

# All Things Considered

A guide for returning to the office



By OfficeLuv  
May 2020

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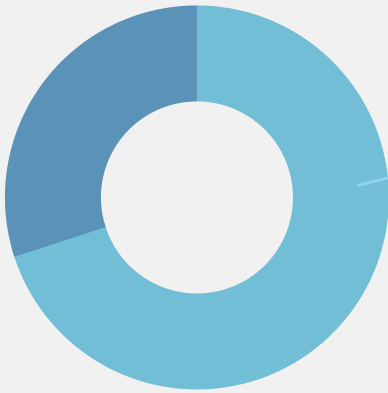
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# INTRODUCTION

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If you're reading this, you're already one step ahead of the game.



**70%**

of offices are still considering what their reentry plans look like.

This will be an ongoing process as conditions continue to change. Whether reopening your office is in a matter of days, weeks, or still unknown, you're doing the right thing by proactively learning about preparation and safety measures you can take.

# TOP 10 PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES COMPANIES ARE CONSIDERING

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- 1 Hand-sanitization stands will be located throughout the office.
- 2 Employees will be encouraged to wipe down shared desks/phone booths before & after each use.
- 3 High-touch areas of the office will be sanitized throughout the day.
- 4 We will enforce 6-foot distances in the conference rooms, elevators, kitchens, or other highly trafficked areas.
- 5 Desks will be rearranged to be farther apart.
- 6 Only single-serve and pre-packaged snacks, drinks, coffee, lunches, etc. will be offered.
- 7 Temperature checks will be required upon entry into the office or building.
- 8 Communal lounge areas will temporarily be closed.
- 9 Everyone must wear a mask and/or gloves.
- 10 Clear shields will be installed between desks.

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## This is uncharted territory for all of us.

Businesses and decision makers are looking to each other for guidance to ensure a safe reentry into the workplace. This framework can help you consider all options and make informed decisions on what's right for your organization.

We've conducted **interviews and surveys** with organizations large and small across the country, and **researched** how other countries have approached reopening. This is a compilation of those findings.



Please remember to always follow the guidelines from the CDC, Federal, and State governments when considering your office return plan.

There is certainly a lot to consider when developing this plan, and it is overwhelming to say the least. The good news is we have time on our side and can proactively prepare.

## Hang in there - we will all continue to get through this together.

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Disclaimer: OfficeLuv has compiled data and research to make an effort to provide perspective on considerations to reopen your office. We are not authorized to influence your business's preparations and advise that you consult with an internal or independent specialist.

# TIMING AND STAGES

**Timing** is one of the first items to determine when preparing for an office reopening and is one of the most precarious angles to consider.

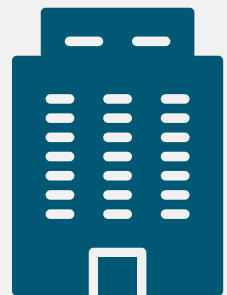
**Staging out reentry** is a popular strategy. What staging looks like will depend on the organization, size, and make up of its departments.

51%

of companies are waiting on state and federal government guidelines before determining a return timeline

< 3%

of offices anticipate everyone returning on the same day.



# STAGING APPROACHES TO CONSIDER

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- 1 Create alternating employee groups.**

One option is alternating groups - group A would return to the office for a designated period of time while group B continues working from home. After a deep clean of the office, the groups would switch. Or consider only allowing a small percentage of each team to return at a time.
- 2 Determine each employee's level of comfort.**

For example, employees with cars may be ready to return while those relying on public transportation would prefer to continue working from home.
- 3 Revisit your Work From Home policy.**

Employees who are uncomfortable returning, or those who are at higher risk, may need an extended work from home timeline.
- 4 Evaluate reopening by market.**

With different parts of the country being impacted more severely than others, it might make sense to open smaller satellite offices before your New York City headquarters.
- 5 It will take time, and that's okay.**

Over 60% of those surveyed plan to stage out their return to the office. A slow and steady approach is the way to go.

# NEW PROCEDURES

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It's inevitable that new procedures will need to be implemented to ensure the safety of your employees and workplace. The question is: *which ones are right for your company?*

Some of these new procedures will require new products to be procured and offered. For example, **78% of offices** plan to have hand sanitizing stations within their space and **49%** will be solely offering individually packaged products like snacks, utensils, coffee, and lunch.

## WHAT TO CONSIDER

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### Traffic flow of entrances and exits

- This may be determined by your **building's management**.
- **Tape out distance markers** at entry/exit ways to reduce crowding.
- **High-touch points**, like fob-readers or fingerprint scanners for entry, should be re-evaluated and sanitizer stations provided nearby.
- **Designate some doors** as entrances and some as exits to avoid contact while passing through the doorway.



# NEW PROCEDURES TO CONSIDER

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## Entrances and exits, continued

- **Installation of automatic doors for entry** would reduce touch points, as would keeping stairway & other internal doors propped open where safe to do so.
- **Elevators** will undoubtedly be hard to handle, usually allowing 2 people per car. High-rise building management may employ staggered start times by floor, or only allow certain floors to come in on certain days. For smaller buildings, encourage use of stairs when possible.

## Conducting Wellness Checks upon entry

- Following the precedent of Amazon,<sup>1</sup> McDonald's,<sup>2</sup> and practices in China,<sup>3</sup> many companies plan to implement Wellness Checks upon entry.

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## Wellness Checks consist of:



- Temperature check, contactless or through a clear barrier
- Asking the individual a simple set of questions related to their wellness and potential exposure:
  - In the past 24 hours, have you had signs of fever, fever of 100.4°F or higher, cough, shortness of breath
  - In the past 14 days have you had close contact with a diagnosed individual?



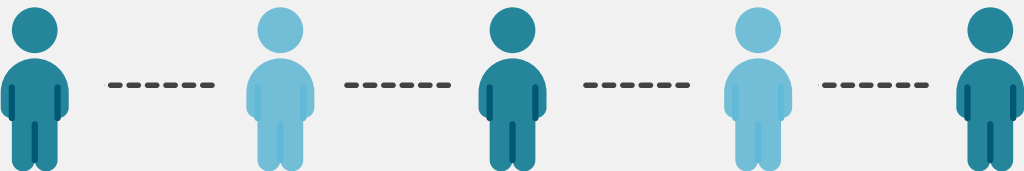
If **yes to any**, or temperature is over 100.4, individual may be asked to work from home for a designated period of time.

# DISTANCING

The 6 foot distancing requirement has been widely adopted and is perhaps one of the most disruptive measures for public spaces, businesses, offices, and even society to adapt to. From a commercial real estate perspective, open floor plans and communal breakout spaces have been trendy, and undoing that footprint will be a challenge for companies of any size, particularly co-working spaces.<sup>4</sup>

As offices begin to reopen, the distancing rules will prohibit team meetings, group lunches, and congregations. Some companies will continue to hold virtual meetings for groups larger than 10 people and will remove every other chair in conference rooms for distancing.<sup>5</sup>

Global commercial real estate firm Cushman & Wakefield has built a concept of "The 6 Feet Office," which includes implementing 6-foot distances at each desk, in kitchens and elevators, in traffic patterns around the office, and when entering and exiting meeting rooms.<sup>6</sup> They suggest the use of floor stickers and signage around the office to help enforce these rules.



# DISTANCING PROTOCOLS TO CONSIDER

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## Desk space & desk dividers

- **49% of those surveyed** plan to rearrange desks to be farther apart.
- **Install clear shields** as dividers between desks.
- To achieve distance between employees at desks, you might consider **staging reentry**, as outlined on page 7.

## Conference rooms

- **Create occupancy limits** by removing chairs or hanging signage at each entryway.
- **Leave meetings one at a time** to reduce congestion at the doorway.

## Common areas

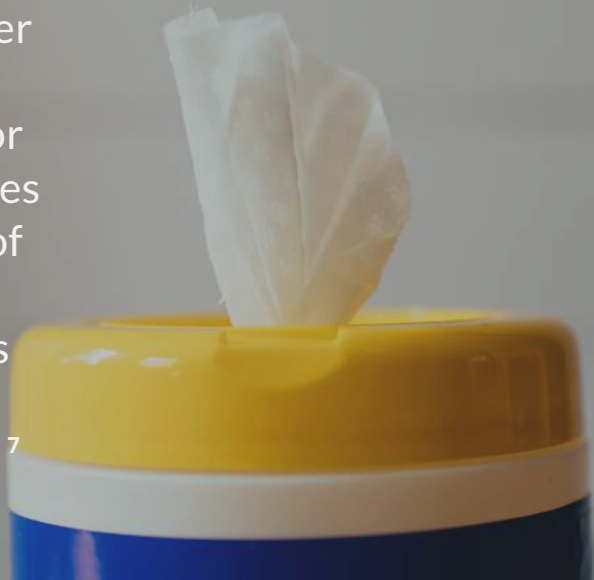
- **Use tape or floor stickers** to create distances in kitchens, snack stations, lounges, or other areas prone to large groups
- **Add more coffee, water, or snack stations** throughout the office to limit the probability of employees gathering

# PPE & SANITIZATION

A few months ago, the letters “PPE” needed an explanation. Now we’re knowledgeable that personal protective equipment is imperative in the healthcare industry and will be a choice and guideline that many outside of healthcare will adopt.

As an employer, you can choose to provide PPE and/or frequently sanitize the office, or at a minimum, empower individuals to make these personal choices.

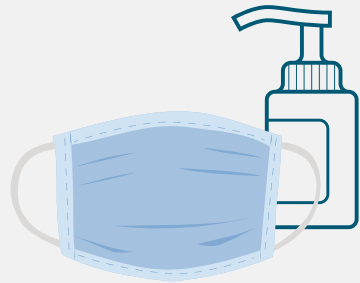
"We've realized that putting wipes and other cleaning supplies out for employees gives them a sense of confidence in the cleanliness of their own work station." <sup>7</sup>



# PROTECTIVE MEASURES TO CONSIDER

78%

of companies are planning for hand sanitizer stations throughout the office



## Responsibilities

Decide and communicate who will be responsible for:

- **High-touch areas** - including door handles, light switches, countertops, copy machine buttons, AV equipment, coffee makers, and many more <sup>8</sup>
- Employees' **personal desk space**
- **Shared areas**, like lounges, conference rooms, kitchen tables, and more

**How to communicate these cleanings** will differ based on size and space of your office - for large communal areas, consider publicly keeping a log to record last cleaning time.

Some companies are planning to give **the responsibility of supply distribution** to managers to monitor supply usage and ensure supplies stay in the office.

49%

of companies said that they plan to assign someone at the office the responsibility of sanitizing high-touch areas throughout the day.

# PROTECTIVE MEASURES TO CONSIDER

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## Supplies needed

- **Disinfecting wipes and sprays** should be available for employees to use at their desks and at commonly used shared areas like lunchrooms, conference rooms, and phone booth areas.
- Many offices are wondering - **if the nationwide shortage of disinfectant and hand sanitizer continues, should they delay the return to the office until these items are secured?**

## Other protective measures

- Staff members who commonly have to interact with others (IT techs, office management team, etc) may be **provided with a mask and/or gloves** to limit the spread of germs.
- **Improved air filtration** is predicted to become more important than ever. Leaders at Cushman & Wakefield predict that many companies in the US will begin to improve air filtration systems based on China's precedent.<sup>9</sup>

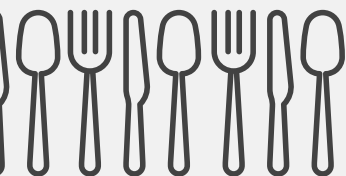


There's a clever policy out of Norway – the corporate office stole an idea from an Italian pizzeria. They give blank sheets of paper at their entries. Employees lay the paper on their desks and then throw the paper away when they leave. Brilliant."<sup>10</sup>

# PROGRAMS AND VENDORS

Whether it's drinks, snacks, coffee, lunch, cleaning, or maintenance, offices large and small provide programs and work with external vendors.

Over the last several years, we've seen corporate buying shift toward being more sustainable by reducing waste and unnecessary packaging, and we're now preparing to see the pendulum swing back in the opposite direction.



27%

of offices surveyed plan to switch to disposable dishes & cutlery for now.

48%

plan to offer only single-serve and pre-packaged snacks, drinks, coffee, lunches, etc.

\*See [OfficeLuv's Product Book](#) for further guidance on these items.

Working with vendors, providing programs, and receiving packages also means external visitors will be entering into the workplace. They are a part of the many facets that keep your business open for operation, but a few suggestions we've taken note of around additional precautions to put in place are listed below.

# PRECAUTIONS TO CONSIDER

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## Vendors

- Limit and/or reduce **entry and exit points** for vendors.
- **Require visitors to sign in and out** of the space.
- Create a **designated shelving area** that is clearly labeled and specified for drop-offs like packages, lunches, etc.

## Programs

- Food and beverage options can still be plentiful, but should be in the **pre-packaged, single-serve category**.
- **Coffee programs** may be among those that change the most significantly:



- Switch bottles of coffee creamer to individuals
  - Provide napkins or gloves as a barrier when using a coffee urn
  - Add coffee stations around the office for fewer employee interactions.
- **Sustainability programs** may need to be put on hold:
    - Offer **disposable** cutlery, cups, bowls, and plates to reduce the use of shared dishes.
    - You can still consider **recycled, eco-friendly options**.
    - Offer that employees can **bring their own dishes**, as long as they are hand washed and stored at the employee's desk.



# VISITORS, GUESTS AND TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

While continuing to social distance and limit person-to-person contact, it may be necessary to revise visitor and guest protocols and continue to implement travel restrictions. **Virtual meetings will likely continue** to be the preferred option rather than bringing clients or guests into the office for some time.

As we wait for government guidelines around travel, we see the uncertainty echoed in our survey results - **around 50% of those surveyed are still unsure what the future holds in regards to travel.**

## WHAT TO CONSIDER

- Depending on building protocols, **Wellness Checks** (as detailed on page 9) may be required for visitors as well.
- For buildings without Wellness Checks, **organizations may take it upon themselves** to conduct one.
- Visitor check-ins that require touch screens may **consider providing styluses** (visitors take a sanitized one, then deposit it in a "used" receptacle when done) **or hand sanitizer** nearby.
- **If travel is necessary**, consider allowing those who travel to continue working from home for 14-days after travel, as is recommended by the CDC guidelines for self-monitoring.<sup>11</sup>

# SAFETY MEASURES BY SPACE

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## Throughout the Office:

- **Wellness Stations** with hand sanitizer, tissues, masks, disinfecting wipes, disinfectant sprays, gloves, etc.
- **Touchless or disposable** thermometers
- **Floor stickers/tape** for safe distancing markers
- **Partitions** for shared desk spaces and at employee desks
- **Disposable parchment paper sheets** for shared desk spaces
- **Foot plate** or hands-free door openers
- **Air purifiers**

## Conference Rooms, Private Offices & Phone Booths

- **Entry/exit floor signage** with waiting areas
- **Chairs arranged** for safe distancing
- **Signage** on exterior detailing maximum seating capacity
- **Voice enabled technology** where applicable - conference phone, lighting, electronics
- **Signage** around disinfecting expectations



# SAFETY MEASURES BY SPACE

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## Kitchen & Coffee Stations

- **Remove chairs** at kitchen tables to reduce number of seats
- If applicable: **create a schedule for lunches** based on last names, teams, etc.
- **Spring-loaded dispensers** for single grab cups
- **Singles grab/hands free** utensil dispenser
- **Single pull napkin** and paper towel dispenser
- **Automatic hand soap** and dish soap dispensers
- **Pre-packaged** snacks, coffee creamers, beverages
- **Disposable** plates, bowls, cups, and cutlery
- **Storage bins** to store bulk snack dispensers temporarily
- **Open baskets and shelves** to hold pre-packaged snacks

## Bathrooms

- **Automatic** sinks, soap, and paper towels
- If entry via a **shared key or keypad**, be sure to include the key/keypad on the list of high-touch areas to be disinfected frequently.

## Mail & Receiving Rooms

- **Systematic package/mail pick up** - by name, team, or floor for example
- **Floor signage** for distancing
- **PPE for staff** working in mail rooms

To purchase any supplies listed, visit [supplies.officeluvinc.com](https://supplies.officeluvinc.com)

# ENFORCING POLICIES AND MAINTAINING MORALE

Along with the rules and policies put in place to physically return to the office, some time should be spent on the culture and morale of the team as well. All of us have been greatly impacted by this virus and the uncertainty that accompanies it, so being hyper sensitive to the physical and emotional well-being of your employees will be critical for a successful office return.

“Day One back in the office will very likely be different from Day 30, Day 60 and Day 90.”<sup>12</sup>

Depending on the size and culture of your office, the approach taken here will vary. Regardless of size, however, should be the frequent revisiting of your plan. News changes quickly, so our plans should be pliable and adaptable to face whatever the news might bring.

# WHAT TO CONSIDER

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- 1 Ensuring that everyone feels comfortable is key.**  
Sending out weekly surveys to determine who feels comfortable coming back, what preventive measures are expected, and other employee feedback has become a common way to keep a pulse on employee morale during this time.<sup>13</sup>
- 2 Consider your company culture when creating rules.**  
Unfortunately, it can be necessary to create appropriate expectations around rule-breakers. If employees are gathering in large groups or if an employee comes in with a cough, is it up to co-workers to encourage proper behavior or is HR looped in?
- 3 Thank your employees.**  
Companies who are in a place to do so may use office reentry as a time to provide gift cards, swag, snack boxes, or other tokens of appreciation to their employees to say thank you for staying productive and flexible throughout this time.
- 4 Communicate, communicate, communicate.**  
In these times of uncertainty, employees especially appreciate transparency from leadership. Frequently checking in, accepting feedback, and providing updates can help employees feel comfortable and safe throughout the return process.



# OFFICELUV

## About OfficeLuv

OfficeLuv is the complete purchasing software for today's office. Our technology consolidates 100+ vendors, allowing you to purchase from a robust catalog, pull instant spend reports, set up controls and user permissions, recurring orders, and access trends and insights - all from one customized platform.

**OfficeLuv has built an expansive catalog of products and safety supplies for the return to the office.**

For a product list and details on how to order, visit [supplies.officeluvinc.com](https://supplies.officeluvinc.com), or email [hello@officeluv.com](mailto:hello@officeluv.com).

For additional guidance, visit [resources.officeluvinc.com](https://resources.officeluvinc.com).

# APPENDIX

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This ebook was published May 1, 2020. All information included is as of this date.

- 1 Clark, Dave. "Update on How We're Protecting Employees." Amazon, April 2, 2020. <https://blog.aboutamazon.com/company-news/update-from-amazons-operations-network>.
- 2 Taylor, Kate. "McDonald's Is Rolling out Wellness Checks to More than 800,000 Workers and Plans to Start Taking Their Temperatures amid the Coronavirus Outbreak." Business Insider, April 1, 2020. <https://www.businessinsider.com/coronavirus-mcdonalds-debuts-wellness-checks-temperature-tests-2020-4>.
- 3 Schwartzel, Erich, Alison Sider, and Heather Haddon. "The Coronavirus Economic Reopening Will Be Fragile, Partial and Slow." The Wall Street Journal, April 13, 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-coronavirus-economic-reopening-will-be-fragile-partial-and-slow-11586800447>.
- 4 Meunier, Jo. "Coworking Post-COVID-19: Cleanliness Will Be The New Normal." Allwork, April 13, 2020. <https://allwork.space/2020/04/coworking-post-covid-19-cleanliness-will-be-the-new-normal/>.
- 5,13 Interviews conducted by OfficeLuv; customers are e-commerce companies that wish to remain anonymous.
- 6 "6 Feet Office: Designing New Office Spaces To Respond To Covid-19: Netherlands." Cushman & Wakefield. <https://www.cushmanwakefield.com/en/netherlands/six-feet-office>
- 7, 9, 10 Farah, Andrew. "How to Bring 82 Million U.S. Employees Back to the Office Safely – 100 Experts Weigh in (Week 1)." Medium, April 15, 2020. <https://medium.com/@andrewfarah/how-to-bring-82-million-u-s-employees-back-to-the-office-safely-100-experts-weigh-in-week-1-500c29e57101>.
- 8 Molla, Rani. "This Is the End of the Office as We Know It." Recode. Vox, April 14, 2020. <https://www.vox.com/recode/2020/4/14/21211789/coronavirus-office-space-work-from-home-design-architecture-real-estate>.
- 11 Coronavirus and Travel in the United States <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>
- 12 McCann, Jason. "Work Spacing – Getting Your Office Ready for The New Normal." LinkedIn, April 13, 2020. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/work-spacing-getting-your-office-ready-new-normal-jason-mccann/>.

Statistics listed throughout this eBook are from an OfficeLuv study of 84 companies, as of 4/24/20. Demographics are as follows:

- 21% have <25 employees; 35% have 26-100 employees; 25% have 101-250 employees; 15% have 251-500 employees; 4% have 501-1000 employees.
- 27% have 1 location; 45% have 2-5 locations; 15% have 6-10 locations; 12% have 10+ locations.