



A COVID-19 Virtual Ideation Experience

Workplace Wellbeing

Chapter Name: _____

Team Members:

Please input your submission in the box below. The word limit is 1500 words.

Employee Psychological Wellbeing

With COVID-19 exposing many people around the world to loss, change and tremendous uncertainty, much of our human characteristics and vulnerabilities which were previously hidden or isolated from the working environment have since been exposed.

Our assumptions are such that going forward there will be a perceived level of expectation that the physical safety of employee will be assured and as much as possible and businesses will adequately address this with new / improved operational measures some of which are outlined above.

However, we expect that workplaces will need to go beyond simply ensuring physical safety and really consider new working rhythms and programs to address our intrinsic emotional state of wellbeing and these predictions are outlined below

Short term changes: support now for those returning to work TOMORROW

The rapid escalation of COVID-19 has highlighted more than ever the need for strong change management skills in the workplace. As employees return to the workplace, this is especially the case.

It will be essential to equip leaders with tools to support a staggered returning workforce, both across physical locations and varied work hours. In addition to addressing the needs of those employees returning to the physical workplace, ensuring employees working virtually are supported too, with effort to develop operations to maximise connection and performance to support wellbeing.

Addressing the impact on personal lives is also critical. As well as haphazard return to work strategies, employees are managing inconsistent routines within a broader family context (such as varied schooling hours and managing the care of ageing parents). Work is encroaching on personal space, so there is a need to manage people's privacy with an open window in to the home, as well as avoiding 24/7 availability expectations with fewer boundaries between home and work.

Long term changes: actions NEXT MONTH that will support workplaces NEXT YEAR and beyond

It has increasingly become apparent that the notion of work being somewhere you go, every weekday from 9am to 5pm needs to change. Workplaces should be looking to empower employees to have some choice on what their working week looks like. This means shifting the focus to output and results, not the when/how it is completed. Shifts may include:

- Move away from Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm
- Stagger starting time to support reduce public transport / lift burden

Our recommendation: How to ensure employee wellbeing

After just 100 days of isolation there are already significant published resources available for employers to reference with regards to post pandemic workplace planning/ strategy. It is hoped that the following section will offer further suggestions that may help your organisation become a leader in ensuring authentic support for your greatest asset – your people and their wellbeing.

Short term: What can we do NOW to ensure employee wellbeing?

We strongly recommend a 'return to work' strategy that focused on an 'empathetic workplace.' This means ensuring emotional flexibility, both physical and psychological, and keeping the innovations and service pivots that were successful during the shift to a remote working environment.

For many workplaces, this will mean continuing to foster a workplace culture that promotes virtual collaboration, while maintaining and building genuine connections.

To reduce infection risk for employees returning to the workplace, the introduction of a booking system to manage employee numbers and arrival/departure times should be considered to manage social distancing requirements.

Long term: What can we do TOMORROW to ensure employee wellbeing?

Firstly, it will be essential for People and Culture/HR teams and Property/Real Estate teams to work together to create long lasting wellbeing programs. This combined approach will support employees, but also ensure the safety of customers and community.

As it is expected that many employees will continue to work remotely at least part of the time, it will be vital to heighten the workplace experience when they are onsite (quality over quantity) and ensure a strong company community continues to thrive regardless of where work is being done. In parallel, we recommend employers place greater consideration in the design of spaces and the technology used to enhance the experience for those who are not present when teams come together – stepping towards equalising the experience for the physical and virtual supporting an individual's choice to be present or attend virtually

Furthermore, with employees working remotely, it can be harder to monitor employee wellbeing. People managers should be set performance pillars (KPIs) that include metrics around employee wellbeing (physical and psychological). Investing in employee wellness training for people managers and other networks to provide wellbeing support for their distributed teams is also recommended, as is appointing "Wellbeing Champions", "Mental Health Ambassadors" etc. This focus on psychological wellness can help to attract and retain talent.

Physical wellbeing can't be ignored either. As employees return to the workplace, the introduction of thermal camera to screen everyone entering buildings should be considered as a safety precaution. Shifting to decentralised hubs rather than getting together in HQ both reduces physical workplace congestion, as well as enhancing work life balance and limit travel. Finally, with staff potentially isolated at home, encouraging regular exercise and movement for physical health, emotional health and stress reduction is recommended.