



A COVID-19 Virtual Ideation Experience

Team Topic and Number: Distributed Work, Team #14

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Definition: Distributed work model may comprise on-site teams at one or more office locations as well as remote employees who work from home, coworking/flexible offices, public spaces or on the go.

Statement: “With government-issued orders to shelter in place across the globe – and corporations shutting offices – employees have been sent home. We are now conducting a worldwide experiment in remote working.”

Goal: Develop key forecasts and recommendations for corporate real estate professionals as they address how the pandemic will impact where we work going forward. 1500 words / up to 10 slides.

Objective: With so many sources out there freely offering direction and guidance or advice to the masses (much of which was based on these questions), our small group thought it may be more beneficial to create an assessment tool to provide insight, measurement, and help to identify gaps and areas that require attention. We recommend you pose each question against each of your locations.

We believe this tool will help users honestly and objectively think through and understand their organization’s strengths and weaknesses, and places to improve. Get into the weeds and probe deeper; an intimate understanding of each location will result in the best tailored solutions for your organization.

“Awareness is the greatest agent for change.” - Eckhart Tolle

1. What will this experiment reveal?

- a. How does your company empower your employees to do their best work in and out of office?
 - i. How does the physical environment support your employees?
- b. What is the purpose of your office space?
- c. Does the office fulfill your original goals and needs? Or is it becoming less relevant with technology, Covid, etc?
 - i. If the office feels less relevant, what changes will you undertake?
- d. With the greater 'Work From Home' experiment
 - i. What has worked for your company?
 - ii. What have been the pain point moments at each location?
 - iii. Ah-ha moments for each team?
- e. We understand the shelter in place mandates have provided a captive audience, as most people can't/don't leave their house for an extended period of time.
 - i. Will productivity decrease/increase significantly when we aren't in a pandemic state/under stay at home orders?
 - ii. What are the measures or benchmarks for productivity pre and post covid?
- f. Was your emergency response plan fitting / appropriate for this pandemic?
 - i. What is your emergency response plan for the next cycle or next pandemic?
- g. Does this provide low risk opportunities to find dispersed talent and test new geographical locations via flexible office solutions?

2. How will remote working transform workplace strategy?

- a. Culture
 - i. How much does it depend on in-person collaboration?
 - ii. How has working from home changed your workplace culture? Describe the better and worse.
 - iii. How does your physical office support your culture?
 - iv. What from this WFH experience do you carry forward as part of your culture?
 - v. Who will manage the cultural experiences for those who work from home? Inclusions?
 - vi. What, if any, behavioral changes will/should be considered for your workforce?
 - vii. How will mentorship be facilitated in the next 12-18 months?
- b. Individual Locations
 - i. Does the location help you recruit and retain talent?
 - ii. Can each person's abode support work from home lifestyle?
 - iii. How will use of public transport impact return to office?
 - iv. Which teams or people need an office to perform well?
 - v. What other departments (HR/Risk/etc) should be part of this discussion?
 - vi. What was your daily seat utilization rate pre-Covid?
 1. Is utilization % relevant for the next 18 months?
- c. Customers
 - i. Is your office essential to attract and retain customers?
 - ii. Can your business support customers with outsourced services such as rentable meeting rooms or does it need branded environments?
 - iii. Can sales/support teams implant themselves in customers' locations rather than in HQ?
- d. Demonstrable ROI
 - i. Rent to revenue ratio (was vs. is).

- ii. Where do you break even?
 - iii. Can the costs of the office be billed back to the location or business unit?
 - iv. Does this location make sense?
- e. Flexibility
 - i. Does the office provide flexibility in times of change?
 - ii. How quickly can you close down this office if needed?
 - iii. What is the cost/benefit of flexibility?
 - 1. Has this changed the amount of premium we are willing to pay for flexibility?
- f. Cost of retrofitting existing spaces
 - i. How do I return to a middle ground w/out losing my short-term investment?
 - ii. What are the costs of canceling FFE existing orders?
- g. Long and short-term policies
 - i. How will you differentiate between short-term changes to account for safety and long-term shifts that become the norm?

3. Will companies that were reluctant to embrace remote work before, now see it as a viable option?

- a. What from this WFH experience do you carry forward as a permanent part of your culture?
- b. Moving forward, how do you justify your reluctance to allow employees to work from home?
- c. Do your employees want to come back?
 - i. Why/why not?
 - ii. Short and long term, how will you instill confidence in the health and safety of your workplace(s)?
- d. If your team could use all or part of their commuting time for something work related, how would it benefit the business?
- e. Is WFH an attraction to future talent?
- f. What are the costs/savings of the work from home employee?
 - i. Financial
 - ii. Technology
 - iii. Productivity

4. Will employees be eager to return to their workplaces and be in the physical space with their colleagues again?

- a. What is your company doing to support employees feeling comfortable and safe returning to office?
 - i. Office design
 - ii. Behavioral changes
 - iii. Enhanced cleaning
 - iv. Technology
 - v. Communication of new protocols
 - vi. Leadership support
 - vii. Reduction of risk
 - viii. Limitation of employees
- b. What is your communication plan around return to workplace?
 - i. What tools do you need to communicate workplace safety post-Covid?

- ii. How will you survey your employee base to gauge their willingness or reluctance to return to the workplace?
 - 1. If they do not want to come back is it because they are more productive from home or because they do not feel safe?
- c. How can you change the office design to make the spaces feel 'safer.'
 - i. Are there certain types of spaces/rooms which you will no longer congregate?
- d. Who in your team is critical to be in the office and why?
- e. Who are your "Buckets" of people for return?
 - i. No – Does not feel comfortable
 - ii. Maybe – "Work Local" less centralized, geographically distributed
 - iii. Yes – excited to return to work
 - 1. Home not conducive
 - 2. Social voids
 - 3. Need to collaborate/mentorship/professional growth/comradery

5. Will the employer see greater value in work remote vs. in office and what may prevail?

- a. What are the costs/savings of the work from home employee?
 - i. Financial
 - ii. Productivity
 - iii. Culture
- b. What is the feedback you are receiving from your team?
 - i. How will you continue to monitor and act upon feedback?
 - ii. How will the following impact your decisions? Behaviors, usage, social climate, and state of pandemic?
- c. Could work become your second safe place?
 - i. Home – 1st
 - ii. Work – 2nd w/ measures put in place from Covid
 - 1. Liability

6. Will the remote working experiment result in corporations using less traditional real estate?

- a. How will 'traditional real estate' be redefined?
 - i. What tools and/or additional questions should you consider to aid in the decision of "how-to" remix your real estate portfolio?
 - ii. Is there value to invert this review (analyze WFH as primary way to work with add-ins back to core/HQ vs reviewing from core/HQ to WFH)?
- b. How can you spread people to multiple campuses (local to employees, smaller buildings; dispersion from central campus)?
 - i. How will vertical transportation (elevators) effect campus functionality?
- c. Which leases have early termination clauses?
 - i. Is it cost effective to permanently close a location for a temporary period?
- d. How agile is your FFE?
- e. How will social distancing measures impact connectivity and productivity?
- f. How will real estate support and or change your culture?
- g. What semi-permanent solutions will you implement?
- l. How can coworking/flexible offices support during this period?

CONCLUSION. By asking the end user more thought-provoking questions of the worldwide experiment in remote working, we hoped to encourage a greater self-reflection which would ultimately result in more tailored actionable steps. In lieu of offering more subjective advice and direction in an already overly saturated area full of sources conjecturing their own opinions we asked the end user to go deeper and examine what was best for their specific company, employees and locations. With industries of all sizes, offering a wide range of products or services in a multitude of locations all facing how to respond to the question of how to work through this global pandemic, a more in-depth inventory should be taken to serve as a tool to guide future decisions in both the short and long term.