The Reimagined Workplace
Return-to-the-Office Guide

The pandemic shattered many of the beliefs we held about the workplace culture.

People are more productive in the office. Effective team collaboration suffers. Ideas from water cooler chats dry up. The office is the only place "real work" gets done.

That was the conventional wisdom pre-COVID and before the great work-from-home experiment of 2020. But, it's 2021 and the results are in. The traditional office is gone forever. Hybrid and remote work has replaced 9-to-5.

Recent research confirms what we already know: 70% of firms plan to move to some form of hybrid work[1] and 75% of employees want to go into the office at least one day a week.[2]

The pandemic gave us the freedom to Rethink the workplace in ways that were previously "unthinkable." Every corporate leader has the same high-level goals:

- Returning to the office safely

- Reconnecting and reinventing how we work together

- Renewing and retooling our businesses to ensure they thrive during the next economic disruption

How and when you achieve those goals could mean the difference between a resilient, future-ready business and a company stuck in the past. The tactics and strategies you use will depend on your role – pre-pandemic workplace, your industry, and where you are technologically. The ultimate workplace redefines business resiliency so you can embrace — and welcome — change.

As you weigh your options, take a look at this step-by-step guide for HR, Facilities, and IT to see what you need to consider to reimagine your workplace. Then, contact us and we'll help you determine your plan of action based on your workplace ecosystem and timelines.

1. *Bloom, Nicholas; "Don't Let Employees Pick Their WFH Days"; Harvard Business Review; May 25, 2021* https://hbr.org/2021/05/dont-let-employees-pick-their-wfh-days

2. *Americas Return to the Workplace Survey;* https://assets-global.website-files.com/5f54d5d0d20ccc918d21aed2/60c27f9b6779e12b2588db43_Americas%20Return%20to%20the%20Workplace_Survey%20Q2%202021.pdf

Return-to-the-Office Checklist: Human Resources, IT, Facilities

Returning to the office isn't just a matter of hand sanitizer and six-foot spacing. It's about raising the comfort level of everyone who walks through the door that your building is safe, healthy, and ready for occupation. That means strategic office reconfigurations and implementations combined with the latest technologies and devices.

Here's a step-by-step guide to see what you need to consider to reimagine your workplace.

Human Resources: Return-to-the-Office Checklist

1. Create a return-to-the-office taskforce consisting of key stakeholders from facilities and IT with appointed group(s) leaders and a taskforce project manager. Coordinate any decisions with legal.

2. Work with key leaders on how to move from a location-centric to a human-centric strategy.[3] To help formulate your strategies, discuss the primary purpose of in-office work with the taskforce and what value employees will gain from: formal meetings, collaboration, innovation, socialization, productivity, and essential work.

3. Communicate, communicate, communicate. Be transparent so employees understand the reopening-the-office plans, the return dates, and what safety measures are in place. In one survey, 80% of employees said increased communication is the biggest driver of readiness in feeling comfortable in returning to the workplace.[4] Another survey found that 61% of employees want increased health and safety measures and 67% want more comfortable design features.[5]

   - ☐ Survey employees to find out what safety concerns they have.
   - ☐ Communicate reopening plans, safety measures, policies, physical office changes to employees, visitors, vendors, and customers (if affected).
   - ☐ Use multiple methods of communication: digital signage, posters, signs, email, text alerts, etc.
   - ☐ Prominently display health and safety notices from the company, local health officials, and building management for anyone entering the building including occupancy limits, PPE, sanitization, etc.
   - ☐ Communicate/display daily health reminders, work schedules, meeting room/desk availability, cafeteria menus, etc.
   - ☐ Create a communications portal/email address for questions.
   - ☐ Make sure employees are aware of all guidelines.

4. Create in-office, remote, and hybrid work policies. Solicit input from department heads and employees.
   - ☐ How will your hybrid workforce communicate?
   - ☐ How will you ensure a seamless collaboration experience in office? When working from home?

5. Define and refine bring your own device (BYOD) policies. Consider how you will monitor the policies and what technology IT needs to put in place to monitor the process.

6. Draw up schedules for hybrid work.
   - ☐ Will schedules be based on company needs and social distancing/safety guidelines?

The most influential factors affecting U.S. workers' comfort levels regarding health and safety at work and what you need to consider.[6]

58% PPE

52% Quality of safety policies

48% Amount of social distancing

3. Venkataramani, Swetha, Contributor; "Gartner Returning Employees to an Office? Consider the Talent Risks"; Smarter with Gartner; June 3, 2021; https://www.gartner.com/smarter-withgartner/returning-employees-to-an-off ice-consider-the-talent-risks/

4. Alonso, Alexander; "Return-to-Work Issues That Unsettle the Brain," SHRM, May 24,2021; https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/summer2021/Pages/return-to-work-issues-that-unsettle-the-brain.aspx

5. Adams, R. Dallon; "Employees did not like the old office. Here are the office changes they want."; TechRepublic; July 2, 2021; https://www.techrepublic.com/article/employees-did-not-like-the-old-office-here-are-the-office-changes-they-want/

6. COVID-19 & the Workplace: A Retrospective on the Pandemic One Year Later, SHRM, 2021

- ☐ Do specific roles/functions/teams need to be in the office simultaneously?
- ☐ Would a phased-in, rotating, or staggered days/weeks in-office approach work better?
- ☐ Can employees volunteer to be in the office full time?
- ☐ Will in-office days be consecutive?
- ☐ Can employees choose their in-office days?[7]
- ☐ Will there be days when all employees can work from home?
- ☐ Most importantly, publish and display work schedules and policies via a centrally managed company-wide communications system for both in-office and remote employees.

7. Determine actions/responses for employees who:

- ☐ Are unable or unwilling to return to the office.
- ☐ Fearful of returning to work.
- ☐ Have family obligations that interfere with the return to the office.

8. How will you change the physical workplace environment? Work with facilities and IT to reconfigure the office keeping safety as the number one priority.

- ☐ Reconfigure floor plans, remove desks/furniture, and Install walls, plastic shields, or other barriers to create distance between workstations and seating areas?
- ☐ Create/reconfigure hot desks, more and smaller huddle spaces, technology closets, comfort centers, conference rooms, etc.
- ☐ If offices and desk spaces are consolidating in numbers, will you need additional collaboration spaces for returning workers?
- ☐ Do you need new furniture for hot desks, meeting spaces, and other vreconfigured areas?
- ☐ Reconfigure cafeterias, lunch rooms, and break rooms. Will you cordon off areas or block seating? Remove all self-service stations?
- ☐ If considering downsizing, consult real estate experts to determine how to make the best use of your space.

9. Establish social distancing/occupancy guidelines.

- ☐ Determine safe distancing and occupancy limits for office areas, conference rooms/meeting spaces, cafeterias, rest rooms, and all communal areas, including elevators.
- ☐ Are you planning on using occupancy sensors that would enable/disable building/room entry or trip alerts?
- ☐ How will you monitor desk/hot desk occupancy and usage? Note: occupancy and usage sensors can provide valuable data if you're considering downsizing.
- ☐ Establish in-person meeting distancing policies, such as, slide alternate chairs back or leave a chair open between each person, remove furniture, cordon off areas, etc. Skip the handshakes and wash your hands immediately before and after each meeting. Any gathering with more than 10 people should be virtual, for the near term.[8]
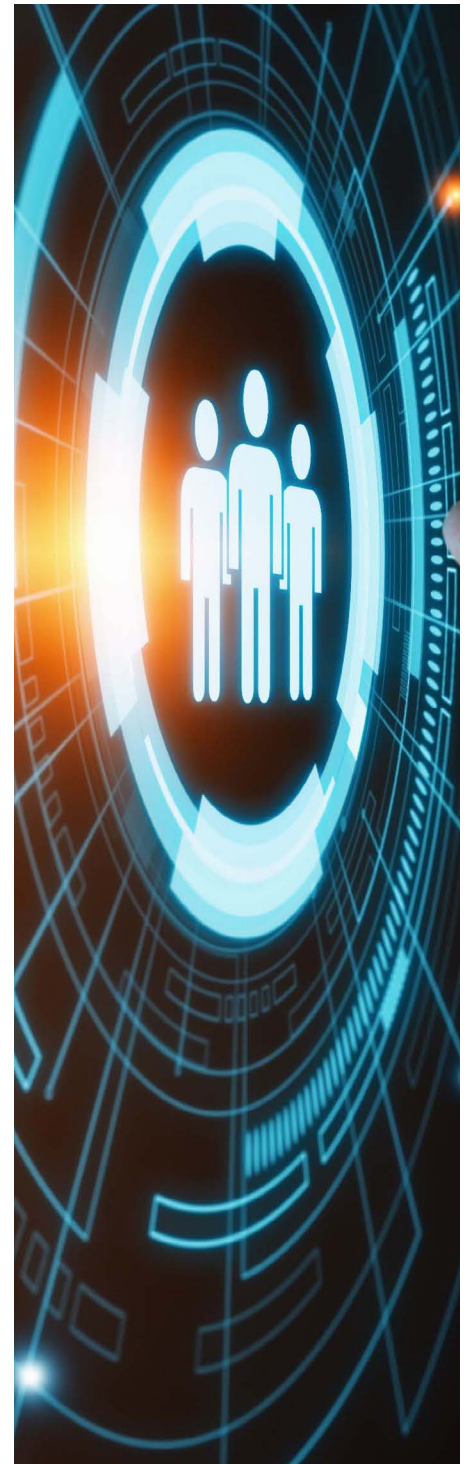
7. Bloom, Nicholas; "Don't Let Employees Pick Their WFH Days"; Harvard Business Review; May 25, 2021; https://hbr.org/2021/05/dont-let-employees-pick-their-wfh-days

8. Allen, Joseph G., Macomber, John D.; "What Makes an Office Building 'Healthy'"; Harvard Business Review, April 29, 2020; https://hbr.org/2020/04/what-makes-an-office-building-healthy?ab=hero-main-tex

- [ ] Will you use interactive signage or kiosks to display room/space/desk availability and reservations?

- [ ] Are you considering safe-meeting/touchless AV collaboration and presentation tools?

10. Do you plan to replace high-touch surfaces with contactless/no-touch technology for entrances, elevators, conference room/video sharing, coffee/water dispensers, rest rooms, etc.?

11. Establish cleaning and sanitization guidelines and procedures with facilities and/or the cleaning services for:

- [ ] Nightly cleaning: desks, public areas, rest rooms, elevators, entrances, lobbies, etc.

- [ ] Cleaning between users: Hot-desks, conference rooms, huddle spaces, coffee/break rooms, cafeterias, etc.

- [ ] How will you manage on-demand cleaning?

- [ ] Will you use signage, messages, and other communication methods to post clean desk/room availability?

12. Develop an exposure-response plan that addresses:

- [ ] Isolation, containment, contact tracing, and sanitization.

- [ ] Stay-at-home policies.

- [ ] Communications to affected employees.

13. Review/update existing policies such as sick leave, PTO, travel, etc. to determine if you need changes based on pandemic restrictions, employee health, and governmental guidelines/regulations.

IT: Return-to-the-Office Checklist

1. Organize or participate in a Return-to-the-Office taskforce with stakeholders from HR and Facilities to plan, coordinate, and execute changes to your physical environment.

2. Conduct infrastructure/technology audits.

   ☐ Assess and audit the premises for technology and building and network infrastructure changes needed for any new installations, such as video conferencing, digital signage, usage sensors, kiosks, IoT, and touchless technology.

   ☐ Perform a technology, application, and device audit to prepare for nextgen 5G, On-Go™, Wi-Fi 6, and SD-WAN communications. Assess network performance against hybrid work demands.

   ☐ Assess what applications and devices are needed to connect all technology at the building's edge.

   ☐ Track what technology, pandemic-driven or otherwise, worked, what didn't, and what was lacking. Keep the good. Get rid of the rest, including licenses you purchased that went unused. Address technology gaps.

3. Hybrid technology integration.

   ☐ Do users have the necessary technology for seamless transitions between in-house and at-home work?

   ☐ Do you need to invest in technology-agnostic solutions, such as SD-WAN networks or 5G and OnGo networks?

   ☐ Has any technology been updated that would prohibit staff from connecting to in office Wi-Fi or networks?

   ☐ Have you implemented a bring your own device (BYOD) policy? How will this change your in-office IT?

4. Run security checks.

   ☐ Perform a safety/software check on all desktops and laptops to determine if they have the proper OS, security patches, and other critical updates. Invest in tools that automate this critical function.

   ☐ Are VPNs, MFAs, and other security measures in place?

   ☐ Where do you have gaps in security?

   ☐ What gives you optimal cybersecurity for hybrid ecosystems?

   ☐ What security measures are you taking to protect your wireless networks (5G, 4G LTE, On-Go, Wi-Fi 6, etc.)?

   ☐ How will you manage security if you have an SD-WAN or cloud-based communications system and if you have an on-premises network?

   ☐ How will you train/instruct employees on proper security procedures?

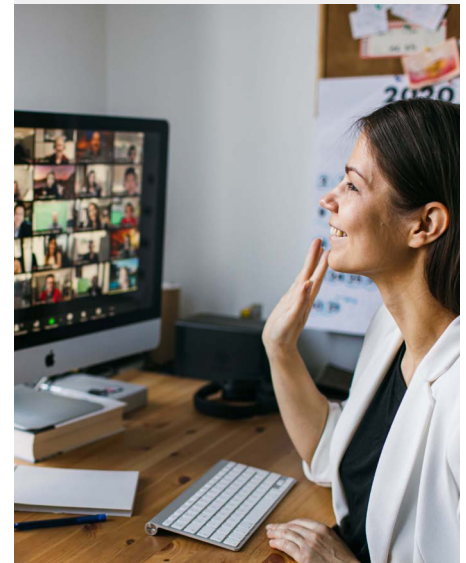   ☐ Are you planning on installing a security-camera system?

The Hybrid Workforce[9]

1-4 **Days/Week:**
Expected time in the office

How Often
40%
of workers expect to be in the office

21-50%
of the time

51-80%
of the time

9. *Alexander, Andrea; Cracknell, Rich; De Smet, Aaron; Langstaff, Meredith; Ravid, Dan; "What executives are saying about the future of hybrid work," McKinsey & Company, May 17, 2021; https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/what-executives-are-saying-about-the-future-of-hybrid-work*

6. Take inventory.

    ☐ Document what devices and data were taken from the office and when they are being returned. Are new devices needed?

    ☐ New hires and employees. Do you have the necessary technology in place to set up new hires with laptops, monitors, phones, docks, etc. Have you collected equipment from employees who are leaving?

    ☐ Assess the need for additional hardware. Did employees take home technology? Will it be coming back? If they continue to work from home, will there be the monitors, docks, peripheral to maintain the shared space and home offices?

7. Get personal.

    ☐ Document employees who use/used personal computers to work remotely, this may include files left on team member's personal devices. Do they meet company security standards? Should employees change passwords? How does a new BYOD policy impact your network security?

8. Office desks, hot desks and hoteling, conference rooms, huddle spaces, technology closets.

    ☐ Audit all technology, including what is needed (hardware, software, infrastructure) for video sharing and 5G, On-Go, Wi-Fi 6, and SD-WAN readiness.

    ☐ How will you create the same meeting experience for in-office and digital participants? Will your new meeting spaces work with meeting collaboration tools like Teams, Webex, and Zoom?

    ☐ Will you implement an automated reservation system?

    ☐ How will you monitor usage for and real-time availability?

    ☐ How will you monitor occupancy? Will entrance be prohibited once limits are reached? Locked doors? Alarms? Lights?

    ☐ How will you evaluate you have the right mixture of collaborative and individual workspaces?

    ☐ How will you post clean desk/room availability, including cleaning status?

9. Consider in-office communication.

    ☐ What technology, infrastructure, cabling is needed for new/moved digital signage displays and video collaboration/display screens, kiosks, alerts, etc?

    ☐ Where will communication displays be installed? Will your signage content management software be compatible with new your communication tools and collaboration strategy?

    ☐ What hardware/software, infrastructure, and cabling changes are needed?

    ☐ What technology and partner will you use?

10. Safe, touchless technology.

    ☐ Are you considering safe-meeting/touchless AV collaboration and presentation tools?

    ☐ Do you plan to replace high-touch surfaces with contactless/no-touch technology for entrances, elevators, conference room/video sharing, coffee/ water dispensers, restrooms, etc. Technology can include contactless sensors, locks, and other IoT devices (facial recognition, hand wave, voice command, card reader, etc.)
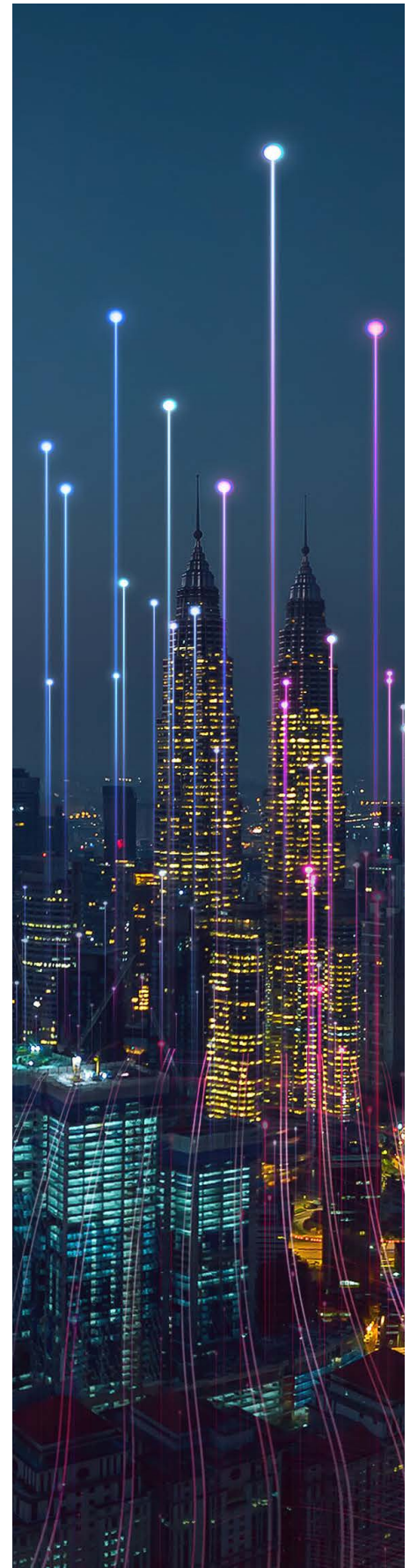
11. Healthy building technologies.

   - What connected building (smart and IoT technology/applications) do you want to use for social distancing and smart building efficiencies? This can include everything from the basement to the rooftop, such as:

   - Contactless/zero-touch devices/sensors for contactless access and capacity control at doors, elevators, break rooms, conference rooms, rest rooms, sinks, etc.

   - Check-in systems

   - Wayfinding

   - Desk/room availability

   - Environmental monitoring

   - Temperature/moisture sensors

   - Air flow quality/ventilation/oxygen content

   - Lighting (smart lighting, sensors, monitoring)

   - Temperature screening/health monitoring *stations/kiosks*

12. Implementation.

   - ☐ Before proceeding, make sure all members of the taskforce know what changes will be made, and who is responsible for taking the lead.

   - ☐ Coordinate all communications systems/updates/changes with HR.

   - ☐ Coordinate infrastructure changes with facilities.

   - ☐ Coordinate with IT partner/vendor for infrastructure upgrades and network readiness.

Touchless is Here to Stay[10]

73%
Willing to interact with touchless

8 out of 10:
See public touchscreens as unhygienic

[10]. *Touchless Tech Trends; Connected World;* *https://connect-edworld.com/touchless-tech-trends/*

Facilities: Return-to-the-Office Checklist

1. Organize or participate in on a Return-to-the-Office taskforce with stakeholders from HR and IT to plan, coordinate, and execute changes to your physical environment.

2. Check state, local, and federal health regulations and guidelines.

3. Conduct an Infrastructure audit

   ☐ Assess and audit the premises for technology and building infrastructure changes needed for any new installations, such as signage, sensors, kiosks, and IoT.

   ☐ Install necessary hardware and infrastructure to ensure next-gen 5G, On-Go, Wi-Fi 6, and SD-WAN.

   ☐ Communications can be enabled by your IT partners.

4. Enable communications — everywhere.

   ☐ Install AV systems, digital signage, interactive displays, kiosks, and other communication and notification systems throughout the workplace in coordination with HR and IT.

   ☐ Consult your business leaders and/or tenants regarding conference room, gathering spaces, and huddle spaces needs. What AV technology do you need to enable hybrid work and collaboration?

5. Coordinate with co-tenants and building management if you're in a shared office space or office building to implement safety measures for all communal areas.

6. Clean, clean, and clean some more.

   ☐ Establish daily and weekly cleaning procedures for all office and communal areas, including all surfaces and touch areas.

   ☐ Establish "after-use" cleaning procedures for shared spaces, such as hot-desks, conference rooms, technology closets, cafeterias, break rooms, etc.

   ☐ Establish on-demand cleaning processes using scheduling systems or sensors to monitor conference room or desk occupancy.

   ☐ Communicate cleaning procedures to HR and IT for dissemination across internal communication channels and office digital signage.

7. Safety measures. Work with IT and HR on what physical safety measures you will be implementing/installing.

   ☐ Abundant hand sanitizing/mask stations.

   ☐ Thermal/temperature sensing kiosks.

   ☐ Scanners for ID and proof of vaccination.

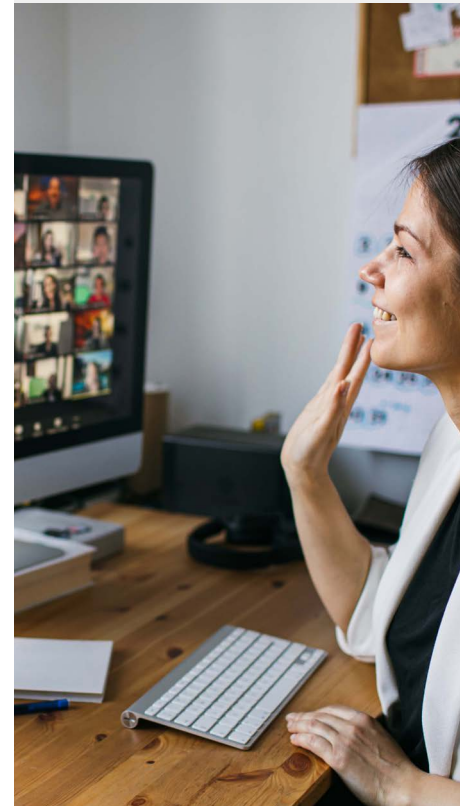   ☐ Protective walls, dividers, temporary/on-demand barriers.

   ☐ Tape/rope off areas.

The Reimagined Office[11]

61%
Increased health and safety measures

67%
More comfortable design features

11. *Adams, R. Dallon; "Employees did not like the old office. Here are the office changes they want"; CXO; July 2, 2021; https://www.techrepublic.com/article/employees-did-not-like-the-old-office-here-are-the-office-changes-they-want/*

8. Reconfigure office floor plans for social distancing.

☐ Work with architects/engineers as needed for infrastructure changes. Hire/ project manage contractors.

☐ Remove/rearrange furniture in office areas, conference rooms, lounges, break areas, lobbies, etc.

☐ Take inventory of existing fixtures, furniture, and infrastructure to ensure optimization of current resources.

☐ Order furniture for communal areas, such as hot desks, hang-out areas, open huddle spaces.

☐ Confirm with IT any additional technology needs, such as new monitors, additional structured cabling, new adaptors and docking stations, etc.

☐ Build/reconfigure smaller conference rooms, huddle spaces, technology closets, etc. Coordinate new technology installations, such as displays, with IT. Post occupancy limits/safety procedures.

9. Monitor occupancy/usage.

☐ Install occupancy sensors in office areas, conference rooms, break rooms, rest rooms, etc. Sensors can lock doors, emit audio alarms, turn on lights, etc. when occupancy limits are reached.

☐ Deploy usage monitors for conference rooms, huddle spaces, technology closets, hot desks, permanent desks, break rooms, and lounges. Coordinate the technology with IT.

☐ Install automated reservation systems for hot desks, conference rooms, technology closets, etc.

☐ To prevent overcrowding, post traffic flow directions, displays, digital signs, and floor stickers.

☐ Monitor data collected by new occupancy sensors and reservation systems to optimize use of shared spaces and ensure you have the right combination of individual and group workspaces.

10. Touchless technology.

☐ Install contactless sensors, locks, and other IoT devices (facial recognition, hand wave, voice command, card reader, etc.) for doors, elevators, conference rooms, rest rooms, lighting, lobbies, and other high-touch areas

☐ Coordinate with IT to install touchless collaborative video sharing hardware and infrastructure, voice recognition, and other applications that can control your meeting rooms.

11. Healthy building technologies.

☐ Reassure employees and visitors of health and well-being measures and improve productivity.

☐ Review HVAC considerations such as:

• Air flow quality/ventilation/oxygen content including portable air filters (Aim for four to six air changes per hour.[13])

• Temperature/moisture monitoring/controls.

• Lighting (smart lighting, sensors, monitoring).

• Temperature screening/health monitoring stations/kiosks.

Touchless is Here to Stay[12]

73%
Willing to interact with touchless technology

8 out of 10
See public touchscreens as unhygienic

Healthy Building Benefits6[14]

$6,500 – $7,500: Savings per person per year

57%
Sick leave due to poor ventilation

1.7%
Performance improved with doubled outdoor air delivery

12. *Touchless Tech Trends; Connected World;* *https://connectedworld.com/touchless-tech-trends/*

13. *Allen DSc, MPH, Joseph G.; Ibrahim, MD, MSc, Andrew M.; "Indoor Air Changes and Potential Implications for SAR-SCoV- 2 Transmission"; JAMA Insights, April 16, 2021; JAMA. 2021;325(20):2112-2113. doi:10.1001/jama.2021.5053;* *https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2779062*

14. *Allen DSc, MPH, Joseph G.; Macomber, John D.; "What Makes and Office Building 'Healthy'"; Harvard Business Review; April 29, 2020;* *https://hbr.org/2020/04/what-makes-an-office-building-healthy?ab=hero-main-text*

12. Develop an exposure-response plan in conjunction with HR and IT. Include sanitization and closure measures.

   ☐ Implement an emergency cleaning procedure that minimizes risk and exposure.

   ☐ Ensure sensors can track employee location for efficient contact tracing.

   ☐ Discuss office closure policies and procedures with all stake holders and people leaders.

Ready to Reimagine Your Workplace? Contact us and we'll help you determine your plan of action based on your workplace ecosystem and timelines. With a global footprint and local resources, we can make your organization safe, socially distant, secure, and connected whether you have one office or hundreds of sites.

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