

The Redefined Workplace

RESEARCH SUMMARY



Our Collective Path Toward the Future

Since the onset of this crisis, we have seen the power of community and a shared vision come together to solve complex problems beyond our imagination. Collectively, we are faced with overcoming adversity and finding balance in an unknown world. The world is thinking differently, and we are taking action to respond.

At our core, Kimball has always found value in listening to and learning from others. From the office to the home and places between, we are reimagining what's next and redesigning the future. Committed to helping employees thrive, we're actively developing products and solutions that support work, wherever it happens.

This research summary features extracted quotes and essential topics needed to inform the evolving workplace. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, these core considerations have helped shape our return to work framework. We share these key learnings below in the same spirit of cooperation that's inspired us so many times since this pandemic began.

Employee Safety Mindset

But what exactly will normal look like post COVID-19? Will there be a “new normal” when the U.S. finally defeats this virus? Specifically, with the exception of essential employees, the American workforce has been forced to work from home. A SHRM report detailed a report that 67 percent of employers were at least taking steps to allow employees to work from home who don’t normally do so. (Apex Benefit)

- Health and safety were the top motives for sending employees home to work during the COVID-19 pandemic. And health and safety will be the driving factors for employees’ eventual return to the office. (Work Design Magazine)
- Anticipate your employees’ needs and help them reengage with your on-site community as they return to work, with support from a team of experience ambassadors. Your ambassadors will be the first friendly faces to greet employees on their first day back. They should also be available to help your people adjust to their new workspace norms and social distancing protocols, and will be a fast, reliable resource to address employee questions. They can provide support and community engagement for your at-home employees, too. (JLL)

Rachel Gutter, president of the International WELL Building Institute, said that if there is a silver lining to be found in this situation, it’s a new level of awareness. “All of us are coming to realize that as designers, as architects, as building managers, as leaders of organizations, that we have a critical role to play in public health,” she said. (Metropolis)

- In the post COVID-19 workplace, we’ll all be more acutely aware of the hazards associated with surfaces we touch and the people we interact with after this prolonged period of social distancing. (Work Design Magazine)
- We’ll view the spaces and places in which we live, work, and play through a different lens. Is the air in this building filtered? Are there proper hand-washing facilities? How many surfaces do I need to touch and how clean are they? Where can I go for a quiet break if the office crowd is too much after being away? (Work Design Magazine)
- Significant attention will be paid to “visible housekeeping” that was once intentionally concealed. (Work Design Magazine)

The coronavirus pandemic has upended everything, including people’s trust in the places and spaces where we work. For those who design and develop office buildings around the world, this has introduced a new challenge: Once we are cleared to return to the office, how can we convince people that the buildings they use are healthy and safe? (Gensler)

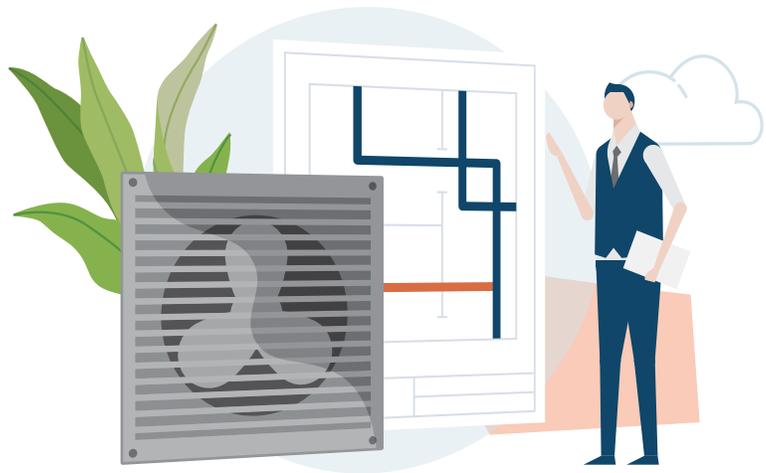
Implement Building-Wide Cleaning Protocols

Given all the instruction circulating about hand sanitizers, hand washing, and wiping down hard surfaces with disinfectant wipes, people will want to know what kind of protocols building managers and their employers are putting into place to keep office buildings safe...organizations should implement professional cleaning and sanitizing protocols for workstations, conference rooms, reception desks, and social/common areas at regular intervals throughout the day. Building owners will need to be able to work to an objective, third-party standard so there is a comfort with the protocol being followed. (Gensler)

Improved Indoor Air Quality

“Improved air filtration is probably the single most important lesson learned from China,” says Despina Katsikakis, head of Occupier Business Performance at Cushman & Wakefield. One reason that the labor force has returned to work so quickly is that China’s office buildings have been installing high-end air filtration systems for several years now, and the country even introduced its own indoor air certification standard, in response to rising pollution. (Fast Company)

- Work with building management to improve air circulation, filtration, and ventilation and confirm cleaning protocols. Increase humidity levels to 40 to 60 percent to reduce infection. Use portable humidifiers if the HVAC system does not allow for this. (HOK)
- Consider engaging advisory services on a site-by-site basis to ensure proper functioning and operation of systems to ensure adequate indoor air quality. A variety of methods may be employed depending on specific needs including dilution ventilation, differential room pressurization, personalized ventilation, enhanced filtration (central or unitary), and UVGI filter installation in terminal units. (JLL)



With immediate retrofits to existing buildings, we can take measures that help filter and destroy bacteria and viruses from our indoor environments. Among other actions mechanical engineers recommend, adding UV lights to air handlers can help purify air and contribute to a safe and healthy indoor environment. (Gensler)

- Going forward, we must consider ways to ventilate more with outdoor air to dilute airborne contaminants and lower transmission opportunities. In addition to HVAC systems, operable windows provide a simple solution for letting in more outdoor air. (HOK)

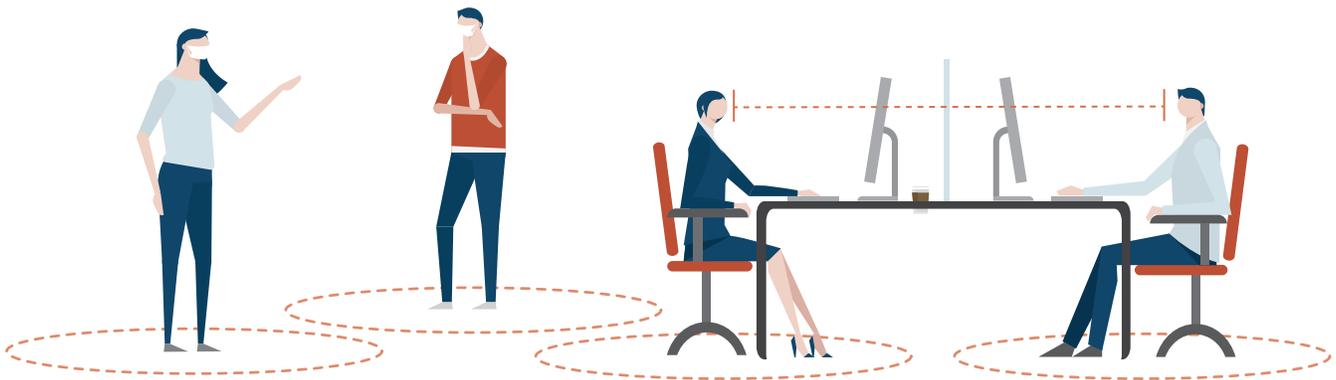
Leverage Technology

Almost everyone predicts that public spaces will move toward more automation to mitigate contagion, with COVID-19 speeding up development of all types of touch-less technology—automatic doors, voice-activated elevators, cellphone-controlled hotel room entry, hands-free light switches and temperature controls, automated luggage bag tags, and advanced airport check-in and security. (Architectural Digest)

- Limiting the need to touch things in the work environment and reduce exposure to germs will be key areas of focus. We already have incorporated automation of workplace elements including lighting systems, sensor-activated faucets and toilets, water dispensers, and smart window shades. But the number of things we touch daily that are rarely cleaned—door handles, elevator call buttons, and building directories—need to be addressed. (HOK)
- In addition to the conventional hands-free faucets, and soap and paper towel dispensers, no touch options can be considered for doors, badge readers, and garbage/recycling bins. (Work Design Magazine)

Workplace Density

This event will change how we use the office and measure the utilization of space. We typically try to design our office space at a density no greater than 200 square feet per person. But is the square foot per person metric critical when we need to practice social distancing and when so many people are effectively working from home? I see our office space becoming less dense and circulation—the distance between desks—becoming more important. (HOK)



- “Open offices were already on the decline before COVID-19,” said David Dewane of Chicago firm Barker/Nestor, who is perhaps most famous for advocating for and designing anti-open-office “deep-work chambers”. He hopes workplace leaders will take the best of what they’ve learned from virtual working to help create office spaces that allow for a balance of isolated concentration and productive, meaningful collaboration. (Architectural Digest)
- “To keep people apart, building managers may have to remove the couches that have sprung up in lobbies in recent years as lobbies have become gathering places rather than just spots you pass through. Or they could place markers on the floor, 6 feet apart, to separate visitors lining up for security clearance. Meetings previously held in a conference room designed for, say, 20 people might need to be switched to a larger room, provided one exists”. said Anthony Brower, Director of Sustainable Design, Senior Associate for Gensler. (Gensler)

- According to experts, companies will try ideas such as making batches of employees and allowing about 30% of the employees to work from home by rotation. This will ensure lower occupancy in offices and more space for all. (The Economic Times)

De-densify people, similar to the current social distancing protective measures that have been recommended: Work remotely, spread out seating, limit or eliminate in person conference meetings, limit or prohibit visitors. (Bala Consulting Engineers)

- A growing number of building owners and developers, including the owners of such prominent Chicago properties as the Merchandise Mart, already have latched onto the concept of office spaces that promote employee wellness with such features as internal stairs that encourage employees to walk from floor to floor instead of taking the elevator. (Chicago Tribune)
- Since functions reserved for conference rooms, dining rooms, and other large congregation areas should presently be avoided, it may be possible to convert these spaces into temporary workspaces for the duration of the crisis. (Bala Consulting Engineers)

The capacity of the workplace may have been significantly reduced due to social distancing. Workplace standards should be loosened to allow the best place for employees to work. (Work Design Magazine)

- Office managers have been using hotdesking (flexible workspace scheduling) as a way to increase the density of their workplaces. With our new six-foot safety zones, we might see density start to be seen as a bad thing, companies might even impose a minimum standard to ensure compliance. (Propmodo)
- The 6 Feet Office is our conceptual idea to help our clients prepare for their employees to return to the office. The core premise is to ensure that 6 feet, the recommended measurement for safe social distancing, stays between people at all times. This behavior is encouraged through properly spaced desks, but also visual signals, such as a circle embedded in the carpeting around each desk to ensure people don't get too close. (Cushman & Wakefield)

“We started the 6 Feet Office Project with the ambition to get the world safer and back at work sooner. We believe that a safe and healthy workplace is at the center of what's next in business.” Jeroen Lokerse, Head of The Netherlands (Cushman & Wakefield)

- Using arrows on the floor, people are also encouraged to walk clockwise, and only clockwise, in lanes around the office. This one-way traffic is the same approach that healthcare workers take in hospitals to help avoid the spread of pathogens. (Cushman & Wakefield via Fast Company)
- Each morning, employees are also asked to grab a paper placemat for their desk. At the end of the day, the paper is thrown away, which could help mitigate some contact-based spread of COVID-19 on office surfaces. (Cushman & Wakefield via Fast Company)
- Upon returning to the office, consider assigning what were formerly shared desks to individuals for a full day or a week, and then make sure they are disinfected before a new person uses the work setting. (Gensler)

- Normal hygiene practices have discouraged the sharing of keyboards, mice and headsets. In shift settings where multiple people share one workstation, accommodations need to be made for each employee to bring their own technology gear. (Work Design Magazine)
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. (OSHA)

Mary Dickinson, an associate principal in Perkins + Will's Dallas office agreed, explaining that she expected to see a shift in how companies manage their people. "I think people are going to be more sensitive about their workforce," she said. "It might call into question how we have been doing things. We might start thinking about how much we have been pushing folks together in terms of the desk arrangements, we might have new rules of proximity." (Metropolis)

- In a future where many employees might spend 50% of their week working remotely, the interior design of offices will become increasingly more flexible, while others adopt more residential tones to create a "home away from home". (Arch Daily)
- Some organizations with shared cafeterias or lunch rooms may consider implementing "assigned" lunch periods to allow for greater space and the opportunity to clean surfaces between visits. Assigned lunch periods will offer facilities teams enough time to clean and sterilize popular gathering areas prior to the next wave of people coming in to eat. (Density Blog)

Virtual Interactions

Perhaps the trickiest aspect of the virtual workplace will be how companies engage with their clients and prospects. (Apex Benefits)

- An immediate solution is to rethink how people congregate in office spaces. Huddling in a small conference room with poor ventilation will not feel good to people anymore. As people gravitate back to the office, we will be more likely to use our conference rooms with half of the people it can accommodate. Others can join meetings virtually. (Gensler)
- "During a meeting with one of our new clients in 2019, half of the team participated from our Apex office while two of us managed the meeting in person," said Scott Long, Apex vice president of Sales. "It was a very effective use of our time and technology. The team performed well and I believe the prospect – now our client – appreciated our thoughtful approach." (Apex Benefits)

A Phased Return to the Office (Choice and Control)

Consider how employees will feel when they prepare to return to the office. Instead of mandating that everyone come back at once, consider offering the option for people to do it in waves. This may not only provide the necessary social distancing, but it would also allow employees a greater sense of control over their health. (Gensler)

Finding the right balance between the in-person and virtual meetings is key. (Apex Benefits)

- Consider establishing policies and practices for social distancing: avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible (e.g., breakrooms and cafeterias). Strategies that business could use include: (CDC)
 - Implementing flexible worksites (e.g., telework) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts)
 - Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite
 - Implementing flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone non-essential meetings or events)
- Employees may return to the office for a time while the organization determines the extent of remote work opportunities based on personal preferences and business demands. The capacity of the workplace may have been significantly reduced due to social distancing. Workplace standards should be loosened to allow the best place for employees to work. (Work Design Magazine)



The return of employees to the workplace will vary by organization but will undoubtedly occur in waves. (Work Design Magazine)

Working Remotely

Many companies will weather this COVID-19 pandemic with the realization that remote work has an important role to play in their real estate and operational strategies going forward. Some will emerge with new appreciation for the workplace and value of in-person collaboration and teamwork (with a new understanding that distributed work can be an alternative when necessary). (HOK)

- At the height of the crisis, many—workers, especially—are spending more time at home. After, this pattern will endure with meaningfulness and comfort carrying a price premium. There will be a rise in home spending—on the home and made at home as people will stay more local. Desire for cocooning, along with opportunities for those with creative strategies to enable it, will move center-stage. (Accenture)
- To minimize business disruption and protect employees, organizations must take steps to start creating an Elastic Digital Workplace to enable a highly extendable workplace environment that allows you to quickly scale and dynamically adapt to changing business needs based on global and local conditions. (Accenture)

While working remotely, productivity increased by 4.4% when employees moved from working at home on a limited basis to the location of their choice, this productivity gain could add \$1.3 billion of value to the U.S. economy each year. (Hire Right Blog)

Remote is not remote anymore, it's a new normal. (Work Design Magazine)

- It's important to remember that while someone's role or function may adapt well to working remotely, there are a host of individual considerations and circumstances that must be considered before employing new workplace practices more broadly. Namely, do the people you're asking to work from home have the environments and tools needed to effectively do this? Will their living or household arrangements allow them to be productive at home? Which allowances are you prepared to make knowing that even those who work remotely full-time often want occasional interaction with others? (HOK)
- "If virtual working is successful, if we're in fact more productive, it's going to fundamentally change the value proposition of shared workspace. Not everyone wants to be in a big social playground," says Lionel Ohayon, founder and CEO of New York design studio ICRAVE, which has overseen health care, airport, hospitality, and workplace projects around the world. (Architectural Digest)

Consider establishing alternating days or extra shifts that reduce the total number of employees in a facility at a given time, allowing them to maintain distance from one another while maintaining a full onsite work week. (OSHA)



- Employers should explore whether they can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others if state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing strategies. (OSHA)
- In the long-term, we may see employers set up offices in secondary or tertiary markets, which will aid in business continuity and service a growing number of younger people who want to own a house. We've learned that urban density helps spread disease and being cooped up in a small apartment with kids doesn't help productivity or good relationships. (Colliers)

The Future Role of Co-Working

For those whose old normal was working at a crowded co-working space, sitting elbow to elbow, and swapping turns on the ping pong table, life might never look the same again. (Propmodo)

- Alex Scandurra, CEO of co-working space and innovation hub Stone & Chalk, echoed similar remarks, “While it’s difficult to predict exactly what a post-COVID-19 workplace will look like, we anticipate that remote working and digital collaboration will play an ongoing role in our industry and beyond.” (ZDNet)
- This transition from collective to remote working, and the architectural considerations it will mean for living and office spaces, old and new, was evident long before the current coronavirus pandemic cast it into the public consciousness. That said, this global forced experiment in working-from-home may ironically be a catalyst for a healthier future relationship between us and our workplace. (Arch Daily)

“People might not want to share space as much after this like you do with traditional co-working spaces so we will likely see an uptick in demand for private offices,” says Bryan Murphy, CEO of flexible meeting room and office space provider Breather. (Density Blog)

- Flex space occupiers like Knotel, Industius, Convene, and even WeWork have been growing their private office suite offerings for some time, so they have a hedge against the decrease in demand for traditional co-working spaces. (Density Blog)

Ultimately, one thing we’ve learned from the isolation we’ve experienced as a result of the pandemic is the degree to which humans are social animals. We value human connection, and we want to join our colleagues at work again. (Gensler)

- We asked Preston Pesek, cofounder of the co-working concept Spacious, which was acquired by WeWork and then later shuttered during their IPO disaster, what he thought the short term effects of this shutdown will be. He answered, “Access to working capital is going to make the difference between success and failure for many businesses this year across the economy, regardless of whether or not they operate, or occupy, shared co-working spaces.” (Propmodo)



Sources

Post COVID-19: Office Design and Market	Colliers Intl. Knowledge Leader
Offices to Make More Room for Employees Post COVID-19	The Economic Times
A Common Sense Guide for Returning to the Post COVID-19 Workplace	Work Design Magazine
What Will Be the COVID-19 Takeaways for the Workplace?	HOK
How the COVID-19 Pandemic Will Change the Built Environment	Architectural Digest
Design Strategies for Work and Life Following COVID-19	HOK
Amid COVID-19, Lessons in Workplace Readiness from a Corporate Real Estate Director	HOK
Could COVID-19 Change the Look of the Office as We Know It?	ZDNet
Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)	Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19	OSHA
The 6 Feet Office: Helping You Adjust to a New Normal	Cushman & Wakefield
How Will the Workplace Change After COVID-19?	Apex Benefits
Our Offices Will Never Be the Same After COVID-19. Here's What They Could Look Like.	Fast Company
Post-Crisis, How Will We Return to the Office Safely?	Density Blog
What Does COVID-19 Mean for Shared Office Spaces?	Propmodo
Will Social Distancing Make Way for Workplace Distancing?	HOK
5 Ways to Achieve a Healthier Work Space Now and After COVID-19	Work Design Magazine
What Happens When We Return to the Workplace?	Gensler
Getting Your Workplace Ready for COVID-19	World Health Organization (WHO)
Reopening the World's Workplaces	CBRE
Is Coronavirus the Beginning of the End of Offices?	ArchDaily
Industry Leaders Discuss the Future of the Workplace and Wellness, Post-Pandemic	Metropolis Magazine
Column: Will the Open-Plan Office Make You Vulnerable to Coronavirus? Or Will the Virus Crisis Force Offices to Become Safer?	The Chicago Tribune
Smart Lifts, Lonely Workers, No Towers or Tourists: Architecture After Coronavirus	The Guardian
WeWork Proposes Post-Coronavirus Changes to Shared-Office Layouts	The Washington Post
COVID-19: Managing the Human and Business Impact of Coronavirus	Accenture
It's Time to Think Differently	Work Design Magazine
New Survey: COVID-19 & Employee Sentiment on Changing Workforce	Glassdoor for Employers
Planning for a Post-COVID Environment	Chief Executive
Moving Forward – Life in the Workplace After COVID-19	Hire Right Blog
Offices to Make More Room for Employees Post COVID-19	The Economic Times
Our Offices Will Never Be the Same After COVID-19. Here's What They Could Look Like	Fast Company
How Will the Workplace Change After COVID-19?	Apex Benefits
COVID-19 and the Impacts to the Workplace	Bala Consulting Engineers
Taking Care of Each Other in the Post-Pandemic Open Office	Gensler
Workplace Transformation in the Wake of COVID-19	KPMG
How Should Office Buildings Change in a Post-Pandemic World?	Gensler
(Re)entry: A framework for Working in the Next Normal	JLL (Jones Lang LaSalle IP, Inc.)