

Workplace Well - being Team Number: 24



A COVID-19 Virtual Ideation Experience



We need each other – but lately, we can't be physically together. People, businesses most important asset, are challenged with maintaining **productivity, innovation, mental well-being, social connection** and are needing to determine what will be their most optimum way to work now and in the near future.

When people come together in a workplace environment, sustained through **safety and happiness**, they can really tap into their most creative and innovative ideas.

Our environments have had to adapt and will need to continue to adapt, as a new normal is presenting itself, and it will look different for everyone acknowledging what will be the best optimum solution for their situation.



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Recommendations:

Short term

- **Acknowledge feelings** - it may be easier to continue to work from home (WFH) than return to the office -discuss options with supervisor.
- **Stay connected** to teams through calls, emails and meetings.
- Include **physical activity** to mitigate long sitting and screen staring for mental well-being.

Mid Term

- **“Visualize” commuting** and determine steps that need to change to better accommodate an ideal journey.

Long Term

- **Take stock of what works / doesn't work** realizing that it could be a combination of being in the workplace and WFH to **optimize safety and happiness.**



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What new protocols around **physical well-being** that enhance health and safety can be introduced into the workplace?

The National Sleep Foundation has found that **“The blue light that’s emitted from screens can delay the release of sleep-inducing melatonin and increase alertness.”** With most work and personal life being lived “on screen” into the hours before bedtime many are having trouble sleeping and wake up feeling tired leading to a loss of productivity.

What is inactivity doing to human well-being? According to the WELL Building Standard **“Relatively small amounts of activity can lead to significant benefits: just 2.5 hours of moderate-intensity physical activity per week can reduce overall mortality risk by nearly 20%.”**



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Recommendations:

Short term

- Ensure all computer **screens**, including laptops, are **adjustable** in terms of height and distance from the user.
- **Alternate between sit/stand** every 30-45 min.
- Host **walking meetings** / conference calls.
- Encourage use of “**night mode**” on screens in the hours before sleeping.

Mid Term

- **Remove all chairs** from meeting rooms; providing additional distance and shorter, standing meetings.
- **Encourage use of stairs** (in one direction to avoid close encounters).

Long Term

- Encourage employees to **bike, walk and run** to work.
- Install and promote use of **height adjustable tables** at workstations.



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While some may see a **return to the office as a welcomed respite** from distracting or isolating home situations, a great many will see the social distancing, masks, and other **return-to-office protocols as cumbersome and counter-productive.**

How do companies **maintain an engaged workforce** while teams are largely still working from home with a **few colleagues phasing back into the office?**

What does this distributed workforce do to maintain the culture of the company?



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Recommendations: Short term & Ongoing

Create opportunities to build community:

- **Engage** teams in fun or bonding activities, including games, happy hours, and group learning.
- Direct projects to be collaborative between team members to **avoid individuals being siloed**.
- Provide **incentives** and explicit support for participation in **employee social groups and events**.

Reinforce culture-based expectations:

- **Communications** with leadership must remain consistent and demonstrate the defined culture.
- Practice **empathy** and provide practical tips and training for emotional intelligence at all levels of the organization.

Provide greater choice to staff:

- Remove expectation of normal working hours & respect **boundaries**.
- Consider new protocols which address inefficient meetings with best practice or creating 'off-meeting' hours to allow **social repite**.
- Keep **equity** in mind to be inclusive of those in physical and virtual workplaces at the same time.



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As a culture we tend to appreciate and encourage physical over mental health. We provide healthy food at the office, subsidized gym memberships, provide free flu shots, etc., but we don't put the same emphasis on mental health as part of our holistic approach to well-being in the workplace.

How can businesses take care of an employee's **mental well-being and physical safety** when returning to work? Leaders at all levels will need to empathize, engage and lead by example. **To know that someone cares about you holistically, more than productivity, is important.**

Preparing the workplace for reentry will be critical for employees' confidence. The messaging and interventions should remain positive, be visible and understandable, with the goal of a confident reentry into the workplace.



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Recommendations:

- **Engage employees** on a personal level, and become more proactive in the message delivered.
- **Communicate early and often** not only with facts and plans for reentering the workplace, but also with **check ins and social calls**.
- **Inform** staff about availability of PPE, cleaning protocols, furniture arrangements, signage, etc., to **alleviate fears** surrounding returning to the workplace.
- Working from home **policies**, flexible hours, and even a leave of absence will need to be considered more than ever before.



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Covid has the potential to **inhibit creativity, productivity, and innovation** as an inherent distraction and trigger for fear and anxiety. During this unprecedented era of uncertainty, **creativity is paramount to survive and thrive**. Individuals and businesses must focus on **strengths, differentiators, and reinvention** to remain relevant. Rebuilding and recovering post-covid will require ongoing **adaptation** – a new normal will evolve and there is a huge opportunity to shape what that looks like.

How can an employer or workplace enable creativity? Office design provides a variety of spaces to support different user types, teams, tasks, and interactions. Currently our homes are not only supporting work, but moonlighting as a restaurant, school, gym, and petting zoo, causing a myriad of distractions. The ability to be present and engaged in the same way that is supported in an office environment is nearly impossible, and even for those accustomed to working from home, the shift is extreme.

What is the opportunity for workplace professionals? **This is our chance to reimagine the workplace** we have spent most of our careers creating, by solving a new set of problems that allow for **flexibility, adaptability, and hackability**.



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Recommendations:

Short term

- Leadership: **Reiterate importance of creativity**, communicate strategy to empower employees to take ownership in working toward shared goals
- **Provide choice** based on employee needs to ensure they are comfortable and can be most productive in their work environment
 - **Establish best practices**, selection of tools and equipment, a sense of accomplishment, and work/life balance for both in office and home work
 - **Eliminate blockages** and obstacles to innovation by providing an environment that supports stress management, minimizes chaos, and allows focus
 - **Support and promote creative outlets** – external sources, hobbies, networking, nature, crafts, etc.

Long Term

- Take the **lessons learned** from the fast and forced changes dictated by Covid to **create a new and improved normal** that is better for the planet, our businesses, work/life balance

