



**How Corporate Real Estate is Responding to the COVID-19 Coronavirus Challenge:
Key Findings from a Worldwide Member Survey**

20 March 2020

Executive Summary

From 17-19 March, CoreNet Global conducted a updated survey of its 11,000 members to gauge the evolving corporate real estate (CRE) response to the COVID-19 coronavirus challenge and to identify practical steps members can take to support their companies' effort to ensure employee safety and business continuity. Separate surveys were sent to end user members (122 responses) and service provider members (176 responses).

The survey was an update to an initial survey sent to the worldwide membership from 4-6 March. The findings reveal major changes in less than two weeks, with corporate real estate organizations dramatically increasing the depth and breadth of their response to the coronavirus challenge.

The biggest changes found in the latest survey of end users include:

- Ninety-seven percent of respondents are supporting a corporate mandate for expanded remote working, compared to 56 percent in the previous survey
- Some 70 percent are encouraging employees to avoid public places and public transportation, up from 20 percent
- Thirty-nine percent have reduced hours of operation at one or more facilities, up from 15 percent
- Fifty-five percent have shut down one or more facilities, compared to 24 percent previously
- Eighty-eight percent are encouraging employees to avoid direct contact in the workplace (e.g., handshakes), up from 56 percent
- Forty-five percent have established more stringent security (e.g., building entry) procedures for visitors, such as health screenings (up from 31 percent)
- Twenty percent are now providing on-site health care professionals, up from 8 percent
- Ninety percent are postponing or canceling business meetings, up from 69 percent

In a new survey question, almost half of respondents (48 percent) stated that their companies are making accommodations for parents whose children are out of school due to the coronavirus outbreak. Several respondents indicated that their companies have expanded PTO (Paid Time Off) to support employees in balancing home and career.

When asked "How has your response to the coronavirus changed in the past 10 days?" typical responses included "dramatically ramped up," "dramatically changed," "more drastic measures" and "much more serious." Specific observations included:

- We went from not being sure we'd start working remotely on 12 March to being told on 17 March that we might not return to the office until May
- Significantly ramped up, with daily, if not hourly, reporting
- Accepting the reality that this is a real issue that needs to be taken seriously
- The "shelter in place" order is very serious
- We've gone from reminders about good hygiene to mandatory work from home
- We shut all our offices at the beginning of this week
- It changes every day with more aggressive measures to stop the spread

Forty-two percent of respondents stated that employees have been specifically instructed to work remotely, and not return to the office until further notice, while 43 percent of respondents stated that their employees are being encouraged to work remotely.

In other key findings, 78 percent of end users surveyed think that expanded use of virtual meetings (e.g., vs. face-to-face meetings) will last beyond the current crisis, and 72 percent think that expanded use of remote working will last beyond the current crisis.

Among end users, expanded use of remote working and expanded use of virtual meetings vs. face-to-face meetings were the most frequent responses, each cited by 97 percent of respondents. Following were implementing travel restrictions (96 percent), increasing access to hand sanitizers (93 percent), enhancing building cleaning, janitorial and sanitation efforts (92 percent), postponing or canceling business meetings (90 percent), encouraging social distance in the workplace (75 percent) and encouraging employees to avoid public places and public transport (70 percent).

Service providers were asked to report on actions taken to support their clients' response. Some 96 percent have expanded use of virtual meetings vs. face-to-face meetings, followed by implementing travel restrictions (86 percent), encouraging employees to avoid direct contact, such as handshakes (85 percent), supporting the mandate for expanded remote working (80 percent), postponing or canceling business meetings (79 percent), increasing access to hand sanitizers (77 percent), enhancing building cleaning, janitorial and sanitation efforts (68 percent) and encouraging social distance in the workplace (66 percent).

As revealed in the survey, the biggest current challenges in addressing the COVID-19 coronavirus include, among others:

- Rapid pace of change and new government mandates
- No matter how proactive we try to be, we're still reactive because the crisis is moving faster than we are
- Determining how to change and adapt more permanently if this continues a long time
- Certain functions cannot be performed remotely
- How to handle mail and other in-office functions when everyone is working remotely
- IT issues with so many people now working remotely
- Not enough laptops in surplus to address demand
- Losing contact with remote team members
- Facilities personnel at risk of being infected
- Containing hysteria
- Fear of an unknown future

When asked "What are the biggest challenges you are experiencing in implementing remote work or expanding remote work?" survey respondents reported the following, among others:

- IT capabilities (especially Internet bandwidth) for employees working remotely
- Limits on how many people can be on our VPN at the same time
- Our IT department is struggling to keep up with the sheer volume of new remote workers

- Engineering staff need powerful desktop computers
- Many staff are accustomed to having multiple monitors
- Ergonomics issues
- Missing out on social interaction in the office
- Distractions for employees whose children are out of school due to the coronavirus
- Navigating who can and who cannot work remotely

When asked “What advice would you give to others working through this challenge?” survey respondents cited the following, among others:

- Stay calm and expect uncertainty
- Network and communicate with your peers
- Stay agile and expect change not only for the next few weeks, but likely for the remainder of the year
- Create a crisis management team and communicate often
- Even if a facility is closed, with mandatory work from home, allow most critical functions to come into the office as needed, but control how many come at any given time
- Praise all efforts made by staff to stay in touch while working remotely
- Show empathy
- Try more virtual options to stay visibly and culturally connected
- Call or video chat when possible; it is very easy to misread tone in an e-mail

About CoreNet Global

CoreNet Global is the world’s leading professional association for corporate real estate (CRE) and workplace executives, service providers, and economic developers. CoreNet Global’s more than 11,000 members, who include 70% of the top 100 U.S. companies and nearly half of the Global 2000, meet locally, globally and virtually to develop networks, share knowledge, learn and thrive professionally. For more information, please visit www.corenetglobal.org or follow @CorenetGlobal on Twitter.