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## IT'S THE OFFICE, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

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A report focusing on business leaders' perspectives of the trends and considerations that will shape the post COVID-19 office environment.





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What will the office environment look like beyond Covid-19?

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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### INTRODUCTION

It's the office, but not as we know it 4

### OFFICE HYGIENE

Hygiene will be a priority 6  
Cultural changes to office hygiene 8  
Communication and training 10  
Reducing touchpoints 14  
Intergrating cleaning stations 16  
The air we breathe 18

### WAYS OF WORKING

Ways of working 21  
Agile and flexible working are key 22  
Agility is key 24

### TECHNOLOGY

Technology 26  
Technology the binding agent 28

### CONCLUSION

Conclusion 30

### FOOTNOTES

Footnotes and references 33

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## IT'S THE OFFICE, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

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A different world, and inevitably a different office environment, is set to rise from the post COVID-19 pandemic, but what will that office and working environment look like? What will be the new normal? What are the future considerations? This report will look to focus on some of the trends and considerations we will see in the post COVID-19 office environment.

To enable us to offer a more relevant prediction of the office environment post COVID-19, we commissioned a survey asking business leaders from a range industry demographics and organisational sizes, how they see the office environment post COVID-19 and to understand their considerations.

This report will highlight 3 main strands, which we believe will shape the office environment both culturally and physically moving forward, whilst offering context of how this may work in practice. The report conducted in mid April 2020 asked one hundred CEO's, business owners and MD's questions that would examine the mindset of business leaders and how they believe people will work moving forward, whilst highlighting some key considerations that may be made in the short and long term.

The following sets to report on 3 primary strands:

- 1) Office Hygiene and the collective responsibility of the workforce
- 2) The Ways of Working and how business needs and the current situation may have changed the way we work.
- 3) Technology, its impact on the current situation, and its future role in the workplace.

The following report is meant to offer a broad overview of the possible future of the workplace through analysis of data, offering a possible solution to the office environment's new normal.

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**“We won’t  
just have  
this binary  
easing up of  
measures.  
We will end  
up moving  
to a new  
normal.”**

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs  
Dominic Raab

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## Office Hygiene

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## HYGIENE WILL BE PRIORITY

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Hygiene is going to play both a short-term and long-term role in the office environment post lockdown and post COVID-19.

We envisage many businesses becoming more mindful of hygiene in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Interior office design will have to adapt, and we have an obligation to design with hygiene “infection control” in mind to support organisations.

Realistically, gone are the days when a sickness bug goes around the office space and everyone just shrugs their shoulders and accept it as being a fact of life.

**94% of business leaders believe that hygiene and cleanliness in the office environment will be important post COVID-19 crisis.**

When we begin to return to our office environments, we believe risk assessments and company policies will begin

to adapt to reduce the spread of infections in the office environment and improve hygiene both in the short and long-term.

This is supported by our recent study of which 94% of business leaders (CEO's, MD's) believe that hygiene and cleanliness in the office environment will be extremely or very important post COVID-19 crisis.

We see a huge shift in both the cultural and physical make-up of the office environment in the months and years post COVID-19.

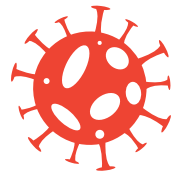
**93%**  
of business leaders said they would likely deep clean the office before staff return to the workplace



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## CULTURAL CHANGES TO OFFICE HYGIENE

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We see the onus being placed on the entire workforce to improve the hygiene and cleanliness of an office space post COVID-19. The responsibility to mitigate the spread of any virus within the workplace has to be a battle fought by the entire workforce. This has to be supported by both cultural change and physical change of the office environment.

We envisage a community approach to hygiene and cleanliness, with basic office habits changing to support office health. We believe that a few basic changes to the ways we work in the long and short-term will support modern working styles and have huge benefits to both the employee and the employer.

### Clear desk policies

With over 400 times more bacteria found on the average office desk than a toilet, a number that can increase based on excess clutter, i.e. personal items, keyboards etc., it is unsurprising that clear desk policies, usually found in flexible and agile businesses are being advised by many.

We advise the implementation of a clear desk policy with non-essential and personal items removed at the end of the day and stored in pedestals, and where possible removing personal items from the office environment completely. But why? If we put this into cultural context, desks are in many businesses inherently full of personal

items, snacks, tissues, mouse mats, keyboards, the list goes on. These very rarely move, and cleaning crews are negatively looked upon if these items are removed from the desk to enable them to thoroughly clean, meaning they clean around the clutter. A clear desk policy in conjunction with strict cleaning measures will ensure the desk will be thoroughly cleaned on a regular basis. Our business leaders agree, with 45% stating they would consider implementing a clear desk policy and provide lockers or pedestals to facilitate this.

For those organisations that share desks, and even for those that don't, we see the implementation of employee cleaning measures for desks before or after use, offering sanitising wipes under each bank of desks for instance, or in key zones. Our business leaders agree with 40% having already considered this measure for when we are able to return to the workplace.

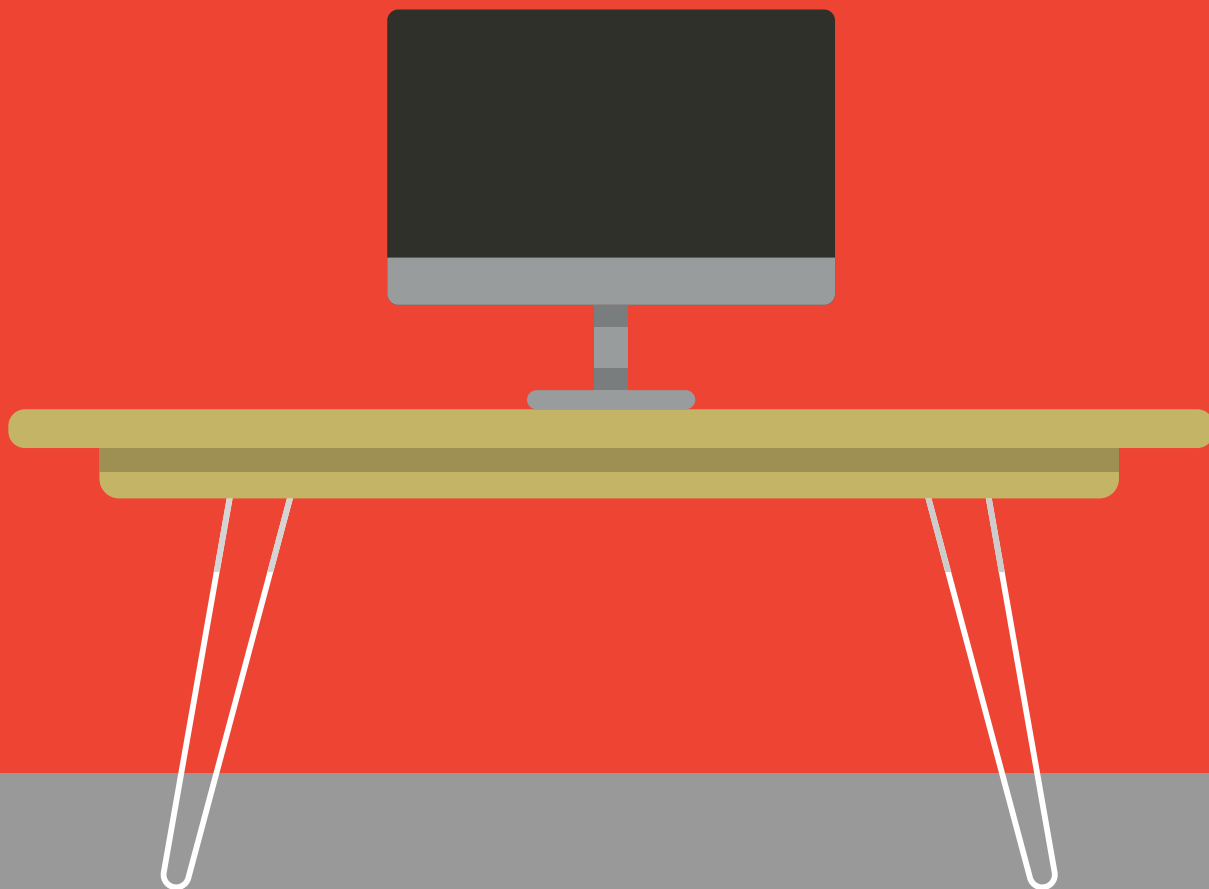
### Sickness policies

Employees that feel unwell, but are able to work could be asked to do so remotely; adapting processes and infrastructure and working styles to support this. This was supported in our survey with 53% of respondents stating that they would look to implement such measures. Although this seems like a simple measure, a safe and trust-based culture has to be present for this to succeed, with management and peers supporting individuals' choice to work from home, rather than visit the office. If individuals do not feel trusted to make this decision people will continue to visit the office even when ill.

**400 times more bacteria  
is found on the average  
office desk than a toilet**

**45%** of respondents would consider implementing a clear desk policy and provide lockers or pedestals

**40%** of business leaders have already considered implementing clean down measures where users clean their desk before and after use.



# COMMUNICATION & TRAINING

Communication and training will be more important than ever.

As highlighted in the *Recovery Readiness* report by Cushman and Wakefield, "employees will need ongoing communication and training, especially during onboarding of new staff or orientation for visitors to the space. A regular cadence of employee training on emergency procedures, good workplace hygiene, effective work practices for distributed teams." Essentially good communication is required to support cultural change towards office hygiene, and is something we have been a big promoter of long before the pandemic.

To benefit from a better working environment there must be a cultural change and communication of how, why and when to best use the spaces. Having champions in the workplace which promote these better hygiene practices will be key. Management leading from the front and setting an example will also be an important part of fostering a cultural change in the office, helping staff transition to a new normal.

This should be supplemented with a good internal communications strategy, via internal emails, verbally in morning meetings, one-to-ones, memos, marketing messages via internal screens, messages distributed in communal areas that focus and reinforce the messages to help to support this switch to a new normal.

A mixture of repetition and associating messages with actions employees are already fostering are key tools in communicating these messages in the changing environment post COVID-19.

In order to learn something new, people need to transfer the information from their working memory (short-term memory) to long-term memory; this can be achieved through mental repetition or by associating it with previously acquired knowledge.

## Would your office benefit from a return to the office hygiene and social distancing assessment?

Our return to the office assessment, assesses the office environment from a hygiene and social distancing perspective bespoke to your office environment, offering physical and cultural solutions, enabling you to get your workforce back to the office environment.

[Click to learn more >](#)

## Can you see any of the following measures being considered in your office/business post-COVID-19?



52.53% Sickness policies will adapt, asking employees to work from home if they have a cough/cold.



29.29% Not allowing people to eat at their desks



45.45% Clear desk policy so cleaners can clean properly - provide lockers or pedestals



40.40% Clean down measures for personal desk space



25.25% Increased internal communications on personal hygiene, e.g. hand washing after using the toilet.



26.26% Clean down measures for personal equipment, keyboards etc.

HELPING YOU GET YOUR TEAMS  
BACK IN THE OFFICE, SAFELY.

To support cultural changes, physical changes will also need to be made to support both short-term and long-term approaches to office hygiene.

In this report, we have highlighted some key considerations that need to be made in the office environment before the workforce returns to the office space in addition to long term considerations.

To support business we have taken the data gathered and developed services that support business leaders like those that have enriched this document.

### Deep clean service

Our Bio/Deep clean service decontaminates your building, ensuring that your workforce can return to the office environment with confidence.

[Click to learn more >](#)

### Office return to work assessment

Assesses the office environment from a hygiene and social distancing perspective bespoke to your office environment, offering physical and cultural solutions, enabling you to get your workforce back to the office environment.

[Click to learn more >](#)

## Office refresh services

From space planning to support social distancing, to installing solutions that reduce touchpoints, right through to new flooring and complete redesigns, our refresh services can adapt and move your business forwards.

[Click to learn more >](#)

## Ensure social distancing with an app

Dale Office can support you and your staff to ensure social distancing in the office with just an app. This can manage office capacity, whilst ensuring social distancing measures are adhered to, without any complicated management or procedures.

[Click to learn more >](#)

### Portable handwashing units

Cleaning your hands is the first step to reducing COVID-19 and other bacteria entering the workplace. Integrated hand washing facilities in main entrance points will be a key first line of defence against viruses entering the office environment.

[Click to learn more >](#)

### Workstation dividers

Effective solution for implementing social distancing measures in the workplace. These temporary workstation dividers create a clear barrier between team members working on the same production line.

[Click to learn more >](#)

## Office furniture solutions

Whether it's furniture for home-working or antimicrobial furniture in the office space such as desks and meeting room furniture, we can support your needs.

[Click to learn more >](#)

## Sanitiser solutions

As part of our wider range of support services, we have put together a range of sanitising solutions, that will support organisations to return to the workplace safely.

[Click to learn more >](#)

**The average person touches 140 objects per day excluding fixtures and fittings**





# REDUCING TOUCH POINTS

The average person touches 140 objects per day and this excludes fixtures and fittings like tube handrails, doors, taps etc. Therefore, it will come as no surprise that reducing the number of “things” we touch in the office environment will be a key design consideration.

## Office Layout

We believe interior design that always has the cleanliness of an office environment in mind will become commonplace. Therefore, creating design concepts and layouts that aid cleaning rather than hamper it will be a key consideration. Overly complicated and intricate design features will be reconsidered to support the clean down process. We also envisage the layout and the flow of the office to be adapted, supporting unidirectional flow to support social distancing and reducing those contact points; the arrangement of main walkways and locations of key social and collaborative areas will also be important.

Beyond this, we see the spacing between desks increasing, reducing the need to come into close contact with others when not required. Interior design being used as a navigational tool and acting as an etiquette prompt is something we also envisage, for instance, flooring being used to show suitable distancing between walkways and desks in addition to supporting the directional flow of walkways.

35% of business leaders are already considering changing the office layout and design in response to COVID-19.

## Doors

Arguably the most touched areas in any office, doors and their handles will be viewed different post-lockdown.

Good office design will reduce the total number of doors outright within an office space, replacing them with clever alternatives when dividing up the space while supporting acoustics and privacy.

Where doors are still required, technology would be advised; utilising automatic doors activated by sensors or pressure plates will play a role in improving cleanliness. Where budget is restricted, we will see more doors with mechanical opening mechanisms operated by foot pedals, and even more basic doors with ergonomic “handles” designed to be opened with the arm.

## Toilets

It’s not just the doors that will change in the office toilets. You can expect to see far more integrated tech to limit touch points; automatic flushing toilets, gesture controlled dispensers and water taps, will become far more commonplace.

## Antimicrobial coatings, surfaces, fabrics and wallcoverings

Micromaterial and antimicrobial fabrics, walls and floor coverings can easily be implemented to improve the general hygiene of the workplace, so we can expect to see a rise in demand and supply of these types of materials. We also see the use of antimicrobial coatings being considered on handrails and again on key touchpoints to limit the transfer and spread of bacteria in the office environment.

## Automation

19% of respondents also highlighted automation as being a key design consideration, helping to control lighting systems, occupancy counters, taps, coffee machines, dispensers and toilet flushes. All of these will help to reduce touchpoints in modern office environments.

35.35% of business leaders are already considering changing their office layout and design in response to COVID-19.

# Other design considerations

## Furniture

We see a move to smaller and more compact desks to maximise space in order to support social distancing. We also envisage the use of compact chairs with integrated desk units, which will enable staff to collaborate in a large open space without the need for a large desk. Updating furniture could be a relatively responsive way of adapting your workspace to support people initially returning to the office environment, whilst also serving the long term goals of the business.

## Video conference pods

With the overwhelming reliance on video conferencing over the past few months, we envisage single occupancy pods for individuals to conduct video conference meetings within the office environment.

## Meeting rooms

Meeting rooms will look different; in the medium term, we see meeting rooms functioning at 50% occupancy whilst still adhering to social distancing rules. Decals will ensure people are situated the correct distance from one another, whilst access to fresh air will be an important consideration.

Standing meets may also be a feature, with outdoors meeting spaces being considered reaping the benefits of the fresh air.

## Modular design

Moving forwards, modular designs which enable rooms to become multi-purpose will be an important feature. The ability to increase and decrease the capacity of a room with movable wall systems enables the team to create various kinds of spaces. Agility and flexibility of the occupied space will be a long-term key consideration in office design.

Can you see any of the following office design measures being considered in your business post COVID-19?



35% Changing the office layout and design



23% Integration of more antimicrobial materials within office space



54% Handwashing facilities at main entrance points



61% Hand sanitiser stations throughout the office



44% Integrating more technology into the business



19% Integrating the likes of automatic lights, doors, toilet flushes, taps, soap dispensers



**53%** highlighted handwashing facilities at main entrance points as a likely consideration.

**61%** said that the use of sanitiser stations throughout the office would be a likely measure.

## Portable handwashing units

Cleaning your hands is the first step to reducing COVID-19 and other bacteria entering the workplace. Integrated hand washing facilities in main entrance points into your office environment will be a key first line of defence for viruses entering the office environment.

[Click to learn more >](#)



## INTEGRATING CLEANING STATIONS

When we think about the average journey to work, via public transport, for instance, individuals will have touched a myriad of things before they even reach the office building.

This is why we see both short-term and long-term solutions to support a clean hands process before we enter the office space.

When we asked business leaders what measures they would consider in the office environment post COVID-19, 53% highlighted handwashing facilities at main entrance points as a likely consideration. We see this initially in the short-term via the use of free-standing portable units, but in the long-term we see them becoming an integrated feature of office interiors.

We believe a key feature could be foyers that encourage visitors and staff to wash their hands upon entrance into the environment.

We also see interior design leading the way by implementing wash stations into high-risk areas such as canteen and kitchen areas, utilising hallway space to integrate handwashing facilities, whilst also serving as a design feature that denotes the transition into a high-risk hygiene area.

The survey also highlighted the use of sanitiser stations throughout the office with 61% stating that this would be a likely measure for their office. It would be advisable to make hand sanitisers available in multiple locations adjacent to common touchpoints like printers and meeting rooms etc. This will be a mainstay for office design, using sanitiser stations where touchpoints cannot be avoided.

As we highlighted earlier in the cultural changes, antibacterial wipes being present near workstations enabling users to wipe the desks down before use, will be key to supporting clean down procedures.

# THE AIR WE BREATHE

“Improved air filtration is probably the single most important lesson learned from China”

Despina Katsikakis, head of Occupier Business Performance at Cushman & Wakefield

Improving the air quality in the office environment will be key. How many of you have come off a plane with a cold? Not as extreme, but many offices recirculate air in the same way. These systems come under the umbrella of Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) but are void of the ventilation aspect of a full system. These kinds of systems can be frequently found in many office spaces but only change the temperature of the air and recirculating the old dirty air back into the office environment. A full HVAC system brings fresh air into the building whilst extracting dirty air. Therefore the cleaning of HVAC systems, and their improved filtration will be paramount. In the long-term, interior design will take the lead with more thought being given to improving the flow of fresh air into the office space. Designers will need to consider how best to implement full HVAC systems and increasing the circulation of quality air in the office environment.

With air quality likely to become a primary concern for office spaces, we can expect to see a lot more plant life in the working environment. Biophilia in the office has become increasingly popular over the past decade, yet we see this increasing further to help improve air quality.

Integrating plants into the office offers additional secondary benefits. They can help to support mental health and wellbeing, reduce stress and improve productivity, whilst reducing absenteeism. In a recent report, it was shown that improving our connection to nature in the office environment can increase productivity by 8%, with wellbeing rates improving by 13%, highlighting that changes made to support cleaner air can also support your business in multiple areas.

## Social Distancing

Social distancing is going to play a key role in getting employees back into the office environment. 94% of our survey respondents expect to implement social distancing into their working environments, with 30% of them seeing this as a long-term measure.

This is key to reducing the spread of any airborne disease. Cushman and Wakefield, in their *Recovery Readiness* report, have developed the "6 Feet Office". Within weeks of the pandemic, they redesigned one of their offices in the Netherlands, integrating a design that encourages better hygiene and social distancing. Weaving the design and the layout of the office space with technology and processes changes the way they work together to shift behaviours, replacing old ingrained behaviours with new expectations of how individuals interact within the office space.

As we have already highlighted, shifting behaviour requires strong communication to the workforce in order to enable a shift in culture towards the new normal office life. Verbal, design and technological clues work together to introduce and repeat the messages associated with the desired actions to foster change.

To support social distancing we initially see a phased return to the office, with part of the workforce still working from home, meaning reduced office occupancy. In open-plan offices, we see chessboard desking being implemented - every other desk being in use to help manage social distancing between employees at workstations. Additionally, we see dividing screens being retrofitted to support this.

The use of technology will be key to managing occupancy, supporting the management of available office space and enabling employees to book the reduced desk space from home prior to visiting the office.

Unidirectional flow could be introduced around the working environment, similar to that seen in supermarkets, ensuring the flow of people around the office.

Signage and floor vinyls will be key to supporting social distancing initially, with longer-term more design-led features for example integrated signage and shapes into flooring being introduced.

Post COVID-19, as an organisation will you look to continue the social distancing rules to minimise the number of people you have in the office space at any one time?



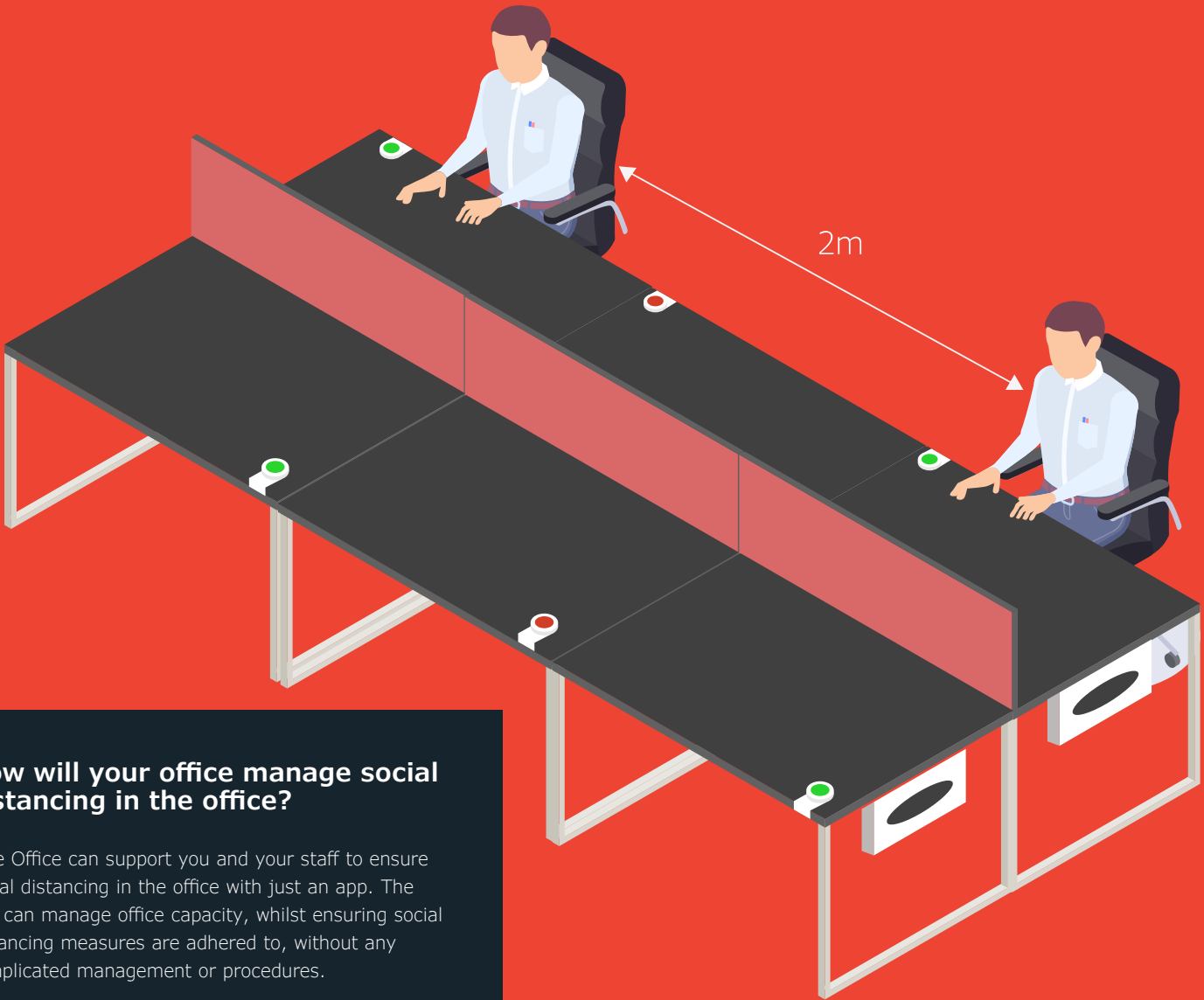
Yes, for the short term



Yes, as a long-term measure



No



## How will your office manage social distancing in the office?

Dale Office can support you and your staff to ensure social distancing in the office with just an app. The app can manage office capacity, whilst ensuring social distancing measures are adhered to, without any complicated management or procedures.

[Click to learn more >](#)

# Ways of Working

## WAYS OF WORKING

We think it is safe to make the statement (without quantitative data) that the majority of businesses were caught by surprise by the pandemic and underestimated the risk and impact on business in the UK. This is put into perspective by a recent survey commissioned by VOX, where 71% of business leaders stated that the pandemic would have a negative impact on their business, with 39% stating it would have a large impact.

In Gallup's report into the future of work, only 13% of UK respondents stated that they felt their organisation had a "mindset and the right tools and processes to respond quickly to business needs". If we then look at the data from the post COVID-19 survey, 43% of respondents highlighted that improving their organisation's agility to respond to changing external factors would be a priority post COVID-19, with 25% stating that improving organisational responsiveness to change would be a priority.

Would you like to learn more about how agile or flexible working can support your business?

[Book a free consultation >](#)

Which, if any, of the following are going to be priorities for your organisation post COVID-19?



43% Improving our organisations agility to respond to changing external factors



35% Increasing sustainability



25% Improving organisational responsiveness to change



34% Improving productivity



25% Significant refocus of business direction

## AGILE AND FLEXIBLE WORKING

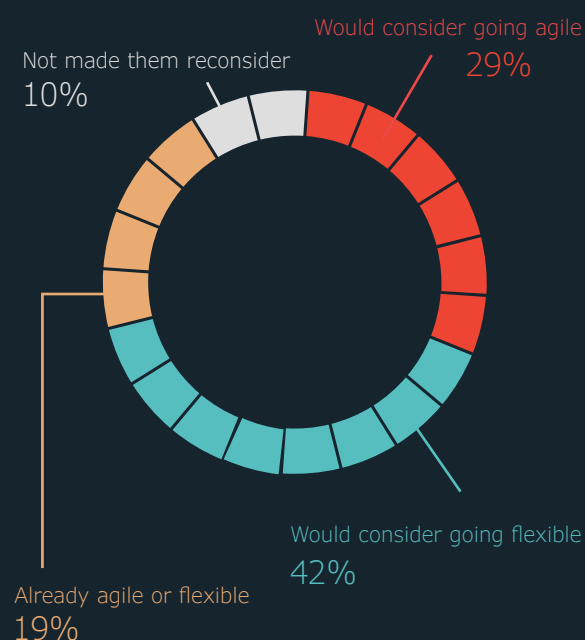
It comes as no surprise that of the business leaders we canvased 71% stated that the current COVID-19 situation has made them consider becoming a more agile or flexible working business, with only 10% stating that it had not made them re-consider their working style post COVID-19.

This makes sense, with both flexible and agile working practices enabling businesses to be more reactive to business needs. Although the two working styles have significant differences, both do offer layers of responsiveness, in addition to cultural and performance improvements.

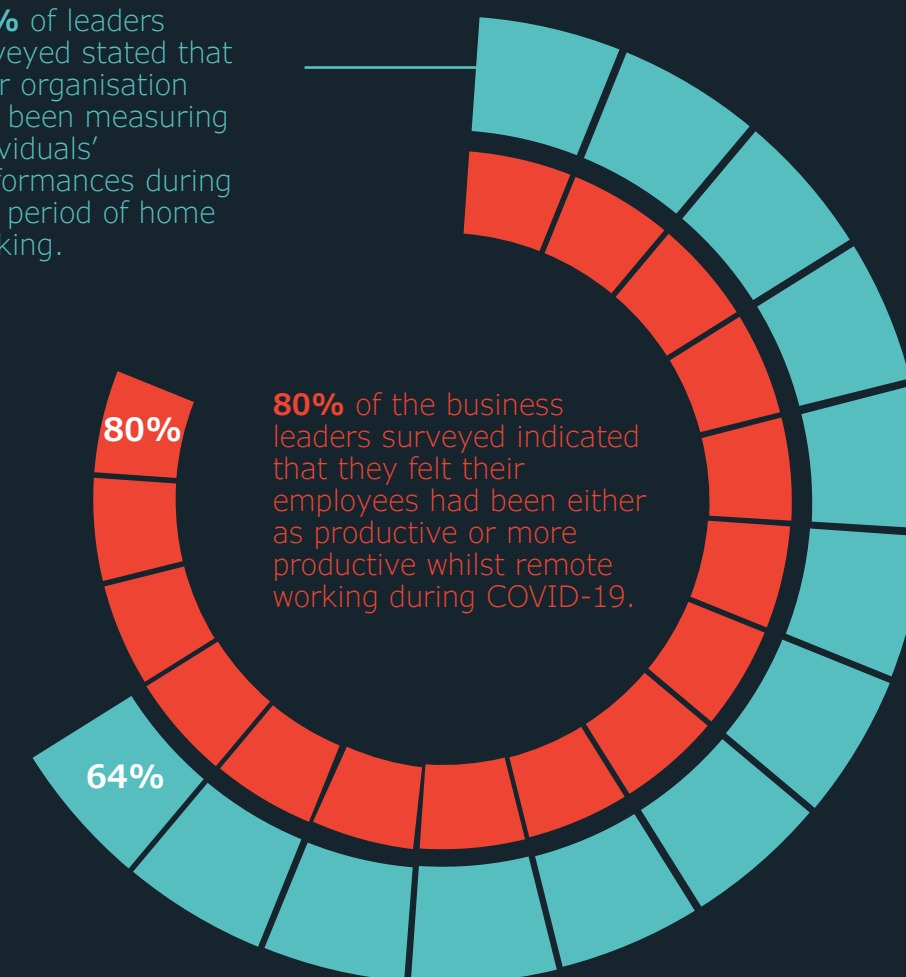
When we look at the differences between flexible and agile working practices, the main difference between the two is the commitment to cultural change within the business. To encourage workforces to commit to this kind of cultural change, it must be led by management, who support and coach staff to successfully integrate this new way of working. Only then, will both employer and employee experience the full benefits of agile working.

Flexible working can be easier to implement through simple integrations of key technology and processes; IT Pro summarise flexible and agile working in the following way: "Flexible working tends to be employee-centric. It's believed to improve work/life balance and enhance employee happiness, though there are benefits there for productivity, reduced absenteeism and staff retention. Agile working practices however, are designed to benefit both the employee and the company; staff get more freedom to work where and when they want, but the result should be a more performance-focused, responsive and effective organisation, where motivated workers deliver stronger products and better customer service."

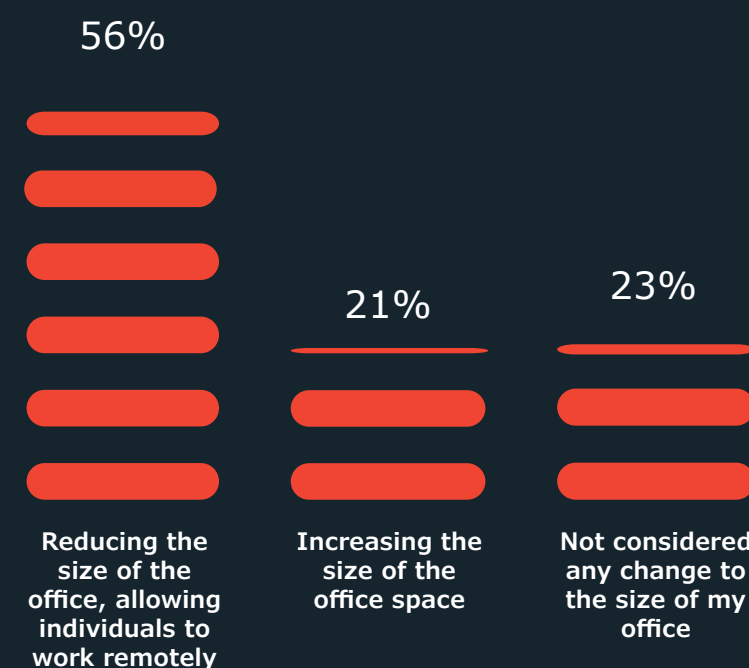
Has the COVID-19 situation made you consider changing working practices to become an agile or flexible working organisation?



64% of leaders surveyed stated that their organisation had been measuring individuals' performances during this period of home working.



In regard to your office size, have the recent events made you consider any of the following?



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## AGILITY IS KEY

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One of the key features of an agile working environment is this ability to enable people to work where they work best, meaning standard performance metrics don't work in the classic sense.

An organisations' ability to respond to business needs and external forces is paramount in the post COVID-19 business landscape.

Yet one of the barriers to organisations becoming an agile business is this uncertainty of measurement. This period has forced many to look at how to break the standard measurements, with 64% of leaders surveyed stating that their organisation had been measuring individuals' performances during this period of home working. This then correlates to the idea of productivity of the workforce away from the office. Many reports highlight how moving to more agile or flexible ways of working improves the productivity of the individual and the workforce. During the COVID-19 situation and the mass trial of remote working, many have been able to experience this uplift for themselves before making the leap of faith to change the entire working style of their business. In total, 80% of the business leaders surveyed indicated that they felt their employees had been either as productive or more productive whilst remote working.

BT, for example, transferred 80% of its workforce to agile practices; this change saw a 30% increase in productivity, with stress-related illnesses falling by 35% and overall company sick days reducing and retention of staff increasing. Ask yourself, would these kinds of stats make you consider implementing a radical change of how your business operates before COVID-19? For many, the risk of changing is just too high. But the aim of going flexible or agile isn't just about improvement, it is now about necessity. To safeguard and protect organisations against future external factors and changing business needs, as already highlighted, companies will consider agile and flexible working styles as it is seen as a way of protecting the business and making it more responsive to change.

One of the biggest challenges for either of these styles of work is the idea of enabling people to work from home. Generally, the main barrier for businesses that prior to the current situation hadn't implemented home working was management attitudes; 62% of respondents highlighted this as a key factor for remote working having not previously been adopted, with measurement and consistency of working accounting for 25% of responses and 38% stating that technology was a barrier.

These stats show the reasons why these alternative ways of working had not been integrated before the COVID-19 outbreak, but this period has highlighted the benefits of such change and enabled many businesses to trial certain aspects of flexible working, hence why 71% of the business leaders canvased are considering a change to the ways they work.

Immediately post-lockdown, social distancing measures will mean fewer people can fit into an office, and because businesses will not be looking to add any additional overheads to their balance sheet as they try to recover, we shouldn't expect any upsizing in premises. In fact, 55% of our survey respondents are considering downsizing their office spaces, so working from home will become an essential part of day-to-day life. We can also expect to see more hot-desking in the office. By the time COVID-19 passes in earnest, we'll all be used to these new ways of working.

A reduction in office size is a feature of agile working, enabling companies to reduce the occupancy of the building and thus lowering overall maintenance and running costs. Post COVID-19, it also enables businesses to support social distancing, whilst supporting the hygiene effort and enabling both the employer and the employee to reap the wider benefits of agile working.

With this in mind, we do see businesses moving to a more agile or flexible way of working as a way of protecting their business against future external forces, but also due to their reservations having been eased by this uncertain and challenging time.

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# Technology

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TECHNOLOGY

Technology has offered many organisations the ability to stabilise business operations during this pandemic. In the first 3 weeks of the UK lockdown, laptop sales increased by 50%, with businesses scrambling to purchase mobile technology to facilitate home working. Therefore, it will not come as a huge surprise that 79% of respondents stated that they saw their business leveraging technology more post COVID-19.

Technology has played such a key role in making homeworking possible. This situation 20 years ago would have had an even more devastating effect on businesses.

One of the main barriers for businesses integrating more technology prior to COVID-19 is the fear of change, its disruption and the perceived push back and the reluctance of the workforce to change and adapt. A positive to come out of this for many businesses is the realisation that their workforce can be adaptable and reactive, and it is capable of change.

Pre COVID-19, video conferencing was not used by many people or organisations, in fact, just 7% of business leaders stated that video technology was widely used pre COVID-19. Now, 73% of businesses leaders see remote video meetings being adopted long-term into their organisations. A technology solution that at the turn of the year would have been a protracted long-term integration into a business, became an overnight necessity that was adopted within days.

When we break down some of the key priorities for business post COVID-19, it offers an additional understanding of organisations' awareness of the role of technology in supporting these priorities and gives meaning to why 79% of business leaders are expecting to leverage more technology in their organisation moving forward.

From the 10 previously highlighted organisational priorities, 8 would be heavily reliant on technology to facilitate them. From offering an organisation the ability to respond quicker to external factors, to an organisation becoming more sustainable, technology is a binding agent that makes these changes possible in the modern workplace.

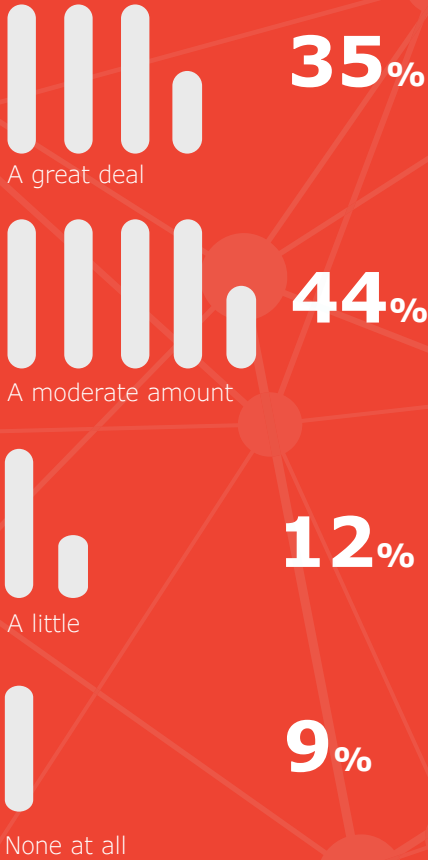
The link between technology and agile/flexible working styles

Agile and flexible working styles offer many advantages and align well with new emerging business goals as highlighted in the survey results. Technology is at the centre of implementing a successful agile or flexible working style. Technology knits the cultural changes of working where people feel they will work best, giving them the flexibility to access files at 8pm from home as that is when the individual feels most productive. Technology offers 24/7 capability for a workforce that is on the move. When this is put into perspective, 92% of millennials place flexible/agile working as a high priority when considering job opportunities (Working futures report). The term “working hours” is changing and with more employees looking for flexible/agile ways of working and business placing more priority on being responsive to change, technology will play a pivotal role in supporting this future style of working.

**"For an organisation to survive increased fragmentation and fluidity, it will need to ensure that each and every participating team member has access to all the information it needs to fully engage."**

IoIC `Future of Work Trends Report' (2020)

To what extent do you see your company leveraging technology with your office environment post COVID-19?



# TECHNOLOGY THE BINDING AGENT

Technology will be at the heart of modern office interior design; it cannot be an afterthought when it comes to the development of the office environment. As we highlighted earlier, tech will be the glue that supports other aspects in context of its role in office hygiene. We expect to see the wider integration of touchless technology to reduce contact points, along with gesture controls being implemented in the modern environment. We also see voice activated technology being a mainstay of future office environments, with Alexa for business already available, this will be the start of the wider integration of this technology, not only to support hygiene but also to improve productivity and connectivity.

Conferencing systems will be widely integrated with simple connectivity, but not just in the boardroom; we envisage these systems being present in smaller meeting rooms and even single pods for one-to-one video calls.

We also see the wider use of mobile tech, with many moving away from desktop PC's and integrating Cloud-based systems allowing employees to access files remotely and securely, improving the agility of the workforce.

Technology will also be key to controlling office occupancy. With 64% of leaders expecting to manage social distancing in the short-term post lockdown, and 30% seeing this as a long-term measure, technology will help to support the management of office occupancy through app-based desk and meeting room booking systems and office counters, supporting social distancing measures. The same tech also supports agile or flexible working, helping to manage reduced people-to-desk ratios.

Technology has the ability to support the office environment, with many changes having multiple advantages beyond its core role.

Technology in this brave new world of remote agile/flexible working will inevitably create different challenges, one challenge will be the mental health of the workforce. The current situation has highlighted that mental health in the workplace is not confined to the walls of the office. The wellbeing of your staff is a constant. Technology will assist and support health and wellbeing, bolstering communications and access to support through 3rd party services apps and online one-to-one support. COVID-19 has increased anxiety and stress levels, and feelings of isolation and loneliness, therefore implementing remote working long-term will require technology to not only enable them to work remotely, but to also access support remotely.

## Tech considerations

### Office monitoring systems

Understanding occupancy and office capacity will be a must in the workplace moving forwards. Systems that support social distancing and office occupancy will be a game-changer. With systems like iotspot (a partner service of Dale Office Interiors) users can book desk space from home via an app, while the system manages the space.

[Learn more >](#)

### Gesture controlled hygiene solutions:

Technology that reduces the number of things we touch is a must in the post-COVID-19 office environment, from sensor-controlled lighting to toilets dispensers etc., we see these kinds of solutions being front and centre of business leaders minds as they prepare to get their teams back into the workplace.

### Video conferencing equipment

A network of video conferencing spaces such as Zoom room functions or Microsoft Teams environment with the relevant audiovisual equipment we see being widely implemented in commercial settings.

### Unmanned reception technology

A technology we have recently become aware of that enables receptions and foyers to be unmanned. Login screens that sign visitors into a virtual office sign-in, at the same time taking their picture and sending a notification to the person they have a meeting with. This also cuts down on processes, time and unnecessary social interaction.

### Audio-visual signage

As we have already reported consistent messages help to support change. Utilising audiovisual equipment enables you to update messages in a matter of minutes though interconnected screens, whilst also having the ability to repurpose them for meetings or demos.

67%

of business leaders surveyed see remote video meetings being adopted long term by their organisation.





# CONCLUSION

The three areas highlighted in this report are intrinsically linked, and can support each other moving forwards in a way that targets business priorities whilst safeguarding employees in the short, medium and long-term post COVID-19.

The business leaders canvassed for this report have highlighted some key considerations on how they envisage the return to the workplace, but they have also highlighted organisations' need to be more responsive, more agile and more open to change.

While this has been a dark period in our world history, it has opened our eyes to new possibilities and considerations we need to make to safeguard businesses and their people moving forward.

Beginning with the ways of working, a change in a company's working style can support their aims of becoming more agile to business needs, enabling them to diversify and change direction quicker, whilst empowering and inspiring staff to think more creatively.

Agile or flexible working has the ability to support the individual positively, impacting on both physical and mental wellbeing whilst also positively affecting organisations' bottom lines. By changing working styles, businesses can reduce their overheads by downsizing size their office space and saving on utilities and maintenance ([you can learn more about the savings here](#)). Businesses will also reap the benefits of improved productivity, more proactive teams, extended service provision, enhanced communication and collaboration, whilst supporting attracting and retention of talent. This situation has shown many that they need to be more responsive to change, whether that be internally or externally. With our climate becoming ever more volatile, the ability to simply and easily switch to remote operations is going to become a must in the post COVID-19 world.

For some, the topic of hygiene and cleanliness, this may have been seen as the end of the hot-desking culture that agile and flexible working is synonymous with, but as shown by this report, businesses want to safeguard its

people whilst becoming more responsive. By initiating a simple cultural and process shift, these working styles can support that endeavour; from lowering the average occupancy, to supporting better illness protocols, improved layouts, and better cleaning processes. A shift in working style can support hygiene whilst continuing to offer all of the benefits they have been known to provide to an organisation.

The initial cleaning of an office space will offer employees returning to the office space reassurance, whilst implementing lasting processes and structural changes to support the long-term hygiene and cleanliness of the office environment. This will in turn, play a part in supporting retention and attraction, whilst reducing the risk any virus/ bacteria spreading in the office and thus improving sickness rates in the workplace.

Technology is the binding agent for all this, and is required to support both of the changes to the way we work and improving office hygiene. Without technology, the integration of safe and cleaner working environments is made more difficult; becoming a more progressive more responsive business is almost impossible without technology.

This report has focused on three strands as key areas that will drive the post COVID-19 office space. These are not going to replace the other design, wellbeing, productivity etc., led advancements. These are still equally relevant in a post COVID-19 office, we just now see them working in harmony with new business priorities.

There has been an ever-present theme throughout this report and that is the human element. It requires people to adapt and embrace change in order to safeguard the things we treasure about an office environment, and this situation for many has proven that we are up for the challenge.

# Would your organisation benefit from services that will help your employees return to the office environment?

[Click here to learn about our Workplace Recovery Services >](#)

## Deep clean service

Our Bio/Deep clean service decontaminates your building, ensuring that your workforce can return to the office environment with confidence.

[Click to learn more >](#)

## Office return to work assesement

Assesses the office environment from a hygiene and social distancing perspective bespoke to your office environment, offering physical and cultural solutions, enabling you to get your workforce back to the office environment.

[Click to learn more >](#)

## Office refresh services

From space planning to support social distancing, to installing solutions that reduce touchpoints, right through to new flooring and complete redesigns, our refresh services can adapt and move your business forwards. .

[Click to learn more >](#)

## Sanitiser solutions

As part of our wider range of support services, we have put together a range of sanitising solutions, that will support organisations to return to the workplace safely.

[Click to learn more >](#)

## Ensure social distancing with an app

Dale Office can support you and your staff to ensure social distancing in the office with just an app. This can manage office capacity, whilst ensuring social distancing measures are adhered to, without any complicated management or procedures.

[Click to learn more >](#)

## Portable handwashing units

Cleaning your hands is the first step to reducing COVID-19 and other bacteria entering the workplace. Integrated hand washing facilities in main entrance points will be a key first line of defence against viruses entering the office environment.

[Click to learn more >](#)

## Workstation dividers

Effective solution for implementing social distancing measures in the workplace. These temporary workstation dividers create a clear barrier between team members working on the same production line.

[Click to learn more >](#)

## Office furniture solutions

Whether it's furniture for home-working or antimicrobial furniture in the office space such as desks and meeting room furniture, we can support your needs.

[Click to learn more >](#)

Would you like to talk about your office?

Give us a call: 0114 233 1115

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“Gone are the days when a sickness bug goes around the office space and everyone just shrugs their shoulders and accepts it as being a fact of life.”

# DALE

Office Interiors



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