Returning to the Workplace
Coronavirus Preparedness Resource Center
ifma.org/coronavirus
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE RETURN TO WORK?
EVOLVING BEST PRACTICES FOR RETURNING TO THE OFFICE
INTRODUCTIONS

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ABOUT GENSLER
GENSLER IS A GLOBAL FIRM

18% Of Annual Profit Invested in Research

50 Global Offices

500+ Design Awards Annually

250+ Research Grants Awarded Since 2009

4,000+ Global Clients

89% Repeat Clients
POST COVID EMERGING WORKPLACE TRENDS
The coronavirus has turned everything upside down.

COVID-19’s impact on global economy has forced organizations in every industry — including our own — to flex and evolve, both in real-time and in the long-term.
PAST

HOW YOU USED TO WORK

PRESENT

HOW YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING

FUTURE

HOW YOU MAY BE WORKING

RETURN TO OFFICE

When this crisis subsides, most of us won’t return to business as usual. In these uncertain times, companies are seeking solutions to prepare for when people return back to the office.
EVOLVING DESIGN STRATEGIES
CONCEPTS IDENTIFIED BY DESIGNERS, ENGINEERS, AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Air Purification Systems:
An EPA report found that installing a system designed to improve indoor air quality can lead to higher productivity, fewer lost work days, and savings in medical care costs.

Infrared Fever Screening Systems (IFSS) will play an ever-increasing role for screening building entrants and monitoring room utilization.

Automation and Voice Activation:
Hands-free tools can facilitate solution-based design strategies for minimizing the need to directly touch door hardware, elevator call buttons, and building directories.
Remove excess chairs in conference rooms with more than 10 seats.

Spread out collaboration seating, so people are spaced further apart.

Encourage people to collaborate virtually whenever possible.
**Evolving Design Strategies**

**Concepts Identified by Designers, Engineers, and Health Professionals**

- **Waves/Staggers/Shifts.** Instead of mandating that everyone returns at once, consider inviting employees to return in stages.

- **Consider adding partitions** for sit/stand desks that are attached to the desktop and move up and down with the desktop.

- **Rethink dynamic and unassigned seating.** Reassign formerly shared desks into individuals for a full day or a week. Make sure they are disinfected before a new person uses the work setting.
Hygiene & cleaning protocols: Organizations should implement professional cleaning protocols for workstations, conference rooms, reception, and social/common areas throughout the day.

Learning from Healthcare: Apply what we know about healthcare environments to materials, cleanability, and safeguard measures.

Rethink office design to minimize contact with shared surfaces like the doors we open, the reception furniture we sit in, and all the other interior finishes we touch during the workday.
Phase 1 will be an initial practice of social distancing impacting every part of the workplace eco-system and metrics will be key in understanding how far the pendulum might swing between the Now, Near, and Far.
WORKPLACE AS “A SYSTEM”

Focusing only on effectiveness can overlook broader cultural or behavioral opportunities to optimize engagement and performance. Creating a great workplace experience requires aligning space, culture, interaction, and behavior.
**IMPACT: PRE-COVID “NOW”**

Pre-COVID, research showed the office was people’s preferred place to work, as long as it supported their way of working.

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As we make the transition back to the workplace, stakeholders are considering new protocols to help protect employees, clients, and visitors.

### Entry | Arrival
- Employees, clients, and visitors enter the workfloor
  - Welcome/reception
  - Hospitality station
  - Waiting and coat closet
  - + Touchless entry
  - + Mudroom/washing station
  - + UV scanning

### Work
Desking is focused on work behaviors
- Efficient and flexible
- Assigned or shared
- Neighborhood planning
- + Observe social distancing recommendations
- + De-densification
- + Shift desk orientation
- + Focus on comfort

### Meet
Meeting spaces encourage and support collaboration
- 1:1 ratios
- Variety of furniture types
- In-person or virtual
- + Maximize circulation
- + Reduce by 50%
- + Increase technology
- + Connect to WFH teams

### Support
Necessary operational and technical support needs
- Copy/print
- Storage and lockers
- Wellness/Mother’s room
- + Air purification
- + Increase custodial services
- + Sanitation stations

### Social
Shared amenities for social gatherings and events
- Work Cafe
- Community Hubs
- Game area
- + Fewer external guests
- + Larger furniture groupings (minimizes surfaces to clean)
- + Increased food delivery
- + Wrapped food + beverages
Phase 1 will be an initial practice of social distancing impacting every part of the workplace eco-system and metrics will be key in understanding how far the pendulum might swing between the Now, Near, and Far.

**Circulation**
2-2.5x increased circulation

**Desking**
30-40% reduction in occupancy

**Collaboration**
50% reduction in collaboration with an increase in collaborative technology

* this could be as much as 400-500 USF per person when 6’-0” distancing measures are in place.
Planning Assumptions

**9,800 USF Area of Study**
**70 Desk Seats**

- 6x6 Flexible Desk Footprints
- 1 Collaboration Seat per Desk Seat
- 6'-0" Main Circulation
- 5'-0"/4'-0" Interior Circulation
PLANNING STUDY EXAMPLE

Planning Assumptions

9,800 USF Area of Study
42 Desk Seats

- 6x6 Flexible Desk Footprints
- 1/2 Collaboration Seat per Desk Seat
- 12'-0" Main Circulation
- Interior Circulation Varies

235 USF / PERSON
LESSONS FROM CHINA
RETURN TO WORK (RTW) FINDINGS FROM CROSS INDUSTRY INTERVIEWS & QUESTIONNAIRES
Tech, Financial, Consumer Goods, Professional Services
TOP 5 FINDINGS & EVOLVING TRENDS FOR RETURN TO WORK

- Coordinated RTW efforts will ease confusion
- RTW will be a migration
- Building considerations for RTW
- Employees will continue to value the workplace
- WFH will continue as part of everyone’s workstyle
1. Coordinated RTW efforts will ease confusion

In China, the State, City, Building, Job Function and Individual circumstances are driving RTW behaviors
- States and Cities have different regulations as to what percent of business can begin to commute, cross boundaries and occupy the workplace
- Buildings are instituting check-in protocols and restricting visitors from entering the buildings
- Companies are prioritizing office operations and team based work groups for RTW
- Individuals family circumstances are driving if they can RTW
TOP 5 FINDINGS & EVOLVING TRENDS FOR RTW

2. RTW will be a migration

In China, every company and individuals personal ability to return to the office will drive different migration patterns

- Some individuals started RTW 1x per week then 2x, then 3x etc
- Some companies are maintaining rotating shifts of 30-35% due to state and city regulations
- Some companies saw an 80-90% RTW within 45 days
3. Building Considerations for RTW

In China, building lobbies, elevators, HVAC systems and janitorial services will be the first wave of change and may impact ‘internal commute times’

- Buildings may limit access points to control path of travel in lobbies
- Lobbies may see check-in procedures similar to post 9-11
- Elevators may limit capacity to observe social distancing
- HVAC systems may supply fresh air only while air purification and circulation systems are reviewed
- Janitorial services will increase to provide preventative supplies such as hand sanitizers as well as increased cleaning services
4. Employees will continue to value the workplace

- Workplace occupancy will be driven by an organization's culture, resources, and a sense of safety.
- The commute and public transportation is currently and will be the biggest concern for individuals' health and wellbeing in their RTW journey.
- In the meantime, individuals will continue to wear masks in public but want to take them off in the workplace.
- People miss their friends, colleagues, and desire a sense of belonging and socialization.
- Resources such as ergonomic seating, collaborative environments, and technology are sorely missed.
5. WFH will continue as part of everyone’s workstyle
ADVICE FROM OUR FRIENDS IN CHINA

- Use this time to experiment with WFH technology and policies
- Follow common sense hygiene and protocols
- Don’t be lax with mask wearing
- Be considerate of others
CHANGE COMMUNICATIONS
Change Communications

How to Prepare Employees on What to Expect Post-COVID

Change Management challenges for consideration:

- Employee Experience
- Playbook for the Future
- Communication Strategies
Gensler Tools

**WPI+WFH Experience**

- Understand your employee WFH experience
- Identify mobility potential by group or department
- Analyze patterns before, during, and after WFH

**Re-Run**

- Quantify the impact of ‘social distancing’
- Optimize your floor plans for future occupancy
- Develop data-driven planning scenarios
- Define density shift

**WISP**

- Assign departments and employees to spaces
- Visualize future planning scenarios
- Maintain spatial data and workplace metrics
- Learn more at GenslerWisp.com

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Gensler
TO LEARN
MORE...
GENSLER.COM/DESIGN-RESPONDS-TO-A-CHANGING-WORLD
Re-Entering the Workplace – A Strategic Framework for Facility Managers for Immediate, Short and Long-Term Facility Planning
Thursday, 30 April

How to Prepare in the Event of Relapse/Re-closure
FM + COVID series #6
Wednesday, 13 May
Planning, controlling, and responding in facilities during a global health crisis.

PANDEMIC MANUAL
Survival Guide for Businesses Worldwide

30 April 2020

foundation.ifma.org/news/publications