mace

BACK TO WORK SERIES

THE NEW OFFICE CONFIGURATION

As the impact of coronavirus continues to be felt globally, the reality of social distancing measures has seen significant changes to the way we live our lives. As these measures are applied to the workplace, the design of the office and its potential future function will be very different to before.

Our calculations show that by introducing social distancing in the workplace, occupancy numbers could be reduced to as little as **25%** of pre-coronavirus figures, changing the landscape of the office for the foreseeable future.
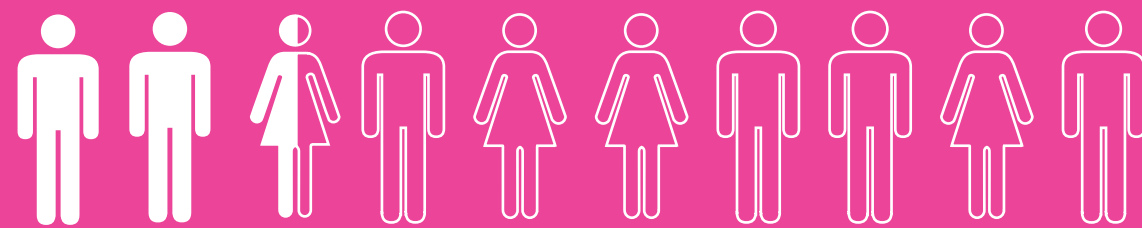
In the third instalment of our Back to Work series we examine the changes required to make the workplace compliant with new government guidelines as well as safeguarding the welfare of employees returning to the office.

If you would like to speak to us about any of this guidance or have any questions about the workplace or technological solutions available during the pandemic, one of our experts will be happy to help. Contact us at:
response@macegroup.com

CREATING A NEW TYPE OF WORKSPACE

For businesses that have been negatively impacted by the effects of the pandemic, reopening workplaces will provide an opportunity for them to resume their operations, and safely welcoming employees back will be a top priority.

With these new measures in place, companies are looking at creating workspaces and environments that employees can work in safely, with a significantly reduced risk of contracting the virus.

Understanding the needs of colleagues is key. An extended period of working from home could influence the expectations of employees who are looking to return to the workplace.

According to the Leesman Home Working survey 52% of global employees reported they have never previously worked from home as part of their role, which will have opened their eyes to new ways of working.

With a clear focus on safety and the welfare of teams, the workspace, from IT equipment to cleaning

schedules, desk arrangements, meeting rooms and communal areas, needs to be reviewed before employees can begin returning to the office.

When it comes to adapting the wider workplace, some areas present challenges when trying to accommodate socially distanced employees. In this guide, we provide some recommendations on modifying the main office space and reviewing workstations.

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of global employees reported they have never previously worked from home as part of their role

ENHANCING WORKSTATIONS AND DESKS

Across large offices with a higher density of workstations, desk arrangements will need to be reduced by up to 75% and seating modified to ensure employees are seated at least 2 metres away from each other.

2m   **2m**

2m

We recommend the following:

- Removing some workstations or removing chairs and using signage to show available desks. To further protect employees disposable desk covers and Perspex screens can also be used, to help limit the risk of infection.

- Position workstations to all face in the same direction, so employees are not sat back to back within 2 metres of one another.

- To reduce the risk of virus transmission, consider providing employees with their own IT equipment and accessories such as a mouse, keyboard and headset, which they must be encouraged to use when they are in the building.

- Ensure that employee and occupancy numbers are monitored daily in line with maintaining safe daily building occupancy levels.

- Employees should be counted within each desk zone or floor by a facilities team member or workplace ambassador to ensure that numbers will not be breached and that social distancing measures can be maintained.

- By using innovative technology such as desk sensors, desk occupancy could be measured remotely, reducing contact between individuals.
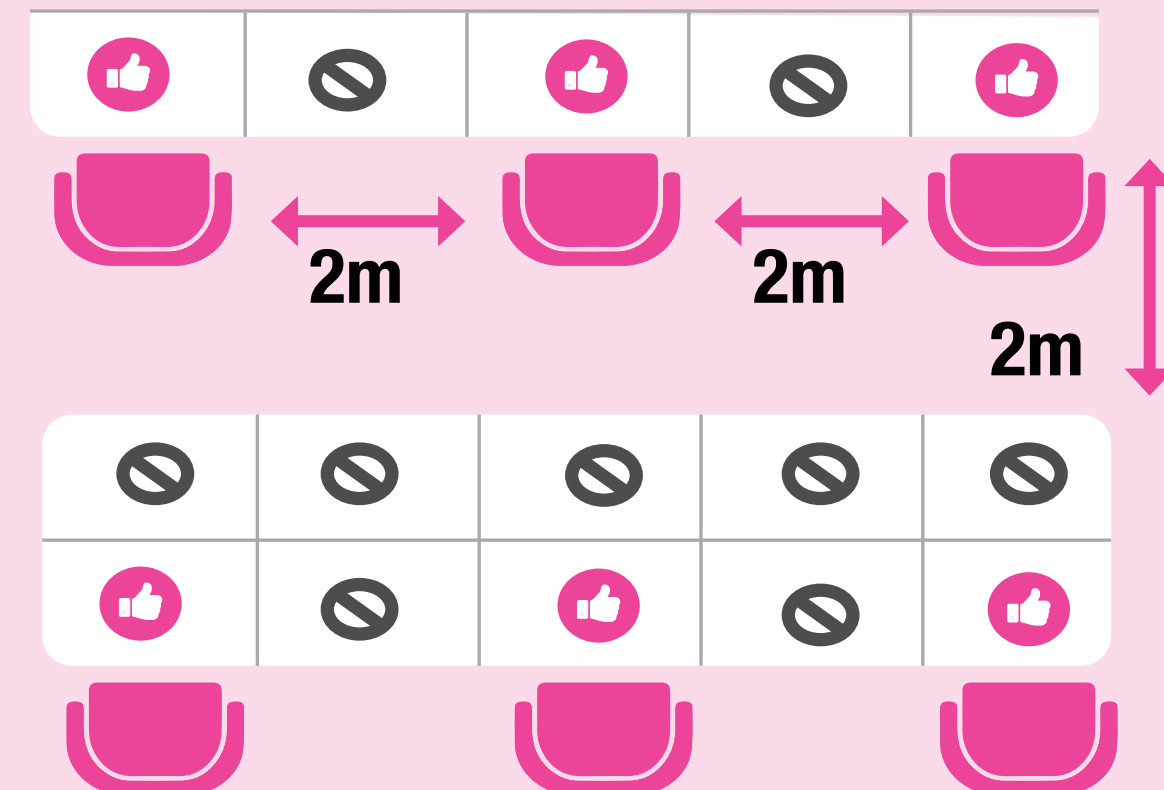
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INTRODUCING WORKPLACE AMBASSADORS

It is vital to continue monitoring the effectiveness of new workplace measures once the office reopens. Collating feedback on what is working and what might need revisiting will ensure continuous improvements can be made where new measures will be being trialled and assessed.

To support employees as they return to the workplace, workplace ambassadors should be appointed to champion the new ways of working and provide a point of contact for feedback.

Workplace ambassadors can be used to support in data collection and should be appointed for each team, or by each floor in larger offices.

With a reduced building occupancy in place, the availability of fire marshals and first aid team members will be impacted. Additional support may be required from ambassadors, or extra training given to fulfil the minimum requirements of safety critical teams.

INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

The internet of things (IoT) provides an interconnected system via the internet of computing devicesembedded in everyday objects, enabling them to send and receive data.

Within the workplace, we have found that utilising IoT technology can not only help maintain a safe working environment as offices reopen but can introduce efficiencies as companies move back towards something resembling business as usual operations.

IoT sensors can gather data on occupancy numbers for offices, meeting rooms and within toilets to show footfall for cleaning schedules, or to monitor air quality and the efficiency of air filtration and circulation systems.

While not an absolute necessity in the workplace, the short-term benefits of sensor technology will be evident during the process of reopening offices, and long-term will see buildings become more efficient, both financially and environmentally.

DEVELOPING A NEW CLEANING REGIME

Cleaning will play a vital part in reopening workplaces. Regular cleaning with specialist detergents and cleaning agents of all surfaces will reduce the spread of the virus through touch and help to protect the health of employees.

Within the office space, you should develop a thorough cleaning regime for workstations and ensure regular deep cleaning can be conducted on a regular basis. Deep cleans should ideally be conducted daily, and between the changeover of employees working shifts, especially where workstations or working areas must be shared, such as reception desks and security offices.

Sanitising wipes and hand-gel should be provided throughout the office area and employees should sanitise their workspace before and after use in addition to normal cleans. A strict clear-desk policy should be implemented to maintain a clean and hygienic workspace for all employees.

If individual waste bins are used under employees' desks, these should be removed, and a central waste area should be utilised by all employees which can then be emptied and cleaned regularly by the cleaning team.

RECONFIGURING MEETING ROOMS

With government guidelines in place, meeting rooms will also require changes to comply with social distancing measures.

Each meeting room will need to be reviewed and maximum capacity established, with the layout of the room adjusted and chairs removed. Tables should be marked to show social distancing zones and stickers used to show employees where to sit safely.

Room booking software should be updated to restrict the number of meeting attendees based on the new occupancy numbers. Meeting rooms should also be reserved throughout the day to allow for regular cleaning, if possible for 15 minutes after every meeting.

Surfaces within the meeting room, such as light switches and sockets, conference phones and TV controls should be sanitised frequently, ideally after every meeting. Any waste bins should also be removed, and central waste disposal utilised by employees.

Catering and hospitality options should be removed from meeting rooms and employees should be encouraged to use their own glasses, mugs or water bottles to reduce the risk of contamination. Additionally, to protect surfaces and improve hygiene, disposable tablecloths should be used and replaced after each meeting.

MAKING COMMUNAL SPACES SAFE

While workstations and meeting rooms can be quickly adapted to accommodate socially distanced employees, navigating the wider workplace presents challenges.

Routes through the office should be designed to reduce unnecessary contact between colleagues and should allow as much distance between walkways and desk spaces as possible. Walkways and routes should be clearly marked with signage and floor markings, and where possible should follow a one-way system.

As with meeting room and desk arrangements, break out spaces will also need to be reviewed to establish a safe occupancy, with seating and other furniture removed where necessary, and clearly marked safe zones for people to stand or sit.

FLOOR PLAN - LEVEL 2
PLEASE FOLLOW ONE WAY SYSTEM. MARKINGS HAVE BEEN PLACED ON THE FLOOR