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VIRTUAL POP UP

A pop in community for **corporate real estate professionals**

Pop-Up Webinar: Key Takeaways

21 April 2020

Our governor just announced plans to re-open bowling alleys, gyms, and hair salons. What is your reaction to news like this about states beginning to open up again?

- In Pennsylvania, they have opened the state liquor stores for online ordering only. That is the only movement there has been in Pennsylvania.
- Here in South Carolina, the state has announced plans to allow some retail businesses to re-open if they maintain social distancing. But many of the municipalities are saying 'forget it, we're not opening.' Personally, I think they are insane. States doing this are crazy and are going to make things worse.

Has anyone developed a return-to-work playbook? Any resources they might be willing to share?

- We are starting to formulate that now, beginning to pull that together. We are working with HR and Legal. It will involve some combination of work at home, flex hours and other strategies, probably with people coming in on different days.
- The Lear Corporation has made their [Safe Work Playbook](#) publicly available. It is very well thought out.
- I am curious as to what steps companies are taking to include medical, scientific, or technical expertise in the development of these new policies and protocols. It is one thing to say social distancing is necessary out in public, but it is another thing entirely to deploy that within an office space.
- One of the things we are thinking about is how we can help employees when they come back. Everyone is coping with this in different stages. Some may be more sensitive than others. We are trying to be aware and offer solutions to them as best we can.
- I am surprised by how many employers are going to be taking employee temperatures when they come back to the office. The technology for doing that is ready to go, and by doing so it

gives both employers and employees some assurance that you do not have somebody with a fever walking through the door.

- [Work Design Magazine](#) has a common-sense guide for returning to the office.

What are people doing about fitness facilities and gyms within their buildings? Are they closed for the foreseeable future? Any discussion about how to bring those back online?

- We have gyms in two of our locations, and we are following state guidelines for when gyms can be re-opened. Before the state lockdown went into place, we had a trainer using only one piece of equipment per person, and then the equipment would be sanitized. This is probably what we will be doing initially.
- I have mixed feelings about going back to my gym, even though I want to.

Do you survey your employees to ask them about their top concerns upon re-entering the workplace?

- I think those surveys are a top priority. They give a good read on what people are nervous about and how they feel about coming back to the office. Surveys should be the first thing people do. They will give insight on who is willing to come back and who is not, and what teams are having trouble working remotely.

In the absence of best practices, and since we have never done this before, what kind of information are you using to determine recommended occupancy percentages for that first return to the office?

- That may be an issue for governors in each of the individual states. If so, we will have a 50-state laboratory.
- There may not be enough guidance provided to users of office space. Every workplace operates in a different technical or mechanical way. It seems like a huge question mark that what is happening in public spaces – keep six feet of separation – will also work in every office environment.
- For now, I think the idea is to carry forward some of the CDC requirements about physical distancing. There are also some facility guidelines you might want to deploy, such as screens if you have front-to-front facing workers. What most folks are looking at is removing chairs from the space, closing desks for the day, to ensure that as you sit at your workspace you are maintaining that three- to six-foot radius. This should include meeting rooms if you are allowing meetings to occur. And of course, sanitizing things at night.
- I would imagine that sanitizing would have to be done after each person used a keyboard, phone, or other part of a workspace. So, hoteling may work, but you must clean more often than daily. I would probably want to put Lysol spray and wipes at every workstation so each person coming in could sanitize things. They are the one who is taking the risk.

- I hear our employees talking about the fact that this year it is the coronavirus, but something else will be coming along in the future. Installing touchless functionality where possible is probably a good practice no matter what. We have added panels on our workstations and at major circulation paths. It did not cost a great deal. We are trying to evaluate things in terms of both short-term and long-term impact since we do not know what the future looks like. A few years from now, something else will come down the pike.
- I have been thinking that every workstation will end up with a sneeze guard.
- There is an interesting study from China in which an HVAC system caused significant infection in a restaurant. So, even your HVAC system might have to be redesigned.
- I have been reading about disinfection and sanitation for cleaning ductwork. It is possible, doable, and available.
- Regardless of the role you had prior to this, we are all in the health and wellness business.
- Hospitals and so on have certain air-exchange rates which are significant. I wonder if all this will result in requirements to increase the capacity of fresh air in office space. Hospitals also use hospital-grade air filters. Will offices start to use those too?
- Be sure to clean the coils on your rooftop HVAC units. That will help you manage indoor air quality.
- I was on a webinar earlier today organized by a major service provider which focused on restarting India using examples taken from the China experience. In China, social distancing has not been used effectively; people are not sitting two meters away. They are basically using masks wherever they go.

How are you balancing some of these new space requirements and distancing requirements with your forecast for space usage? With some many people working from home, are people thinking about rationalizing their space and saving costs?

- That is kind of a long-game decision. This is a fantastic opportunity to assess whether remote working is effective in the long run. If the economy falters, it might mean people will take even less space.
- Clients are clamoring for cash right now. They are looking under every rock. One rock they are turning over is this very significant expense – real estate.

Has anyone heard about using ultraviolet light to disinfect workspaces?

- Enterprise-grade UV lights intended to disinfect workspace exist. I think they are still going through the data to determine efficacy. UV light is an irritant to humans, so you must use it when people are not in the office. This is a solution that could potentially disinfect an entire workspace.

- We looked at this technology. Our thought was that it would take too long to sanitize the whole building because you must get the light within a certain distance of the surface you want to disinfect.
- We have looked at some of the research on UV lighting. There are different systems that can be put in. Some are in the HVAC, while others are surface mounted. You can only clean about 10 square feet at one time. Depending on how much space you have, it can be an expensive endeavor.

Has anyone estimated where your operating budget might end up with the additional costs you're having for COVID-19?

- I just took a SWAG and increased my janitorial costs by 20 percent.

How much might companies invest in technology to support remote workers who do not feel comfortable coming back into the workspace?

- Our technology infrastructure is stable. For us, it is more of an ergonomics issue. We are partnering with our HR teams to provide a potential stipend to purchase sit-stand desks to better support employees in their home office.

What about bigger screens?

- We have allowed our people to take home those bigger monitors.

Has anybody had any thoughts about using electrostatic spray to disinfect workspace?

- We started using the electrostatic spraying as soon as I heard about it, even before the building shut down. We probably will continue with that for some time when we all come back to the office.

What is everyone doing about asymptomatic people? I have a colleague whose daughter had COVID-19 for a month, but with no real symptoms.

- Temperature is one factor, but since some people can have the virus but not the symptoms such as fever, sanitization and social distancing still are a must.

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