EVOLUTION OF THE WORKPLACE POST COVID-19

COVID-19 is a catalyst for change in how people work inside and outside of the traditional workplace. Firms must reconsider the role and purpose of their office in the Post COVID-19 world. Why, when, and how often are people coming in, and what tools do they need to feel safe, connected, and productive?

> There is no precedent, no trends nor best practices to reflect on and learn from.
> Companies that pilot and adopt agile portfolio, workplace and workforce strategies will be best positioned as we evolve into the new normal.

Workplace attitudes, behaviors, and governance will shift over time. The first year after office re-boarding will see a hyper-focus on hygiene protocols, remote work rotation and physical distancing to help people feel comfortable in the new paradigm. More long-term, organizations will prioritize investing in business continuity plans, organizational culture and high-touch hospitality in a low-touch world.

KEY WORKPLACE IMPACTS

NEW HYGIENE PROTOCOLS

Post COVID-19, stringent cleansing regimens, behavior protocols and constant communication about hygiene will be highest priority in the first year back in the office. After new protocols become the norm, building tenants and owners will invest in significant building infrastructure and sanitation technology improvements.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, poor ambient conditions - such as air quality, ventilation and temperature control - were a top complaint of office workers across all industries and building types.

	BEHAVIOR/ POLICY	SPACE/ INFRASTRUCTURE
FIRST YEAR	New cleaning, mail and delivery protocols and behavioral expectations shared with staff regularly (visually and verbally) Clean desk policy Protective gear provided Health screening at entry points "COVID-19 safe" vendor contracts	Hygienic surfaces added to entry, equipment, and furniture features Removeable panels on reception desk, workstations and café tables Soft seating in reception and other high-traffic areas reupholstered with anti-viral fabric, or replaced with "healthier" alternatives
BEYOND	More paid sick days New dedicated department conducts cleanliness inspections VOIP and personal cell phones replace desk phones, one of the dirtiest office surfaces Enhanced digitization to reduce paper, and virus transmission	Touchless entry and tech features Integrated disinfectant stations ("the new water cooler") Anti-viral and anti-microbial furniture/architectural surfaces Smart air filtration and automatic cleansing systems linked to and triggered by occupancy sensors Larger mailroom/ staging areas

REMOTE WORKING

Post COVID-19, it is predicted that U.S. home-based workers will double from 5% to 10%. Organizations will explore variations in remote work policy to find what's right for them. Firms may save on real estate but in turn there will be increased spending on technology, sanitation, training, and building virtual culture.

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrust organizations into high-stress remote working situations. This reactive state does not accurately represent normal remote working. Leadership should not form strong opinions about alternative workplace strategies based on this unprecedented experience.

	BEHAVIOR/ POLICY	SPACE/ INFRASTRUCTURE
FIRST YEAR	Employee surveys and manager input inform phased staff return to the office and preliminary remote work strategy Staff and managers trained on distributed team best practices Remote employees allocated funds for home office setup or coworking membership close to home	Routinely sanitized shared or unassigned seats and lockers dedicated to specific teams Touchdown stations without shared equipment (BYO) Video-conferencing installed in most or all conference rooms Telepresence in boardrooms
BEYOND	Office shift-work and split weeks "Connected culture" program/ committee rolls out strategy for maintaining or evolving a firm's organizational culture with a distributed workforce Extensive new hire training and onboarding programs to forge a sense of connection	"Mobile office models"- some or all individual spaces are shared and reserved, and amenity/ collaborative spaces comprise more than half the RSF Tech-enabled flexible large-scale event space for all hands events Less space allocated to individual desk and offices

PORTFOLIO, WORKPLACE & WORKFORCE AGILITY

How will your firm's answers evolve over the next year and beyond?

- Should teams be geographically distributed for business continuity?
- Will you give more choice and control over how and where employees work and/ or hire consultants?
- How will you determine remote work participation? Will it be robust enough to enable shared seating?
- What technology, sanitation, culture, mentoring and training investments are needed to support agility?
- How will the composition of space types change to encourage remote staff to come to the office?
- How will your real estate portfolio adapt to accommodate workplace and workforce agility?

For inquiries, please contact **Newmarknewnormal@ngkf.com**

KEY WORKPLACE IMPACTS CONTINUED

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Post COVID-19, physical distancing is implemented to strengthen social networks and communication while maintaining a spatial buffer. Individuals and organizations adopt sanitation policies, air quality improvements and self-distancing behaviors to reduce close contact and minimize large gatherings, likely until mid 2021. Spatial modifications vary based on budget and new build-out vs. retrofit, but smart solutions are designed to change over time.

A larger space requirement resulting from physical distancing may be offset by savings from remote workers without dedicated seats, bifurcation and/ or smaller space standards.

	BEHAVIOR/ POLICY	SPACE/ INFRASTRUCTURE
FIRST YEAR	Frequent virtual meetings and team check-ins	Restricted elevator occupancy/ staff utilize freight and stairs more
	Staff asked/required to wear protective gear and eat in private	Every other workstation and conference chair removed
	Occupancy-limit and physical distancing signage throughout, especially in high-traffic areas	Seats reoriented to limit close, direct face-to-face positioning
	Wayfinding directs traffic for one-way circulation	Office guest chairs removed
		Unassigned seats empower choice
BEYOND	Traveling for business is limited	"Compartmentalization" via small offices, neighborhood planning, suites, central cores, smaller floorplates
	Nimble firms/ more change-ready	Increased planning circulation
	Internal mobility promoted so staff interact from safe distances	More graciously proportioned conference rooms and pantries
	Meeting times staggered to avoid large influx and outflow	Fewer double offices and in-office gyms; more health clinics
	Lower floors preferred so staff can take the stairs and avoid elevators	

HOSPITALITY

Post COVID-19, physical distancing, remote work and less travel result in a reduction in face-to-face meetings and large-scale events. A higher value is placed on in-person interactions, and the quality of the experience becomes richer and more bespoke people feel safe and valued. There is a rise in organizational empathy- valuing a firm by their impact on people and communities.

To "future-proof" the workplace, locate key infrastructure and high-end spaces such as comms rooms, reception and conference centers in the central zone of a floor for ease of subletting.

	BEHAVIOR/ POLICY	SPACE/ INFRASTRUCTURE
FIRST YEAR	Only pre-registered "essential" visitors are allowed, and they're hosted in a separate public zone	Reception reconfigured to allow for separate seating areas and increased space in front of desk
	Guest health screening and detailed logging of visitors	Branding showcases positive messaging: charitable contributions, sustainable initiatives, brand values
	Strict protocols for catering; in-house food program limited	Moveable partitions in lounges and cafés to create distinct areas
	Extra cleaning service before, during and after large events	
BEYOND	Bespoke client and internal events encouraged as new infrastructure and hygiene protocols mitigate risks from gathering	Separate entrances and primary circulation for guests and staff
	Firms donate use of space to non profits and community groups	Front-and back-of-house zones
	Virtual and augmented reality used to enhance event experience	Public zones have fewer formal meeting rooms and are designed as multi-purpose events spaces, with dedicated ambient controls, private restrooms, sophisticated catering capabilities and high end/ touchless IT and AV

BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Post COVID-19, staff bifurcation and team decentralization may come into favor. Firms increasingly embrace the cloud and invest in robust, secure connectivity and mobile technologies. Business continuity plans (BCPs) accommodate waves of virus surge; staff may need to repeatedly evacuate and repopulate the workplace.

The rate of technological advancement suggests that disaster recovery and business continuity plans have less than a year before they are outdated, and that window continues to shrink. The plan should be revisited about every 6 months.

	BEHAVIOR/ POLICY	SPACE/ INFRASTRUCTURE
FIRST YEAR	Decentralized work modeling and piloting	Higher adoption of cloud technology and increased investments in network connectivity and data security
	Business continuity and disaster recovery plans are drafted, tested and/ or revised	Wider usage of VOIP
	Dedicated BCP committees are formed	To reduce reliance on mass transportation, employees join co-working spaces close to home if regional offices are not available
	Regular employee BCP training	
BEYOND	Implementation of team bifurcation/ finalization of strategy	Significant investment in building infrastructure improvement
	Potential preference for distributed regional offices vs. consolidate HQ or campus	Home office consulting and design services offered to select employees
	Increased use of consultants	BC sites get smaller as more people work from home, and are designed to bring people together effectively and safely
	Employers reimburse personal cell phone bill when used for business	

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