



# The Reimagined Workplace

## Return-to-the-Office Guide

The pandemic shattered many of the beliefs we held about the workplace culture.

*People are more productive in the office. Effective team collaboration suffers. Ideas from water cooler chats dry up. The office is the only place “real work” gets done.*

That was the conventional wisdom pre-COVID and before the great work-from-home experiment of 2020. But, it’s 2021 and the results are in. The traditional office is gone forever. Hybrid and remote work has replaced 9-to-5.

Recent research confirms what we already know: 70% of firms plan to move to some form of hybrid work<sup>1</sup> and 75% of employees want to go into the office at least one day a week.<sup>2</sup>

The pandemic gave us the freedom to Rethink the workplace in ways that were previously “unthinkable.” Every corporate leader has the same high-level goals:

- Returning to the office safely
- Reconnecting and reinventing how we work together
- Renewing and retooling our businesses to ensure they thrive during the next economic disruption

How and when you achieve those goals could mean the difference between a resilient, future-ready business and a company stuck in the past. The tactics and strategies you use will depend on your role – pre-pandemic workplace, your industry, and where you are technologically. The ultimate workplace redefines business resiliency so you can embrace — and welcome — change.

As you weigh your options, take a look at this step-by-step guide for Facilities to see what you need to consider to reimagine your workplace. Then, contact us and we’ll help you determine your plan of action based on your workplace ecosystem and timelines.

<sup>1</sup> Bloom, Nicholas; “Don’t Let Employees Pick Their WFH Days”; *Harvard Business Review*; May 25, 2021 <https://hbr.org/2021/05/dont-let-employees-pick-their-wfh-days>

<sup>2</sup> *Americas Return to the Workplace Survey*; [https://assets-global.website-files.com/5f54d5d0d20ccc918d21aed2/60c27f9b6779e12b2588db43\\_Americas%20Return%20to%20the%20Workplace\\_Survey%20Q2%202021.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5f54d5d0d20ccc918d21aed2/60c27f9b6779e12b2588db43_Americas%20Return%20to%20the%20Workplace_Survey%20Q2%202021.pdf)

# Facilities: Return-to-the-Office Guide

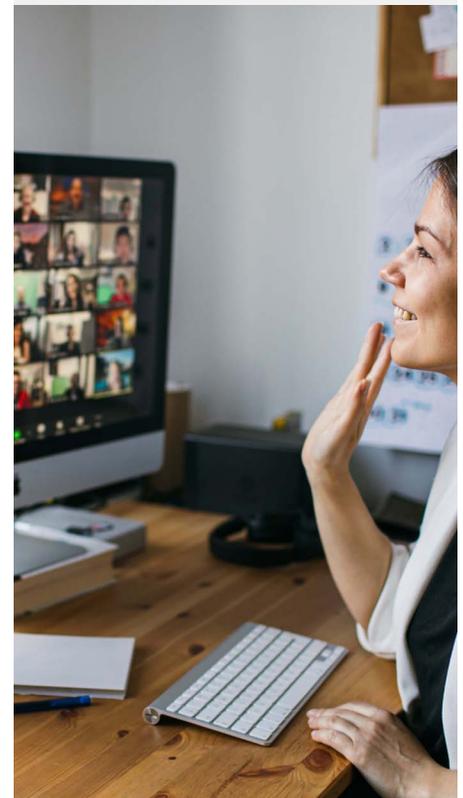
Returning to the office isn't just a matter of hand sanitizer and six-foot spacing. It's about raising the comfort level of everyone who walks through the door and providing peace-of-mind that your building is safe, healthy, and ready for occupation. That means strategic office reconfigurations require implementation of the latest technologies and devices. Here's a step-by-step guide to see what you need to consider when working with HR, IT, and business leaders to reimagine your workplace.

1. Organize or participate in on a Return-to-the-Office taskforce with stakeholders from HR and IT to plan, coordinate, and execute changes to your physical environment.
2. Check state, local, and federal health regulations and guidelines.
3. Conduct an Infrastructure audit
  - Assess and audit the premises for technology and building infrastructure changes needed for any new installations, such as signage, sensors, kiosks, and IoT.
  - Install necessary hardware and infrastructure to ensure next-gen 5G, On-Go, Wi-Fi 6, and SD-WAN.
  - Communications can be enabled by your IT partners.
4. Enable communications — everywhere.
  - Install AV systems, digital signage, interactive displays, kiosks, and other communication and notification systems throughout the workplace in coordination with HR and IT.
  - Consult your business leaders and/or tenants regarding conference room, gathering spaces, and huddle spaces needs. What AV technology do you need to enable hybrid work and collaboration?
5. Coordinate with co-tenants and building management if you're in a shared office space or office building to implement safety measures for all communal areas.
6. Clean, clean, and clean some more.
  - Establish daily and weekly cleaning procedures for all office and communal areas, including all surfaces and touch areas.
  - Establish "after-use" cleaning procedures for shared spaces, such as hot-desks, conference rooms, technology closets, cafeterias, break rooms, etc.
  - Establish on-demand cleaning processes using scheduling systems or sensors to monitor conference room or desk occupancy.
  - Communicate cleaning procedures to HR and IT for dissemination across internal communication channels and office digital signage.
7. Safety measures. Work with IT and HR on what physical safety measures you will be implementing/installing.
  - Abundant hand sanitizing/mask stations.
  - Thermal/temperature sensing kiosks.
  - Scanners for ID and proof of vaccination.
  - Protective walls, dividers, temporary/on-demand barriers.
  - Tape/rope off areas.

## The Reimagined Office<sup>3</sup>

**61%**  
Increased health  
and safety measures

**67%**  
More comfortable  
design features



<sup>3</sup>. Adams, R. Dallan; "Employees did not like the old office. Here are the office changes they want"; CXO; July 2, 2021; <https://www.techrepublic.com/article/employees-did-notlike-the-old-office-here-are-the-office-changes-they-want/>

8. Reconfigure office floor plans for social distancing.
  - Work with architects/engineers as needed for infrastructure changes. Hire/project manage contractors.
  - Remove/rearrange furniture in office areas, conference rooms, lounges, break areas, lobbies, etc.
  - Take inventory of existing fixtures, furniture, and infrastructure to ensure optimization of current resources.
  - Order furniture for communal areas, such as hot desks, hang-out areas, open huddle spaces.
  - Confirm with IT any additional technology needs, such as new monitors, additional structured cabling, new adaptors and docking stations, etc.
  - Build/reconfigure smaller conference rooms, huddle spaces, technology closets, etc. Coordinate new technology installations, such as displays, with IT. Post occupancy limits/safety procedures.
  
9. Monitor occupancy/usage.
  - Install occupancy sensors in office areas, conference rooms, break rooms, rest rooms, etc. Sensors can lock doors, emit audio alarms, turn on lights, etc. when occupancy limits are reached.
  - Deploy usage monitors for conference rooms, huddle spaces, technology closets, hot desks, permanent desks, break rooms, and lounges. Coordinate the technology with IT.
  - Install automated reservation systems for hot desks, conference rooms, technology closets, etc.
  - To prevent overcrowding, post traffic flow directions, displays, digital signs, and floor stickers.
  - Monitor data collected by new occupancy sensors and reservation systems to optimize use of shared spaces and ensure you have the right combination of individual and group workspaces.
  
10. Touchless technology.
  - Install contactless sensors, locks, and other IoT devices (facial recognition, hand wave, voice command, card reader, etc.) for doors, elevators, conference rooms, rest rooms, lighting, lobbies, and other high-touch areas
  - Coordinate with IT to install touchless collaborative video sharing hardware and infrastructure, voice recognition, and other applications that can control your meeting rooms.
  
11. Healthy building technologies.
  - Reassure employees and visitors of health and well-being measures and improve productivity.
  - Review HVAC considerations such as:
    - Air flow quality/ventilation/oxygen content including portable air filters (Aim for four to six air changes per hour.<sup>5</sup>)
    - Temperature/moisture monitoring/controls.
    - Lighting (smart lighting, sensors, monitoring).
    - Temperature screening/health monitoring stations/kiosks.

**Touchless is Here to Stay<sup>4</sup>**

**73%**

Willing to interact with touchless technology

**8 out of 10**

See public touchscreens as unhygienic

**Healthy Building Benefits<sup>6</sup>**

**\$6,500 – \$7,500: Savings per person per year**

**57%**

Sick leave due to poor ventilation

**1.7%**

Performance improved with doubled outdoor air delivery

4. Allen DSc, MPH, Joseph G.; Ibrahim, MD, MSc, Andrew M.; "Indoor Air Changes and Potential Implications for SARS-CoV- 2 Transmission"; JAMA Insights, April 16, 2021; JAMA. 2021;325(20):2112-2113. doi:10.1001/jama.2021.5053; <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2779062>

5. Touchless Tech Trends; Connected World; <https://connectedworld.com/touchless-tech-trends/>

6. Allen DSc, MPH, Joseph G.; Macomber, John D.; "What Makes an Office Building 'Healthy'"; Harvard Business Review; April 29, 2020; <https://hbr.org/2020/04/what-makes-an-office-building-healthy?ab=hero-main-text>

12. Develop an exposure-response plan in conjunction with HR and IT. Include sanitization and closure measures.

- Implement an emergency cleaning procedure that minimizes risk and exposure.
- Ensure sensors can track employee location for efficient contact tracing.
- Discuss office closure policies and procedures with all stake holders and people leaders.

Download our full Return-to-the-Office Guide for HR, Facilities, and IT at [BlackBox.com/ReimaginedWorkplace](https://BlackBox.com/ReimaginedWorkplace).



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