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A **COVID-19** Virtual Ideation Experience

Team Topic and Number: Team 23 Workplace Wellbeing

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Input your submission below. Please remember that you have 1500 words to share your insights.

TEAM 23: 4 CHALLENGES OF WORKPLACE WELLBEING POST COVID 19

**The Emotional Workplace
The Physical Workplace
The Technological Workplace
The Purposeful Workplace**

Please see Slide 1

REINFORCEMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION'S COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS

While in the details below we focus on 4 Challenges that we face in getting back to work, the 5th Challenge is most important. It is simply the organization's commitment to providing the necessary resources and the structure for whatever needs to be done.

In addition to doubling down on well-being initiatives addressing mental health, mindfulness, health screenings, etc., it is vital to also communicate to employees how the building supports wellness. Adopting certification standards such as WELL or Fitwel, reinforces an organization's commitment to addressing issues that impact health. Please see Slides 2 and 3.

Wellbeing that focuses on Health and Safety needs to be a central focus in any return to work strategy. The New Normal is not in any of the details, it is in the organization's focus on the health and wellness of the employee above all else.

Of equal importance, to get to a New Normal that reasonably reflects the reality we face, the organization will have to focus not just on the "soft landing" scenario of the virus's potential decline but on the more probable scenarios of its potential return -- and in waves.

THE EMOTIONAL WORKSPACE

CULTURE

Culture is unique to each workplace, but with social distancing and other restrictions, how does the environment remain positive, interactive, and social? Coming back to a workplace that will be so different, will cause some people to feel anxiety and others will roll with the changes.

Workplaces will be different – more separation in desk arrangement, maybe no tables in the breakroom, and fewer people in the office, as working from home will continue in large part. How does collaboration within teams stay strong? If half the team is in office and half at home, what adjustments needs to be made to ensure the team feels whole and heard?

For heavy collaborative offices – could providing a dedicated conference room or space for each group help people feel safe? These spaces would also need technology for connecting with those working from home. What unwritten rules will be affected by this shift? Leadership will need to lead by example to accommodate any shifts in the workplace and recognize:

- The importance of transparency from leadership / over communication with staff members.
- Also the importance of being sensitive in a time like this.
- Use technology to stay connected on a regular basis and build each other up. Importance of regular check-in with team members.

THE PHYSICAL WORKPLACE

THE ORGANIZATION MUST DEMONSTRATE TO THE EMPLOYEE THAT BEST EFFORTS ARE BEING EXERTED TO KEEP THEM SAFE UNDER REASONABLE WORST CASE VIRAL INFECTIOUS SCENARIOS

DAY 1 -- BACK TO WORK RIGHT NOW -- IT'S ALL ABOUT FRESH AIR

Air Quality as defined as Absence of Pathogens is currently starting to be addressed. The guidance provided from ASHRAE in the link is useful. The link is:

<https://www.ashrae.org/news/ashraejournal/guidance-for-building-operations-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

Please see Slides 7 and 8

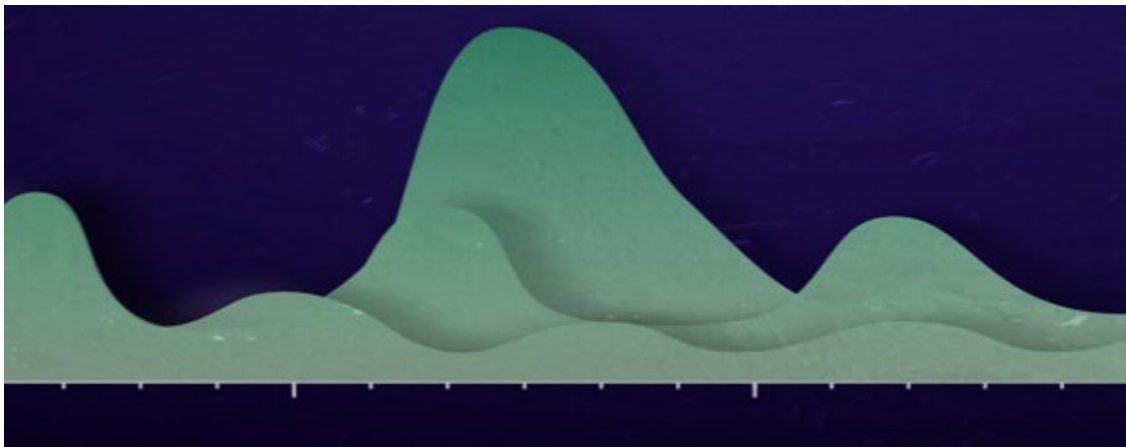
RENOVATIONS AND NEW CONSTRUCTION PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HARDENING THE SITE

We are collectively fooling ourselves if we believe that we are over the hump in new infections and it will tail off and leave. Please see the following published by the University of Minnesota May 1:

<https://twin-cities.umn.edu/news-events/new-report-cidrap-university-minnesota-outlines-covid-19-realities-advises-next-steps>

Please see Slides 9 and 10

The study suggests that the scenario of a bigger peak in the fall is now more likely than the others since that one is based on epidemics. The study does not suggest that there is any likelihood of the infectiousness of the virus simply tapering off without a significant recurrence of some strength.



... Slide 6

IMPACT ON THE NEW NORMAL

Going back to the future of wide open offices in company facilities and co-working spaces may only work for a short time:

- The virus could still abound in many people, possibly after a second peak, but at a low level of causing illness in the individual a significant level of infectiousness. That is the true objective of the virus -- not to kill its hosts, and not to make them too sick to circulate that it inhibits transmission. It was happy to do that in its animal host for a long period of time while the animal host co-developed enough resistance to keep it down. And then it fortuitously jumped to a human -- that had none of the resistance that the virus was used to.
- The virus will become seasonal in waves like the flu mutating slightly each season and therefore requiring seasonal vaccinations. Some seasons will be much worse than others.
- Many variations on the above, with the potential mutations possibly with deadly consequences.

As time progresses:

- Cleaning will continue
- 6 feet spacing may evolve to something else -- like closer spacing with Plexiglas barriers

It is likely that:

- **Today's open Office will not return** -- and we will absorb that change and adapt easily
- **Today's open Co-working Spaces will not return** --extensive rework of the spaces will likely be required so we don't rub shoulders with strangers and we don't breathe the same air

We MUST plan for **Reasonable Worst Case Scenarios** as may be determined by the best scientific studies available.

- **All new construction and renovation projects being planned needs to include Pathogen-Free considerations.**
- **Planning should begin immediately to bring all employee spaces up to Pathogen-Free Standards.**

DAY 2- STAYING AT WORK IN THE FUTURE -- HARDENING THE SITE

Recognize that the office workplace must be designed, engineered, built and commissioned as a Critical System which if it doesn't work, can seriously damage the health of the occupants. Examine what changes may be required in the Design, Specification, Construction and Commissioning process to meet that obligation

CONSIDERATIONS

Organizations are using virtual medical services and also spending capital on developing on site medical clinics for employee use. We are seeing this emerging as a new amenity type for workplace clients.

Food service components of workspaces are being re-thought of. For instance the way food is served should always be from behind the counter, no open salad bars or shared food containers.

Social distancing within the office environment may mean that workspace furniture needs to be flexible like mobile desk solutions so employers can have adjustability in their floor plans that would support current and future needs.

It's important to engage employees through signage, plaques, and/or intranet announcements, advertising wellness standards implemented throughout the building.

Existing shared spaces can be temporarily re-purposed. Example: turning an enclosed conference room into a private office for high risk workers who normally would sit in a workstation solution.

- Conference rooms should be retro-fitted to connect with employees working from Home so they don't feel disconnected from another group.
- Create outlets that allow outlets for people to communicate and express themselves freely. Let people know they are being heard.
- Support different methods of working. Example: working during different times during the day and in multiple locations.

With an attention to wellbeing, collaboration in an office needs to be limited to just a few in unenclosed spaces – and virtual for larger gatherings. Benching does not go away, but a variety of work points, including a heads down traditional seat, and glass toppers/dividers that contain not only sounds but also contagions are key considerations.

Company cultures unable to adjust to a distributed team that manages by performance and not proximity will have the biggest challenge striving in the new norm.

THE TECHNOLOGICAL WORKPLACE:

We are about to enter into an area of great change. Tech infrastructure that enables virtual everything, include smart buildings and touchless offices, optimally will be the norm, and not the exception. In this section we will hyper focus on a key technology designed to help people get back to work in a structured manner -- right now.

A **Reservation System** would be a great help –one which allows employees to choose their own seating arrangements -- within rules -- and with of course the 6 foot distancing built in.

This example was provided by Agilquest. The grey workstations have been blocked out by management leaving the green workspaces available with at least a 6 foot spacing...



NOTE: The information displayed in this table is shown in the Time Zone of the selected Location.

● Available ▲ Unavailable ▲ Requested ▲ Reserved

... Slide 4

THE PURPOSEFUL WORKPLACE

WHY IS THE OFFICE WORKPLACE NEEDED?

That is the elephant in the room.

The success of Work at Home in the midst of a catastrophic crisis raises lots of questions.

STRUCTURED EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

A **Collaborative Engagement Process** to address why and how to return to the office with employees will both improve employee wellbeing and lead to better results. The charrette planning process attached is an example of one approach.

CDI Collaborative Design



Source: Bill Lennerz, Co-founder of the NCI Charrette System and Principal of CDI Collaborative Design + Innovation.

The slide shows a Collaborative Employee Engagement process with Rapid Feedback Loops.

...Slide 5