



CORENET GLOBAL

VIRTUAL POP UP

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Pop-Up Webinar: Key Takeaways

28 May 2020

This whole work from home experiment is in full effect. It has changed the perceptions about employee productivity at home. Do you see a shift in how your organizations are approaching WFH, and whether you see a permanent increase in the number of employees who do? How will this impact how you manage your workspaces moving forward?

- We have always had a flex or remote policy in the handbook. But it has always been up to the managers, and a high proportion of our managers were not willing to allow their people to work remotely. I think that will shift now. We will certainly see more of a regular remote work force.
- I think that there will be some shifts that are long term, and remote work will continue as a higher percentage of our work force.
- We will have a marked increase in WFH and we are reimagining the office environment going forward, to be integrated with an updated labor strategy to leverage remote work.

If you see more people potentially working from home, does that leave a lot of unused spaces? Are you thinking about how you use that space differently?

- We have activity-based workspaces, so they are relatively dense. Yet we are not occupied to completely fill the density; some extra space was always there. Now, with the six-foot distance, nobody will be in the seat next to you. That will be possible because of the added remote work. We will not see a physical change in how we build our space, but there will be changes in behavior in terms of how we use it. That is what we are thinking so far.

Do you have a date set for your initial return to the office?

- We do not have a specific date at this point. Potentially, it will be sometime this fall. We are manufacturing already in our manufacturing facilities.
- We do not have a date yet, but we believe it will be in mid-June. We are waiting for final word from the city of Chicago. Washington, D.C., has just come out with their time frame. We are waiting until we know for sure the environment is ready before we bring

people back. Our biggest concern right now is public transportation. Many of our people are taking public transportation to the office. That is our big concern when we do come back to the office. Getting to and from work safely is the big question.

- Our company has not closed during the shutdown. Most everyone is working in the office, not from home.
- As countries open back up, we are handling site by site based on the specific needs of each site.
- No date for a U.S. opening yet, but likely in July.

We are creatures of habit. Will there be an inclination among companies to go back to the way things were before?

- We are by nature a conservative company. We have been around a long time. Our reaction will be slow. We will make sure that it is the right decision to remote more people. Our goal is to get everyone back in the office at some point and figure out what makes sense from there. We do want to get back to collaborating in in-person meetings when it is safe to do so. We will do all this slowly, probably more slowly than other companies will.
- We install audio-visual equipment. In terms of what we are hearing from our clients in preparing to go back to the office, there is mixed opinion on how quickly they want to get back. Inevitably, they will, whether it be in shifts or some other method. We have been asked to create some touchless spaces in conference rooms. Technology is making it much easier to work remotely, but the human interaction is obviously very important.

Have any public transportation agencies come out with protocols for their mass transit systems?

- I am based in Chicago, but our company is global. In terms of transportation, as far as I know, the trains here are running on reduced schedules. Buses are still running from the train hubs to our building. We have been speaking with building management as to accommodations they will make in parking garages, because they cannot provide enough parking to support all the employees in this building.
- Our public transportation here in Chicago is communicating about cleaning and their new procedures, but it is the people you are riding with going to and from work that is everyone's major concern. The people you are riding with could have the virus. It is a real concern for us.

If people really do start working remotely more, how do you maintain the corporate culture?

- There will be a shift in what office space is really used for. I can see that the office might not be for your day-to-day work anymore. It will be for collaboration and project work and team building and just creating and maintaining the culture. We have built our space specifically to foster collaboration, but can we maintain that if our people are working remotely more and more?
- We are currently getting leadership buy-in on what the office is for. We are just starting to work more formally toward policies and create an action plan to guide us as leases start to roll. We will start to reimagine the spaces we have. Getting our leadership to

react and move forward is where we are. Of course, they are getting a lot of input: everyone knows a friend, has read an article, and so on.

Everyone is focused on many of the same things as they plan their return to the office: six feet of separation, more cleaning, temperature checks, and taped-off workstations. Is anything new being discussed?

- I was on a call yesterday, and I heard that a large company is using a smartphone app which will notify you if someone you have been in contact with recently has contracted COVID-19.
- I heard that too. They are testing it now in Asia.
- We have a client that is rolling out something new. If you are visiting their campus (and if you use Outlook) you will get an e-mail a day or two ahead of time stating that you need to fill out a survey answering a series of questions. If those are satisfactorily answered, you will get a QR code on your phone. Upon arriving, instead of waiting in the lobby you can use the code to print your badge and gain entry. The printed badge will be active for 12 hours, and it will get you through the security doors. After that set time, the ink fades, and you cannot use it anymore. This company is looking to automate the visitor check-in process.

How are your relationships with landlords? Are they being more proactive in setting up and communicating protocols for their buildings?

- We have a good relationship with our Chicago office property. They are sending us great information. But other properties globally are smaller, and we are not receiving that much information from them.
- We have multiple landlords. The larger ones are a little more prepared, but we are still feeding them information that we would like them to follow through with. We end up copying and pasting information from them to pass along to our smaller landlords. Interestingly, this is how we are ending up with a similar experience across all our locations. It is hard dealing with the smaller landlords, and we are basically spoon-feeding them.
- The landlords in my region have been proactive in setting up their own safety protocols.
- Our landlord is proactive in reaching out to its tenants.

Liability is a topic we are hearing about more and more.

- Landlords need to be careful from a legal standpoint. Leases provide access to the space. Where I live, some people are refusing to wear masks. They want to go ahead like nothing unusual is happening.

What seems to be the regular cadence of communications to the staff during a pandemic like this? What kinds of communications are being done?

- We have weekly pulse updates to everybody, and then a monthly town hall, specifically on COVID-19.

Are you feeding your executive leadership team CRE-related information?

- It can be helpful to communicate with your senior leadership to clarify trends and headlines. One story that got a lot of press recently had to do with a big tech company

and the idea that essentially all its employees would work from home permanently. That headline was misleading unless you took the time to dig into it and learn more.

- We have weekly if not bi-weekly calls with our leadership, and I am keeping them up to date on what we discuss on these pop-up calls and what I get from other real estate companies and architectural firms. They are taking the information seriously, but I am getting a lot of information back from them too. We vet and consolidate all that information. We have a seat at the table. We just want to make sure our leadership gets good information, not just hypothetical information. That is what we disseminate and share.
- My boss, the director of global real estate, is having meetings all day, every day because he is on the overall task force. He is asking me regularly about the consensus of what I am hearing.

Are you getting feedback from senior leadership on topics of interest?

- Their main topic now is any projects involving capital construction and confirming if we will continue to build out in the same manner. It appears that we will not make changes, but with things uncertain, no one wants to hang their hat on it.

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