



PREPARING OFFICE REOPEN CHECKLIST

Supporting Facilities Management
and Corporate Real Estate teams
during COVID19

Checklist to re-open office buildings during COVID19

Over the next few weeks businesses around the world will be preparing to transition their workforce back to the office once COVID19 lockdown rules are lifted.

Here is a checklist to help you start preparing your office reopen plans.



1. Return to work strategy

Health and safety should be top priority in your reopen preparation plans post COVID19. The key aims of any return to office project should be to:

1. **Decrease density in offices significantly.**
Depending on the size of your office space, start conservatively at 20% utilisation and slowly build up over time to 30%, 40% and then 50%.
2. **Ensure office social distancing guidance** is clearly laid out for employees. Guidance such as using every other or every 3 desk seating arrangement, in a zig zag shape and to avoid back to back seating, should be clearly communicated. As most people's natural inclination is to go back to normal interaction, visual signs should reinforce social distancing messages.
3. **Cleaning regimes** should be significantly increased in all areas of the office to reduce any outbreaks of the virus.
4. **Consider shutting down shared areas** or using them as overflow space for a single person.
5. **Develop a communication strategy** to ensure employees are updated every step of the way

2. Preparing the office building

During quarantine, take this opportunity to disinfect the office to set a baseline of sanitisation.

- ❑ **Pool a list of ad hoc cleaning suppliers** so you have the flexibility to act quickly to unexpected situations
- ❑ **Deploy hospital grade disinfectants.** Make sure all levels of disinfection is carried out, such as surfaces, flooring, carpets, fixtures and furnishings
- ❑ **Check maintenance** or replacement of HVAC equipment
- ❑ **Increase fresh air intake**
- ❑ **Identify potential high risk areas** based on proximity of other occupants, such as shared spaces like the kitchen or collaborative areas
- ❑ **Publish and communicate revised floor plans** with new work settings
- ❑ **Develop supplier contingency plans**
- ❑ **Determine how shared** or collaborative zones should be managed e.g. coffee stations or cafeterias
- ❑ **Make new work policies and office guidance** more accessible and visible with printed signage, documents or online
- ❑ **Develop new guidelines** for receiving and sending posts or deliveries
- ❑ **Provide PPE equipment** in high touch areas

Leverage data to efficiently manage office usage

- ❑ **Use footfall counting data** on each floor to monitor the peak number of people on each floor
- ❑ **Provide cleaning suppliers** with daily desk and space utilisation data to ensure deep cleaning of surfaces that have been used
- ❑ **Use occupancy data** such as desk utilisation to manage seating arrangements and social distancing rules are followed
- ❑ **Use air quality data** such as CO2 levels to get an insight into whether fresh air is circulating appropriately on a floor
- ❑ **Ensure humidity levels** is kept between [40%-60%](#) indicated by early research as the ideal level to contain the virus
- ❑ **Use employee surveys** to understand what specific challenges people are having during this extended work from home period

Adapting the workplace to accommodate social distancing

- ❑ **Pre-plan seating arrangements** with key teams and stakeholders
- ❑ **Set up 2-3 desk separation** between individuals
- ❑ **Avoid back to back seating** arrangements
- ❑ **Remove furniture** or equipment to spread out workstations such as extra chairs or tables
- ❑ **Reuse meeting rooms** as workstations if necessary
- ❑ **Restrict use of shared spaces** such as collaborative zone, cafeterias or coffee stations
- ❑ **Limit the size** of group gatherings
- ❑ **Schedule lunch shifts** to avoid large crowds in cafeterias or canteens
- ❑ **Use directional signage** on floors and walls
- ❑ **Identify workspaces** to use as quarantine zones in cases of outbreaks

3. Transitioning employees back to the workplace

We recommend a phasing of back to office vs. big bang shift back. Here are some different approaches our customers and partners are taking to stagger employees back.

- ❑ **Narrow down priority teams** or individuals who need to come into the office
- ❑ **Identify remote workers** who can continue to work from home over the coming months or for a longer period of time
- ❑ **Assess the maximum capacity of people** who can work on a floor or building based on social distancing guidelines
- ❑ **Staggering teams back to the office**
 - ❑ **Identify the key employees** who need to be in the office more than others, such as members of the Facilities teams.
 - ❑ **Consider splitting teams in groups** and rotate office use between them, with deep cleaning carried out between rotations.
 - ❑ **Set a rota of rotation.** For example, group A to work in the office for 2 weeks in allocated spaces then works from home the following 2 weeks.
 - ❑ **Maintain a list of members in each group.** In case the virus is contracted within that group, action can be taken quickly to control the risks to others, quarantine can begin and members of that group can be advised accordingly.
 - ❑ **Single use desk space** and collaboration zones until social distancing is eased, limit the use of shared surfaces and ensure deep cleaning is carried out in between single use.
- ❑ **Determine restricted zones** such as shared collaboration areas are clearly labeled as 'do not use'
- ❑ **Have clear guidance** on limits to the number of people in elevators and in bathrooms
- ❑ **Stagger start times** to ensure social distancing is possible on elevators and common entrances have staggered start times in the morning. Strongly discourage a blanket work start time policy of 8am or 9am
- ❑ **Consider making masks a requirement** especially in shared areas such as elevators, meeting rooms and possibly on desks to minimise transmission
- ❑ **Reconfigure workspaces** that can be used as workstations such as large meeting rooms
- ❑ **Identify equipment** that will need to be replaced such as fixed desktop with laptops or telephones with cloud based applications
- ❑ **Identify furniture or equipment** that need to be removed to adapt the workplace for social distancing, such as limiting the number of chairs in meeting room
- ❑ **Clearly labelled seating signage** of what is in use, requires cleaning or restricted
- ❑ **Consider implementing food pick up only** in cafeterias and stop sit down eating options
- ❑ **Use floor decals in cafeteria** for directional and distancing purposes
- ❑ **Communicate entry and exit policies** before return to work and make these easily accessible throughout the office and online
- ❑ **Provide PPE products** at work stations and high touch areas such as hand sanitisers and disinfectants wipes
- ❑ **Make cleaning protocols highly visible** and enforce clean desk policies
- ❑ **Publish floor plans of new office layout** with social distancing guidance
- ❑ **COVID19 exposure and recovery policies** should be made highly visible and accessible
- ❑ **Ensure team managers communicate regularly** with onsite employees, build an openness for them to feedback and share sentiments
- ❑ **Communicate to all external suppliers** of revised visitor, deliveries and shipping policies

Update work and health & safety policies

Work collaboratively with HR and other relevant business functions to update or create new policies now.

- Develop guidance on on entry and exit protocols
- Guidance on seating arrangements and clean desk policies
- Cleaning and sanitisation protocols for general and individuals
- Work from home policies
- Work pattern arrangements
- Health & Safety regulations
- Travel policies
- Process for screening non-regular employees or new visitors
- Visitor, mailroom deliveries and shipping policies
- Emergency response plans including ensuring there are sufficient fire safety and first aiders present in staggered teams
- Enforce aggressive self reporting policies and not coming to work when sick
- Develop guidance for those returning to work after exposure of COVID19
- IT and Security procedures for mass remote users
- Data protection and privacy

Providing personal protective equipment

Instill employee confidence that measures are in place to protect their health and safety.

- Provide enough masks for each employee
- Install hand sanitisers at workstations or near high touch areas such as lifts, lobbies or restrooms
- Provide disinfectant products for employees to sanitise their workspace regularly
- Provide disposable gloves
- Increase the frequency of cleaning
- Provide clear signage of which desks are in use or zones that are restricted
- Provide screening tests for employees
- Reduce travel
- Use contactless payment facilities if applicable
- Provide disposable cutlery in cafeterias
- Provide guidance on emergency response plans
- Make self reporting policies highly visible
- Provide guidance for those returning to work after COVID19 exposure
- Provide health & safety equipment for remote workers
- Provide IT equipment for remote workers

4. Develop a communication strategy

Keeping employees updated with progress will increase the likelihood of a smoother transition back to the office.

Regular communications will instill a sense of safety, reduce uncertainty and give confidence.

Ongoing communication

- ❑ **Provide regular internal communication** and demonstrate how the business is following Government guidelines
- ❑ **Clearly communicate plans and changes** with employees, so they understand the effort that is being taken and the latest guidance
- ❑ **Involve senior leaders** to make sure messages are cascaded correctly
- ❑ **Use all forms of communication channels** to give employees visibility of plans
- ❑ **Provide guidance of new policy** changes and where to seek this information
- ❑ **Encourage employee feedback** and participation to reduce uncertainty

Office communication and signage

- ❑ **Provide instructions** on what to do on entry and exit of the building
- ❑ **Provide clear signage** of which desks are available to use
- ❑ **Ensure social distancing guidance** in the office is accessible, whether through printed or online collateral
- ❑ **Make employees aware of cleaning protocols** for their work station as well as in general
- ❑ **Provide PPE products** and clear guidance of usage
- ❑ **Guidance on the new office layout**, with clearly signposted restricted areas
- ❑ **Provide information on which teams** will be occupy the office and who remain working from home

Supporting employee wellbeing

- ❑ **Provide support lines** for employees struggling to cope to manage mental wellness
- ❑ **Enforce aggressive self reporting** and self isolation policies with guidance on what to do if the virus is contracted

5. Longer term planning

We're in unprecedented times and it's difficult to predict how the next few months will unfold once people return to the workplace.

However, it's important to plan beyond just the next few months. Here are some things we know as a fallout from COVID19 to take into consideration for longer term planning.

1. **Working from home is here to stay** - The majority of the workforce will continue to work from home over the coming months with some roles permanently moved to remote working. This opens a whole plethora of opportunities to explore, from new work policies to real estate management and technology enablement.
2. **Office settings** will move away from traditional fixed seating arrangements as the workforce become more mobile. Consider:
 - How changing the office layout will impact productivity levels
 - How to make it easy to understand social distancing
 - Will the layout be suitable in 6 months time or will more changes be required?
 - Do you have the bandwidth and flexibility to make more short term changes if needed?
3. **Building consolidation** - CFOs and CRE's will naturally plan to consolidate real estate with working from home becoming the norm. Consider how you will need to manage space capacity with limited space. Much collaboration will be needed across key functions to develop your strategy.
4. **Costs** - Evidently cleaning, security and IT costs will increase significantly and become a permanent budget line for the foreseeable future. Have a realistic view of what it will cost to operate in a post COVID19 era.
5. **Managing risks** - [Gartner survey](#) found that 71% of CXOs say business continuity and productivity are the biggest risks from COVID19 followed by:
 - Employee health and safety (69%)
 - Financial risk (45%)
 - Information security risk (40%)
 - Fraud risk (27%)
 - IT risk (27%)
6. **Social distancing** will continue to form part of everyday life, whether in the workplace or at home. Consider what the implications are to the work environment and employee well being.
7. **Activity based working** will be the way forward to manage changes in the workplace. Be prepared for more short term changes.
8. **Communicate with your workforce** - Keeping everyone up to date with changes will be pivotal to phase people back to the office, curb uncertainty and anxieties as well as give them confidence that measures are in place to protect their well being.
9. **People management** - Since a large portion of the workforce will likely continue to work from, new work behaviours and patterns will emerge. Managers might need training and guidance on how to adopt new management styles.
10. **Shaping a sustainable business** - The future of the workplace is changing. Given some of the 'known' variables above, new ways of working and maintaining business continuity will emerge. Start anticipating some of these likely changes and opportunities now.

Supporting you through COVID19

[Sign up to our newsletter](#) for new releases on guidance we're sharing to help support you through COVID19. It's a challenging time right now, but our aim is to help make it easier to get through.