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A **COVID-19** Virtual Ideation Experience

**Team Topic and Number: Space Utilization & Metrics**

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## **Approach**

Our approach is centered around “what”, “why”, and “how”. This way we can determine the problem and constraints, if it requires immediate attention or will be prolonged, and how to solve the problem. See attached graphic for further detail.

## **How will metrics be used to make space utilization decisions post-COVID?**

Metrics matter when it comes to space utilization because understanding the importance of collecting data allows an opportunity to analyze how space is used, and where new opportunities lie within space. This helps organizations maintain an effective bottom-line for their business, values, culture, and longevity. This paper will highlight metrics that will focus on space utilization in a post-COVID era. We have broken it down to the following sections: employee experience, health and wellness metrics, short-term and long-term solutions, building assessments, including operational efficiency, and operational readiness and varying approaches, and utilization recommendations.

Employee experience – Minimize confusion over space availability, streamline process for reserving space, establish space disinfection practices between occupancy and solving for building amenities.

- Data taken from occupancy reporting and space usage can be used to focus resources to accommodate space needs.
- Metrics from space utilization can be used to develop processes of reserving space that is in demand. Regularly occupied workstations in areas that are assigned can be easily made available, however closed door non-assigned areas i.e. focus, touch down and huddle resources can be created as reservable spaces and proactive measures can be made so those spaces are ready to use as required.
- Space utilization data can be used to generate space disinfecting requests before and after occupancy.
- Data collected from space usage can be used to highlight areas that require occupied status lighting, HVAC, pantry, coffee break area and vending accommodations.
- Infrastructure – Solving for required connectivity, technology support and resource functionality.
- Space utilization data can be used to prepare occupied spaces from a network accessibility aspect.
- Metrics can be used to assure the appropriate on-site and virtual technology support is engaged and can accommodate user needs.
- 3. Real Estate optimization – Accommodating occupied spaces while also focusing on space that is not in use in order to reduce power in lighting, HVAC and amenities that are not in use.

## Pre-COVID Considerations

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a tendency to look at space utilization metrics primarily through an economic lens and not give much credence to considerations such as employee experience and health. The bottom-line was the bottom-line when considering space utilization and real estate strategy.

## Post-COVID Considerations

Now, as the workforce prepares to re-enter workspaces everywhere, companies have a prime opportunity to showcase how they will assist their employees in the re-entry process by implementing two critical initiatives. Operational efficiency, which consists of removing any enabler for the virus to spread, and operational readiness, which consists of obstacles to stop the spread of the virus. How well leadership helps and the extent to which they assist their employees, will be a determining factor in staff feeling at-ease post-COVID. Organizations that are successful in returning their employees to the office will see positive outcomes in productivity and employee wellness.

It is the recommendation of this committee that all business develop a comprehensive work re-entry plan. For the purposes of this paper, the only part of a re-entry plan that will be covered will be space utilization and the use of metrics in re-occupying space. Thought should be given to both a short-term and long-term approach and the need to reevaluate and make changes as issues and unforeseen considerations will arise in even the most well-planned re-entry plan. There is no one size fits all plan. Your plan will need to be tailored to meet the unique considerations and needs of your industry and organization. Moreover, emphasis should be placed on how fast your organization can pivot if there is a change in protocols as the situation evolves.

**Short-term considerations may include the following:**

- a. An increased focus on employee wellness programs including time and funding.
- b. Access to counseling and life coaching to deal with the new work environment.
- c. Gathering data to be used for deciding the areas and the frequencies that spaces need to be cleaned and disinfect.
- d. Gathering metrics and implementing spacing guidelines and social distancing practices.
- e. Deciding if PPE will be required and who will provide the PPE.
- f. Using metrics to determine what spaces require modification or reconfiguration (touchless plumbing fixtures, towel dispensers, door openers, voice recognition devices, conference room and cafeteria modifications, queues for building entrances and visitor spacing, etc.)
- g. Using the metrics to decide whether or not custodial contracts need to be modified or if additional custodial staff need to be hired.

**Long term consideration may include the following:**

- a. Gather new data that will show the most densely congregated areas of people and setup mitigating procedures for employee social distancing and CDC best practices.
- b. Using metrics, determine what health and disinfecting procedures will continue.
- c. Using metrics, determine if there will be a need to invest in new technology and infrastructure including sensors and databases that will automate these new workflows (cleaning, disinfecting, ordering of supplies, PPE, space planning, occupancy monitoring, capital project planning, RFID badge tracking, Distributed Antenna Systems DAS, etc.).
- d. Using metrics, determine what building system(s) you or the landlord will need to update modify, replace or reprogram. Some systems may include HVAC air changes, filters (HEPA/HEGA) increased testing for sick building syndrome and preventive work orders, installing high touch surfaces that are antimicrobial, desks, chairs, conference rooms, common spaces, cafeterias, etc.

- e. Using the newly gathered data after employees return, make decisions regarding the space utilization to include: reconfiguration/modernization projects, strategic plans for the entire life cycle of the space(s)/facilities.

### **Recommendations**

Utilization is a way of understanding movement throughout the space. This in turn will enhance the employee experience, allow data driven decisions utilizing technological resources, optimize real estate, and streamlining new best practices and leading industry standards. Methods of collecting this data can be sensors, RFID codes, increases facility coordinators, signing in sheets, shifting hours for employees/teams, thermal sensors, biometrics, occupancy sensors, and furniture reconfiguration.

In summary, we recommend organizations create a utilization metric measurement plan that will act as the guiding document for all employees/occupants returning to these spaces. The plan should include both a short-term and long-term approach as well as a regular review intervals. Plans should be flexible enough that they can incorporate changes and revisions as needed. Any re-entry plan will include new guidance and policies and should be reviewed before occupants return to the workspace so they will have a clear understanding of the new expectations. The metrics and data regarding space utilization will help organizations make data driven decisions for both the short and long-term for their organizations. A well prepared and documented plan will help ensure that re-entry into spaces will be as smooth and orderly as possible and determine the best plan of action for organizations.