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## BUSINESS PLANNING RESOURCES & KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE

Insights on how COVID-19 has reshaped the workplace  
and how you can prepare now to welcome employees  
back to the workplace

Every part of office life is being re-examined by business owners racing to create strategies to address how and when employees should begin to return to work. As owners, there are many questions: How will the office space be structured? How do we balance culture, health, safety, and the bottom line? What is the utilization once ready for re-entry?

Illinois is moving into phase 3 of the state's phased reopening plan in June – our next normal is quickly approaching. We have developed a guide that includes key considerations as you address how and when you should begin to return to your office, so your employees get a clear signal from day-one that their company is concerned about their well-being.

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## Staggering Your Return to The Office Setting

Develop a strategy that's tailored to the needs of your specific business and workplace; coordinate with your landlord and other tenants. This will include evaluating typical movements and traffic patterns within the workplace and establishing new norms.

- ⌘ Within your office, identify who will return to the office in the near-term, beginning with critical employees and taking each wave of re-entry into consideration
- ⌘ Some employees may require flexibility or extended remote work due to school closures, commuting restrictions, and personal health challenges
- ⌘ Creating a shift schedule may be feasible depending on team structure(s), headcount, and space  
Maintaining social distance and separation will be key





## Defining and Implementing Social Distancing Protocols

We must provide six feet for every employee, not just when they are sitting at their desk, but when they are walking to the restroom or refilling their water bottle. To satisfy the maximum gathering rule, some businesses are removing extra conference room chairs and installing signage indicating the maximum number of people allowed in each conference and meeting room.

- ⌘ Adjust your office's capacity, seating plan, layout, cleaning practices and usage based on social distancing guidelines, especially for shared spaces including meeting rooms, breakout spaces, hallways, and restrooms
- ⌘ Plan for and manage congestion in common areas like elevator banks, hallways, and reception
- ⌘ Execute any furniture changes or reconfigurations and when possible, 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
- ⌘ Respiratory etiquette will be top-of-mind when sharing office resources like desks and phones; defining and communicating new protocols before returning to the office will be critical
- ⌘ Rearrange or remove seating in the reception area to manage social distancing



**“Develop a strategy that’s tailored to the needs of your specific business and workplace.”**

## Establishing New Office Behaviors

Employees may choose to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when returning to the workplace and in some instances, businesses are providing face masks part of a welcome-back kit.

- ⌘ Communicate new protocols around PPE and cleanliness and provide guidelines for gathering in common areas, as well as return-to-work timing and scenarios
- ⌘ Limit on-site meetings with clear guidelines
- ⌘ Continue to use videoconferencing and other virtual meeting technologies where applicable
- ⌘ If holding in-person meetings, limit the number of attendees to maintain social distancing



## Reconfiguring Office Layouts

Work with a design firm or furniture vendor if you need to reconfigure furniture, to determine a capacity that works for your team. They can help you repurpose underutilized spaces as well.

- ⌘ Desks, once tightly packed in open floor plans, will be spread apart once offices reopen to allow for social distancing
- ⌘ Beer taps, snack containers, and communal coffee stations will likely remain closed
- ⌘ Some walkways will become one-way
- ⌘ Smaller conference rooms will be temporarily off limits due to six feet requirements
- ⌘ In some instances, televisions will be installed in larger common areas to accommodate videoconferencing and virtual meetings
- ⌘ Limit any desk sharing in the near term

## Cleaning and Safety Protocols

Safety protocols can be adapted in various ways. Screening procedures for employees, clients, and visitors could include Infrared Fever Scan Systems (IFss) or other health assessment measures.

- ⌘ A clean desk policy, eliminating personal objects and memorabilia, will enable cleaning crews to thoroughly clean all desks and work areas
- ⌘ Require each employee to personally sanitize their phone, computer keyboard, and mouse daily
- ⌘ Remove magazines, corporate swag or pens from the reception area and keep hand sanitizer dispensers in plain view
- ⌘ Provide touchless hand sanitizers at entry points to the office requiring all employees and visitors to sanitize prior to entering the premises

**As you prepare for the return to the workplace, many decisions will need to be made, and your response to new information and changes will be critical for success. We will continue to update our *COVID-19 Resources Page* and stand ready to help in any way that we can.**

**Be prepared. Be resilient. *Bespoke.***