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[1] and 75% of employees want to go into the office at least one day a week.[2]

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 IT 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.

1. 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

2. Americas Return to the Workplace Survey; https://assets-global.website-files.com/5f54d5d0d20ccc918d21aed2/60c27f9b6779e12b2588db43_Americas%20Return%20to%20the%20Workplace_Survey%20Q2%202021.pdf

IT: 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, Facilities, and business leaders to reimagine your workplace.

1. Organize or participate in a Return-to-the-Office taskforce with stakeholders from HR and Facilities to plan, coordinate, and execute changes to your physical environment.

2. Conduct infrastructure/technology audits.

   ☐ Assess and audit the premises for technology and building and network infrastructure changes needed for any new installations, such as video conferencing, digital signage, usage sensors, kiosks, IoT, and touchless technology.

   ☐ Perform a technology, application, and device audit to prepare for nextgen 5G, On-Go™, Wi-Fi 6, and SD-WAN communications. Assess network performance against hybrid work demands.

   ☐ Assess what applications and devices are needed to connect all technology at the building's edge.

   ☐ Track what technology, pandemic-driven or otherwise, worked, what didn't, and what was lacking. Keep the good. Get rid of the rest, including licenses you purchased that went unused. Address technology gaps.

3. Hybrid technology integration.

   ☐ Do users have the necessary technology for seamless transitions between in-house and at-home work?

   ☐ Do you need to invest in technology-agnostic solutions, such as SD-WAN networks or 5G and OnGo networks?

   ☐ Has any technology been updated that would prohibit staff from connecting to in office Wi-Fi or networks?

   ☐ Have you implemented a bring your own device (BYOD) policy? How will this change your in-office IT?

4. Run security checks.

   ☐ Perform a safety/software check on all desktops and laptops to determine if they have the proper OS, security patches, and other critical updates. Invest in tools that automate this critical function.

   ☐ Are VPNs, MFAs, and other security measures in place?

   ☐ Where do you have gaps in security?

   ☐ What gives you optimal cybersecurity for hybrid ecosystems?

   ☐ What security measures are you taking to protect your wireless networks (5G, 4G LTE, On-Go, Wi-Fi 6, etc.)?

   ☐ How will you manage security if you have an SD-WAN or cloud-based communications system and if you have an on-premises network?

   ☐ How will you train/instruct employees on proper security procedures?

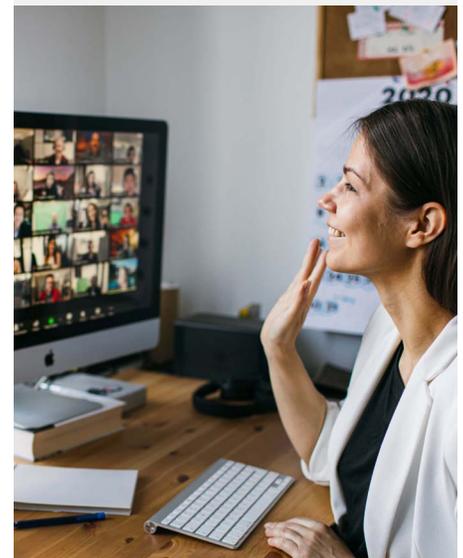   ☐ Are you planning on installing a security-camera system?

The Hybrid Workforce[3]

1-4 Days/Week: Expected time in the office

How Often **40%** of workers expect to be in the office

21-50% of the time

51-80% of the time

3. Alexander, Andrea; Cracknell, Rich; De Smet, Aaron; Langstaff, Meredith; Ravid, Dan; "What executives are saying about the future of hybrid work;" McKinsey & Company, May 17, 2021; https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/what-executives-are-saying-about-the-future-of-hybrid-work

6. Take inventory.

☐ Document what devices and data were taken from the office and when they are being returned. Are new devices needed?

☐ New hires and employees. Do you have the necessary technology in place to set up new hires with laptops, monitors, phones, docks, etc. Have you collected equipment from employees who are leaving?

☐ Assess the need for additional hardware. Did employees take home technology? Will it be coming back? If they continue to work from home, will there be the monitors, docks, peripheral to maintain the shared space and home offices?

7. Get personal.

☐ Document employees who use/used personal computers to work remotely, this may include files left on team member's personal devices. Do they meet company security standards? Should employees change passwords? How does a new BYOD policy impact your network security?

8. Office desks, hot desks and hoteling, conference rooms, huddle spaces, technology closets.

☐ Audit all technology, including what is needed (hardware, software, infrastructure) for video sharing and 5G, On-Go, Wi-Fi 6, and SD-WAN readiness.

☐ How will you create the same meeting experience for in-office and digital participants? Will your new meeting spaces work with meeting collaboration tools like Teams, Webex, and Zoom?

☐ Will you implement an automated reservation system?

☐ How will you monitor usage for and real-time availability?

☐ How will you monitor occupancy? Will entrance be prohibited once limits are reached? Locked doors? Alarms? Lights?

☐ How will you evaluate you have the right mixture of collaborative and individual workspaces?

☐ How will you post clean desk/room availability, including cleaning status?

9. Consider in-office communication.

☐ What technology, infrastructure, cabling is needed for new/moved digital signage displays and video collaboration/display screens, kiosks, alerts, etc?

☐ Where will communication displays be installed? Will your signage content management software be compatible with new your communication tools and collaboration strategy?

☐ What hardware/software, infrastructure, and cabling changes are needed?

☐ What technology and partner will you use?

10. Safe, touchless technology.

☐ Are you considering safe-meeting/touchless AV collaboration and presentation tools?

☐ Do you plan to replace high-touch surfaces with contactless/no-touch technology for entrances, elevators, conference room/video sharing, coffee/ water dispensers, restrooms, etc. Technology can include contactless sensors, locks, and other IoT devices (facial recognition, hand wave, voice command, card reader, etc.)

11. Healthy building technologies.

- What connected building (smart and IoT technology/applications) do you want to use for social distancing and smart building efficiencies? This can include everything from the basement to the rooftop, such as:

- Contactless/zero-touch devices/sensors for contactless access and capacity control at doors, elevators, break rooms, conference rooms, rest rooms, sinks, etc.

- Check-in systems

- Wayfinding

- Desk/room availability

- Environmental monitoring

- Temperature/moisture sensors

- Air flow quality/ventilation/oxygen content

- Lighting (smart lighting, sensors, monitoring)

- Temperature screening/health monitoring *stations/kiosks.*

12. Implementation.

☐ Before proceeding, make sure all members of the taskforce know what changes will be made, and who is responsible for taking the lead.

☐ Coordinate all communications systems/updates/changes with HR.

☐ Coordinate infrastructure changes with facilities.

☐ Coordinate with IT partner/vendor for infrastructure upgrades and network readiness.

Download our full Return-to-the-Office Guide for HR, Facilities, and IT at **BlackBox.com/ReimaginedWorkplace.**

Touchless is Here to Stay[4]

73%
Willing to interact with touchless

8 out of 10:
See public touchscreens as unhygienic

[4]. *Touchless Tech Trends; Connected World;* *https://connect-edworld.com/touchless-tech-trends/*

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