



**How Corporate Real Estate is Responding to the COVID-19 Coronavirus
Challenge:**

Key Findings from a Worldwide Member Survey

March 2020

Executive Summary

From 4-6 March, CoreNet Global conducted a survey of its 11,000 members to gauge the 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 and service provider members. One hundred ninety-two end users and 151 service providers responded to the survey, a significant survey response by historical standards. The survey revealed that corporate real estate professionals are proactively and heavily engaged in supporting their companies' response.

Among end users, increasing access to hand sanitizers was the most frequent response, cited by 93 percent of respondents, followed by implementing travel restrictions (88 percent), enhancing building cleaning, janitorial and sanitation efforts (85 percent), expanding use of virtual meetings vs. face-to-face meetings (76 percent) and postponing or canceling business meetings (69 percent).

Service providers were asked to report on actions taken to support their clients' response. Some 74 percent have increased access to hand sanitizers, followed by implementing travel restrictions (72 percent), expanding use of virtual meetings vs. face-to-face meetings (65 percent), postponing or canceling business meetings (53 percent) and encouraging employees to avoid direct contact, such as handshakes (48 percent).

As revealed in the survey, the biggest challenges in crafting an effective response to the COVID-19 coronavirus challenge include, among others:

- Ensuring thorough, consistent communication to employees
- Controlling panic and general hysteria
- Determining how much to advise and guide vs. mandate and direct
- Maintaining an appropriate balance between mindful precautions and overreacting
- Coping with uncertainty as to how serious the challenge will become
- Achieving scale and speed of response
- Gaining access to adequate supplies of hand sanitizers and face masks

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

- Get out in front of it – have a plan
- Communicate clearly with employees, but do not panic or overreact
- Take concrete, visible steps to make employees feel safer
- Have a centralized, cross-functional incident management team
- Collaborate with internal business partners to align priorities
- Be ready to deploy a broad-based remote working plan
- Encourage remote working and virtual meetings
- Avoid travel insofar as possible

How is CRE Responding to the COVID-19 Coronavirus?

End User Responses

Increasing access to hand sanitizers was the most frequent response, cited by 93 percent of respondents, followed by implementing travel restrictions (88 percent), enhancing building cleaning, janitorial and sanitation efforts (85 percent), expanding use of virtual meetings vs. face-to-face meetings (76 percent) and postponing or canceling business meetings (69 percent). Other actions include:

- Encouraging employees to avoid direct contact, such as handshakes (56 percent)
- Supporting corporate mandate for expanded remote working (56 percent)
- Partnering more closely with other corporate functions (52 percent)
- Establishing more stringent security (e.g., building entry) procedures for visitors, such as health screenings (31 percent)
- Establishing more stringent security (e.g., building entry) procedures for both employees and visitors, such as health screenings (24 percent)
- Shutting down one or more facilities (24 percent)
- Supporting business leaders to minimize supply-chain disruptions (24 percent)
- Safety training with employees (22 percent)
- Encouraging employees to avoid public places and public transportation (20 percent)
- Reducing hours of operation at one or more facilities (15 percent)
- Providing expanded access to onsite health-care professionals (8 percent)

Among the 52 percent of survey respondents who stated that they have partnered more closely with other key corporate functions as a result of the current challenge, the biggest linkage is with HR (cited by 89 percent of respondents). Some 59 percent reported expanded partnering with Risk, followed by IT (43 percent), Procurement (35 percent), Finance (26 percent) and Supply Chain (26 percent). Additionally, 29 percent reported partnering more closely with yet other corporate functions, including Operations, Legal, Security, and Communications, among others.

Service Provider Responses

Service providers were asked to report on actions taken to support their clients' response. Some 74 percent have increased access to hand sanitizers, followed by implementing travel restrictions (72 percent), expanding use of virtual meetings vs. face-to-face meetings (65 percent), postponing or canceling business meetings (53 percent) and encouraging employees to avoid direct contact, such as handshakes (48 percent). Other actions include:

- Supporting corporate mandate for expanded remote working (47 percent)
- Enhancing building cleaning, janitorial and sanitation efforts (46 percent)
- Safety training with employees (26 percent)
- Encouraging employees to avoid public places and public transportation (16 percent)
- Supporting business leaders to minimize supply-chain disruptions (11 percent)

- Establishing more stringent security (e.g., building entry) procedures for visitors, such as health screenings (10 percent)
- Establishing more stringent security (e.g., building entry) procedures for both employees and visitors, such as health screenings (10 percent)
- Shutting down one or more facilities (7 percent)
- Reducing hours of operation at one or more facilities (5 percent)
- Providing expanded access to onsite health-care professionals (4 percent)

Biggest Challenges or Obstacles

Both end users and service providers were asked “What are the biggest challenges/obstacles you’ve faced with your team and/or company response to the coronavirus?” Both groups cited many of the same challenges and obstacles. Some of the most frequent responses include:

- Ensuring thorough, consistent communication to employees
- Controlling panic and general hysteria
- Determining how much to advise and guide vs. mandate and direct
- Coordinating our response across multiple business units
- Ensuring a coordinated response in a highly matrixed organization
- Maintaining an appropriate balance between mindful precautions and overreacting
- Coping with uncertainty as to how serious the challenge will become
- Achieving scale and speed of response
- Gaining access to adequate supplies of hand sanitizers and face masks
- Quickly equipping all employees with the tools needed to work remotely
- Maintaining commitments to clients and partners at a time of social distancing
- Enforcing or encouraging reduced physical contact in high-touch cultures
- Employees pushing for travel to customers and clients
- Disruption to supply chain
- Lack of institutional planning for incidents of this kind

Advice for Others

Both end users and service providers were asked “What advice would you give to others working through this challenge?” The answers from both groups were similar. Some of the most frequent responses include:

- Get out in front of it – have a plan
- Review your Business Continuity Plan now
- Gather information from a variety of sources, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local governments
- Communicate clearly with employees, but do not panic or overreact
- Take concrete, visible steps to make employees feel safer
- Have a centralized, cross-functional incident management team
- Set up a “war room” with business units and cross-functional services teams to share and evaluate new external information and coordinate a common response
- Collaborate with internal business partners to align priorities

- Be ready to deploy a broad-based remote working plan
- Encourage remote working and virtual meetings
- Increase janitorial cleaning and access to hand sanitizer
- Treat this like “the flu on steroids” – increase cleaning rounds, stress the importance of proper hygiene, and stay home when sick
- Consider not just the risk to yourself, but the risk to your friends, family and colleagues you interact with daily
- Remove community snacks and food
- Encourage employees to avoid crowded public places
- Avoid travel insofar as possible

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.