Considerations for Returning to a Healthy Workplace

Knoll

Knoll helps organizations create workplaces that reflect their business objectives and workstyles. We understand that every workplace is different with respect to privacy and enclosure needs, and offer a range of heights, sizes and options for enclosure to meet your organization's evolving requirements.

Our clients' primary concern for arriving back to the office is the health and safety of their employees, with considerations around how people enter the office; circulation within the workplace; and new behaviors that need to occur to ensure a healthy and safe work environment for everyone.

Organizations are working to balance communicating new policies and procedures with providing their employees the freedom to work safely and maintain the choice and flexibility that we have all come to value in the workplace.

What follows are strategies and suggestions for arriving back to the workplace. Whatever your approach to planning, our variety of product solutions can help create a workplace that helps your employees feel safe and remain healthy at work.

A Checklist for Preparing the Workplace for Your Employees

The transition back to the office post Covid-19 will not be business-as-usual. An organization's successful return to the workplace will take time and a thoughtful approach that addresses changes in people's habits and behaviors and well as company spaces and procedures.

Every organization's return to the office will be different and should be customized based on their culture, objectives and workstyles. To guide the planning process, we have assembled a checklist of categories and items that organizations should consider.

Change Management and Coaching

+ Develop your plan-of-action well in advance of return dates

+ Create a "Return to the Workplace" steering committee. Include members from HR, Communications, Facilities, etc.

+ Obtain buy-in and support on the strategy from senior leadership

+ Recruit change "champions"

+ Coach and train supervisors and managers to help them succeed in their key roles as change agents. Ask them to:
  - Set expectations
  - Model behaviors
  - Foster a team spirit

Communication and Outreach

+ Establish a clear communication strategy and schedule to keep employees up-to-date, include:
  - Steps you are taking to assure them of a healthy environment
  - New workplace policies and protocols
  - Frequently asked questions
  - Point/s of contact for questions, concerns

+ Establish a help line and/or use change champions to direct employees to additional information and resources

+ Take the pulse of the organization by gathering input from employees through surveys and focus groups for their readiness and/or willingness to work onsite

+ Craft an office etiquette guide for employees to clearly communicate new protocols and procedures

+ Continually monitor progress and how employees are adapting via surveys, town halls or other listening forums

+ Keep an open dialogue to maintain ongoing communication

+ Provide training updates as policies and protocols change

Working from Home and Flexible Work Strategies

+ Stagger return to the office in stages

+ Alternate workdays/weeks for teams (A/B)

+ Utilize employee surveys, productivity data or other measures to guide planning for which teams to bring back in early stages

+ Review video conferencing technology and media guidelines and capabilities

+ Consider providing a stipend to employees for furniture to help work from home. (i.e. monitor arm; ergonomic task chair; height-adjustable tables)

Day-to-Day Considerations and Protocols

+ Establish screening procedures for employees, visitors and contractors, such as temperature checks, health assessments or travel history

+ Review visitor protocol and consider controlling access or limiting number of daily visitors

+ Post visible protocol reminders (wash hands, keep social distance, cover sneeze, stay home when sick, etc.)

+ Provide personal mugs and water bottles and dishwashers with Sani-wash cycles

+ Consider making Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as face masks and gloves, available to employees and visitors

+ Review your snack, food and beverage protocols. Consider pre-packaged, grab-and-go items

+ If you are in a multi-tenant building, review building management guidelines for common areas

Distancing and Separation Opportunities

+ Provide enclosures or delineate space at workspaces

 - Add screens to workstations

 - Reduce number of workstation seats in the open office

 - Rearrange workspaces so employees are not face-to-face

+ Remove or reduce reception area seating

+ Reduce number of seats in meeting rooms, cafes and other shared spaces and post signage with the maximum occupancy

+ Incorporate soft architectural solutions—wall systems, drapery, screens—around open collaboration areas

+ Create traffic patterns in your circulation, mandating a directional flow through the office

+ Implement social distancing queues in traffic areas such as pantry, lobby, elevator vestibule

Use of Shared Spaces, Tools and Objects

+ Assign seats and storage for individuals

+ Alter refuge, phone rooms and other small meeting spaces to dedicated individual offices

+ Dedicate meeting rooms and neighborhoods to teams as well as specific rooms to use for vistors

+ Consider replacing some traditional seated-meeting spaces with high-top tables and chairs for perching

+ Review your shared seating options, consider adding armless seating choices for less physical contact

+ Offer meeting spaces that allow onsite associates to easily connect to off-site teammates

+ Provide personal phones, electronics and equipment to eliminate sharing

+ Make all collaboration spaces bookable to allow time to clean between each use

+ Add sensors and no-touch technology for hands-free operation of doors, garbage/recycling bins, elevators, etc.

 - If no-touch technology is not an option, consider pulling out and exposing any concealed garbage/recycling bins, keeping all non-security doors open and creating traffic patterns in stairways, etc. to minimize physical touch points

Indoor Environmental Quality

+ When possible arrange areas to provide well-lit spaces with daylight and nature views

+ Review indoor air quality systems and procedures:

 - Assure that ventilation keeps clean air flowing in and helps direct air down

 - Evaluate current HVAC systems

+ Add plants wherever possible

Office Cleanliness

+ Add a robust and regular cleaning protocol, including daily day- and night-time cleanings and scheduled deep cleanings, like electro-static cleaning

 - Collect and be prepared to follow cleaning instructions from product manufacturer

+ Establish a clean desk/clean meeting space policy to enable a cleaning crew to thorough-ly clean all desks and spaces

+ Specify fabric and finishes with antimicrobial properties and/or bleach-cleanable surfaces

+ Supply hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes throughout the office, especially in high-traffic areas like reception areas, exits, stairs, restrooms, elevators, etc.

+ Provide each employee with individual cleaning materials and a place to store them

+ Recommend that employees wipe individual desks down at the beginning and/or end of each day and shared spaces at the beginning and/or end of each use

+ Include appropriate areas for disposing wipes and other cleaning materials

– Away
> Adapt
+ Add

The biggest changes that we suggest upon arrival have to do with safety, circulation, and density. Our suggestions and solutions fall into three groups:

Away

+ Remove chairs to create distancing in shared spaces and private offices

+ Take away workspaces that block safe access to other workspaces and for those now permanently working from home

+ Reduce the number of people in the space by alternating daily or weekly occupancy in red/blue teams (de-densify/reduce occupancy)

Adapt

+ Convert private offices to single occupancy

+ Convert refuges and enclaves to Private Offices

+ Open up circulation where possible and designate one-way corridors where necessary

+ Open up stairs to lobby as an alternative to elevators

Add

+ Add screens and surrounds on desks

+ Install glass or other add-ups to increase horizon of panels, and freestanding screens for separation

+ Create sanitation stations, signage, floor markings to help with circulation and distancing

– Away

Strategies for this Phase

- Reduce the number of seats in what had been a larger team area to allow for greater space between users.

- Remove seats from walkway-adjacent workstations and benching to allow greater circulation berth.

- Alternate work shifts to reduce density, with fewer people in the office at any given time.

Away
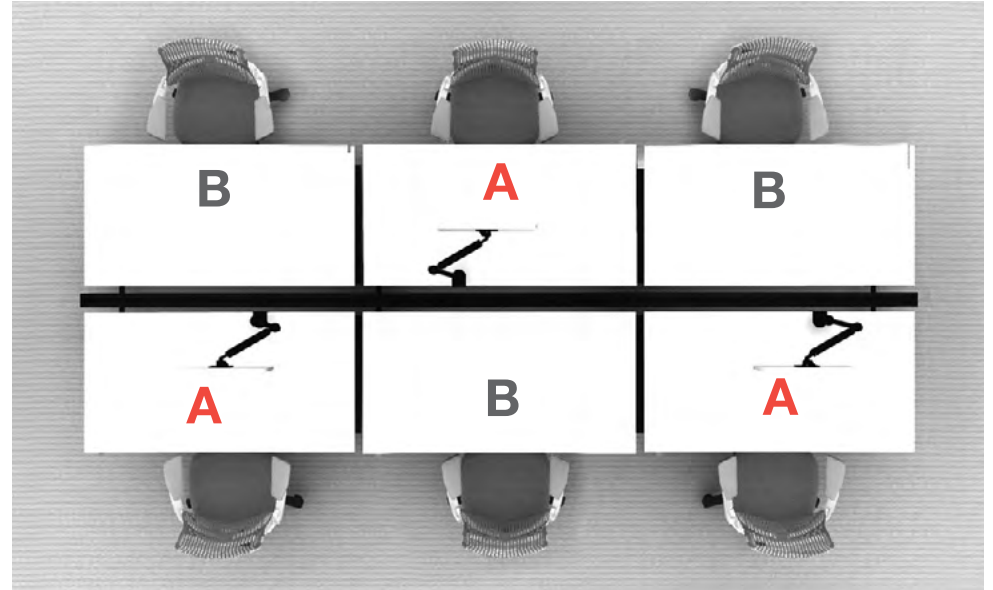
Alternate Seats or Work Shifts for Greater Distancing

Reduce density and increase separation by alternating office work days for half of the group, so fewer people are in the office

Remove guest seating to signal that an office is limited to a single occupant

Reff Profiles™ with integrated height-adjustable desk; Sapper™ monitor arm; Islands Collection by Knoll™ X-Base table; Life® chair

Away

Consider dedicating meeting spaces to a single team

DatesWeiser JD Table; DatesWeiser Highline Twenty Five credenza; Saarinen Executive chairs

Reduce capacity and space out seating to allow individuals to be separate, but together

Rockwell Unscripted® Creative Wall®, library table and steps; Muuto Visu Chairs; Muuto Ambit Rail Lamps

Away

Reduce capacity and space out training room desks and seating

Featured: Pixel™ tables; Ollo™ chairs; Rockwell Unscripted steps; Scribe™ mobile markerboards

> Adapt

Strategies for this Phase

> Consider posting maximum occupancy for spaces and setting time limits on them to allow for suitable cleaning between meetings.

> For spaces used by multiple people, consider making them bookable if they were not already, in order to allow for proper, regular cleaning.

> Ensure team members working from elsewhere can join the meeting virtually and have a similar experience to those inside the space; optimize lighting, power access and a surface for placing a laptop or tablet.

> Use furniture elements or signage to create traffic patterns, mandating a directional flow through the space.

> Fabric panel inserts are easily removable and can be swapped for laminate, steel, or KnollTextiles bleach-cleanable fabrics.

Adapt

Hold meetings in the open with dedicated tools for each person

Pilot by Knoll® Lounge Chairs; Horsepower® media cart; Muuto Relate Side Tables; Piton Stools

Reconfigure freestanding desks along technology spine to create more distance between users

Antenna® Horsepower™ with add-up glass and suspended storage; Tone height-adjustable desks with acrylic screen surrounds; Sapper monitor arms; Generation by Knoll work chairs

Adapt

Designate refuge spaces as assigned offices

Featured: Rockwell Unscripted Creative Wall enclosures; Antenna Workspaces® desks; ReGeneration by Knoll® chairs; Muuto Tip Lamps; Sapper® monitor arms

Reorient desks and add screens to create a sense of enclosure

Featured: Fence with add-up glass; Tone height-adjustable tables with back screens; Sapper monitor arm; Generation by Knoll work chairs; Sparrow® desktop light

Reprogram Keyless Locking from Shared to Assigned Individual Use

Anchor™ slide-out towers

Adapt

Swap out existing storage for slide out tower for additional space delineation

Anchor™ slide-out towers

Encourage shorter meetings with touchdown seating

Featured: Interpole™; Luna by Fully Standing Desk Stools

Engage technology for contact-free adjustment

RIO by Rol Ergo, available on Tone and Telescope height-adjustable tables, allows users to set personal preferences and adjust the table from a remote application on their computer.

Adapt

Provide a range of outdoor seating options

Bertioa Diamond™ chairs; Petal® coffee tables

Background: Muuto Linear Steel series

Take your meetings outside

Stromborg tables; Olivares Aluminum chairs; Spark® Series Lounge chairs; Maya Lin Stones

+ Add

Strategies for this Phase

+ Add soft architecture, additional storage or reorient furniture to create clear delineation and encourage users to follow defined circulation paths

+ Mobile displays allow for sharing and collaboration as well as bringing in team members not present.

+ Multiple displays may be needed to allow people to separate and orient away from each other.

+ Add armless seating options for less physical contact.

Add

Add temporary side screens to fixed-height benching for increased separation and space delineation

Antenna Workspaces Big Table with Pop Up™ Easy Screens in corrugated cardboard; Sapper monitor arms; Generation by Knoll work chairs; Anchor™ mobile pedestals

Add enclosure and separation with add-up glass and freestanding screens

Dividends Horizon® panels with add-up glass; Tone™ height-adjustable desks; Dividends Horizon freestanding gallery panels; Sapper XYZ® monitor arm; Generation by Knoll® work chairs

Add

Add temporary screen surrounds to height-adjustable benching for increased separation and space delineation

Featured: k.™ bench with Pop Up Easy Screens in corrugated plastic; Sapper monitor arms; Anchor credenzas; ReGeneration by Knoll work chairs

Add perpendicular freestanding gallery panels

Freestanding gallery panels paired with Antenna Workspaces® intermediate screens on Antenna Workspaces Big Table

Add screen surrounds to height-adjustable benching

Featured: Antenna® Telescope™ with Antenna Workspaces desktop surround screens; Sapper monitor arms; Antenna Workspaces pedestals; Generation by Knoll work chairs

Add

Incorporate storage into open plan workspaces to indicate circulation and boundaries

Clockwise from near right: Calibre storage; Anchor lockers; Rockwell Unscripted modular storage

Add storage to fixed-height benching for increased separation and additional space for personal items

Antenna Workspaces Big Table with center screen and Anchor stackers; Sapper monitor arms; Generation by Knoll work chairs; Anchor mobile pedestals

Add

Use vertical space division to indicate boundaries, and open storage to reduce contact with furniture

Interpole with Saarinen table, Spark Series side chairs and Luna by Fully

Use freestanding screens to indicate boundaries and limit users

Rockwell Unscripted Creative Wall and Easy Table with Muuto Loft Bar Stools and Scribe® mobile markerboard

Add

Use freestanding individual tables to allow users to separate to a comfortable distance

Above: Pixel C-leg tables with Pixel screens and Ollo chairs

Left: Islands by Knoll Collection tables and ReGeneration by Knoll chairs

Add

Use desktop screens to indicate maximum occupancy and seating pattern

Rockwell Unscripted Creative Wall, Tall Table and screens with MultiGeneration by Knoll® stools

Add laminate panel surrounds for delineation and ease of cleaning

Dividends Horizon® panels with Bertoia Bench.

At Knoll, we make creative, inspiring places where people love to be. Understanding what drives you allows us to bring your workplace vision to life.

Whether you are a commercial, educational, healthcare or government organization, we can help you achieve your workplace goals. We believe in places that offer people, across all generations, a fluid experience from intimate to shared spaces for individuals and teams. We make this possible because our constellation of brands works together to build unique workplaces across a range of budgets and price points.

Our hands-on approach prioritizes your brand values and company culture, and leverages our workplace experience; our team brings research and an innovative mindset to every engagement. We will work through the specific challenges of your organization to develop the right workplace planning strategy. Our dealers' expertise in areas like space planning, specification development, project management and logistics, combined with their global reach, ensures that your project proceeds smoothly every step of the way.

Let us show you why we love workspaces that inspire people to do their best work.

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