV). Start here.

Presenting? Only share what you mean to share

Don't you love that moment when you're sharing your screen and then, suddenly, everyone on the call is reading your email? To make sure you only share what you mean to share, present only one window rather than your entire screen. Check it out.

Want to read the room? Change the screen layout

One of my favorite features in Meet is changing the layout of the video call. If someone's showing slides, but there's a lively discussion happening in the office, you can switch your layout to focus on the people in the office, rather than the presentation. Learn how.

Got video tips of your own? We'd love to hear them. Tweet us **@gsuite**.

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Be real

Everyone has a life outside of work. Depending on the culture of your workplace, it can be OK (even good) to show a little bit of the "real" life around you — like letting your kid wave to the camera or eating your lunch if you've been on nonstop calls all day. Showing a little bit of your life can foster deeper connections with coworkers and even create empathy for whatever you're dealing with outside of work.

How Google Can Help

Keep your team connected with enterprise-grade video conferencing built on Google's robust and secure global infrastructure. Google Meet is included with G Suite and G Suite for Education.

Trusted by enterprises around the world.

- Take advantage of the same secure-by-design infrastructure, built-in protection, and global network that Google uses to secure your information and safeguard your privacy. Meet video meetings are encrypted in transit and our array of default-on anti-abuse measures keep your meetings safe.

Enjoy frictionless meetings.

- Meet takes the headaches out of joining a video call at work. Just set up a meeting and share a link. No worrying about whether teammates, clients, or customers have the right accounts or plug-ins. With a fast, lightweight interface and smart participant management, multi-person video calls are a breeze.

Got video tips of your own? We'd love to hear them. Tweet us **@gsuite**.

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Designed for every kind of business.

- Meet is fully integrated with G Suite, so you can join meetings directly from a Calendar event or email invite. All of the important event details are right there when you need them, whether you're joining from a computer, phone, or conference room.

Join meetings on the go.

- With Meet's specially designed iOS and Android apps, you can see your meetings for the day with all the important information from Calendar, then join with a tap. G Suite's Enterprise edition also creates a dial-in phone number for each meeting, so every guest has a great experience – even on the road without wifi or data.

- Teams using Skype for Business or meeting systems based on SIP and H.323 standards (e.g. Polycom and Cisco) can seamlessly join a Meet meeting through the Pexip Infinity Platform.

Got video tips of your own? We'd love to hear them. Tweet us **@gsuite**.

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