



HACKATHON



CONNECT



PRESENT



A COVID-19 Virtual Ideation Experience

Team Topic and Number: Distributed Work

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

How can CRE play a more enabling role in the distributed workplace?

Our hack for the CoreNet Global Hackathon

Intro

The COVID-19 outbreak created an unprecedented, global effort to keep workforces safe and largely working at home. With the ensuing changes, corporate real estate (CRE) is seeking the most effective way for distributing the workforce going forward.

Our team of CRE leaders recognized that nobody knows the exact way to go. To offer holding points during the uncertainty, we therefore pooled together our perspectives and created a collection of priorities, questions and sources of data that can be applied for specific situations.

The ultimate goal here is to support CRE in:

1. Managing the right balance of assigned, unassigned and remote work, and
2. Executing that balance more effectively with the CRE toolkit.

We built this guidance around six topics that we believe merit further attention. Each topic is approached with a global perspective, but centered around our home region, New York.

1. Getting to and from the workplace

Transportation will continue to play the most important role in employees' commute, the question is how and to what extent.

Selected priorities:

- Health, safety and wellbeing
- Equity (ensuring a just level of inclusion)
- Time (efficiency)
- Compatibility (with private and professional schedules)
- Coordination (with internal/external entities)
- Compliance (with legislation) and liability

Questions to ask:

- How safe and efficient is the building to enter?
- How can arrivals / departures be effectively provided, measured and planned for (transport, lobby, elevator, etc. vs. priorities)?
- How do we provide / select the most effective mode of transport? (Public, company driven e.g. drive to shuttle, private).
- How do we inform and manage the above?

Sources / uses of data (what, where, how):

- Map applications from e.g. Apple, Google, Microsoft
- Public ridership information - updated schedules and guidelines to help riders plan
- Landlord guidelines on: staggered entry, elevator use, equity (who can move through faster/with more flexibility), density, etc.
- CDC or OSHA guidelines down to specifics e.g. wait times in elevators
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus www.osha.gov/coronavirus
- New York Health page
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-businesses-and-facilities.page>

2. Helping employees form effective relationships

A key role of CRE is to create an environment where employees can forge strong relationships. How do we enable this in the distributed workspace?

Selected priorities:

- Culture, inclusion and equity
 - Creating a strong culture with inclusion
 - Creating equality for all employees in the distributed work model
- Effective communication/collaboration (team/tools/places)
 - Promote team building interactions
 - Align real estate mix to 'new normal' (effective collaboration space)
 - Provide variety of space types for in-person + virtual interactions
 - Offer flexibility, e.g. smaller suburban spaces
 - Support planned/unplanned, structured/unstructured interactions
- Mentoring and growth
 - Integrated and balanced with the points above

Questions to ask:

- How do your employees work?
- What are the best space types that support the interactions between your employees / partners / clients?
- Where do you spot efficiencies (e.g. figuring who works when)?
- How will you make sure meetings are meaningful for all employees regardless of where they work from?
- How do you expose employees to mentoring interactions (e.g. spontaneous collisions, listening in, onboarding newbies)?
- How are other departments looped into managing this (e.g. HR, IT)?
- How do factors such as gender, age, hierarchy, income, physical attributes, ethnicity play in?
- What are your competitors and clients doing?

Sources / uses of data (what, where, how):

- Employee surveys
- Space utilization data
- Interaction data (email, instant messaging, for social network analysis)
- Office login data
- <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/about/company/coronavirus-human-experience>

- <https://zapier.com/learn/remote-work/how-build-culture-remote-team/>
- <https://www.fastcompany.com/90488708/how-to-activate-mentoring-and-career-development-when-you-work-from-home>
- Voluntary program at leadership level - Track team leaders touch points with their team members/internal clients (in case of CRE departments). Did anyone fall through the cracks?

3. Understanding the impact of the “group effect” and “fear factor” on user preferences

COVID-19 created an unprecedented moment of global coordination where “everyone is home” more or less at the same time. How will attitudes to remote working evolve as we improve control of the virus and return parts of the workforce to the office?

Selected priorities:

- Understanding culture, inclusion, equity
 - Creating/maintaining culture while working remotely
 - Empowering remote mentoring interactions
- Understanding productivity
 - Maintaining training capabilities
 - Maintaining/increasing productivity
 - Letting employees have choice and ownership in how they work, choice = productivity
- Understanding privacy issues that amplify fear factor
- Understanding trust, impacted by the believability of data being received and shared

Questions to ask:

- How do these factors evolve with time?
 - As people get more used to them
 - As the office/remote balance changes
 - As control of the virus progresses
- How does technological development play in?
- How does lack of access impact progress and perceptions?
- How does training play in?
- Has the “taboo” of working from home gone away?
- How do companies promote relationship building internally while working remotely?
- Does working from home over the long-haul change productivity?
- Is there a tipping point? What does that look like? When does it happen?
- How do you ask the right questions?
- How do you perform statistically unbiased measurement and analysis of the above?

Sources / uses of data (what, where, how):

- News analytics
- External benchmarking, from same and other industries
- Staff surveying
- Educational communications about new protocols
 - And their effect on people’s perceptions (employee surveys, badging data)

4. Protecting equity

Remote working following COVID-19 has changed the balance of equality in the workplace. On one hand we're seeing greater participation from people that stayed silent in the physical workspace. On the other hand, we're seeing that people's home working can vary with personal circumstances.

Selected priorities:

- Health, safety, wellbeing
- Inclusion
 - In relation to personal circumstances
- Trust and perception
 - Equal access to company activities, during meetings
 - Creating parallels between the WFH and work in the office experience
 - Making people feel seen, heard and valued
- Economics
- Privacy

Questions to ask:

- How will workspaces be "equalized" between office and remote?
- How do the following play in, position, hierarchy, stage in career, age, health, ethnicity, handicaps, education, gender, family circumstances (parenting, caretaking), other?
- How can cost management protect and not compromise equity?
- How does the priority of topics get balanced, e.g. COVID-19 response vs. other critical topics?
- How do we enable an equal level personal space / health / family breaks?
- How do we implement the above in day to day operations, such as staggered arrivals, access to amenities?

Sources / uses of data (what, where, how):

- Company costs and personal costs for supporting work equipment i.e. computers, monitors, headsets, etc.
- Feedback from employees regarding what's working, what's not working
- People working from home vs. in office; what percentage of male vs. female; senior execs vs. junior staff; department 1 vs. department 2, etc. Is there a trend of preference for particular group?
- Factors limiting work from home that are not job function requirements

6. Understanding the "urban-suburban pendulum"

Following 9/11 many companies moved their workers out of the city and into the suburbs. More recently, suburban offices were moved back into the city. Is there a pendulum effect, and how do we manage it following COVID-19?

Priorities:

- Resiliency
- Flexibility

- Safety, health, wellbeing and changing preferences
- Timely solutions for employees who cannot effectively work from home
- Alleviated risk factors traveling into urban centers
- Right real estate asset mix
 - Providing an effective level of options in work locations, possible cost savings of this turns into a long-term solution
 - Partnering with smaller sub-urban space providers
 - Proactively provide solutions for a possible migration to the suburbs, short or long term

Questions to ask:

- How temporary is this, vs. part of a longer progression?
- Does duty of care standards from space providers reflect firm brand?
- How long will it take to move back into city offices and use them in a “normal” fashion vs. in suburbia?
- Where is our targeted talent located in relation to available offices?
- Will this still provide the collaboration and functionality of the urban office? How will we accommodate teams that are split?
- Will employees have a choice in which space they work in?
- What is the pattern of talent moving between suburb and city? How do we measure current trends and predict future ones?

Sources / uses of data (what, where, how):

- Employee feedback / surveying on location preferences
- Employee home location mapping
- Availability and cost of space
- Utilization Data
- Municipal census data