

Knoll Workplace Research

Guidelines and Etiquette for Returning to a Healthy Workplace

Introducing changes to office
policies, protocol and politeness

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A very important part of ensuring a smooth transition during times of change is developing a clear and concise communication plan. Helping employees understand new policies and procedures prior to returning to the workplace post Covid-19 will be key to organizational success. This document provides some advice on the process for developing workplace protocols for a successful re-entry into the workplace and presents an example of guidelines for a hypothetical company that addresses some hot-button issues.

Tips for Developing Return to the Workplace Protocols

Before getting started

- + **Gain leadership support.** Top-level leadership and support are vital to a successful re-entry process. Engage leaders early and encourage them to be active and visible throughout the process.
- + **Consult with Human Resources and Legal to assure compliance.** Appropriate departmental representatives should be involved to ensure that any guidelines you create align with company policies and meet legal requirements.
- + **Assemble a Team.** Gather a group to co-create the guide and discuss best practices. Consider a cross-disciplinary team of representatives from HR, Communications, Facilities, Legal, Customer Service and other front-facing departments.
- + **Establish a plan.** Consider your approach for transitioning back to the workplace and what items to include in the guidelines. Areas to think about include protocols for a distributed work strategy, visitor policy, individual and shared space type changes, social and physical distancing standards, posted signage and circulation patterns, technology usage and the addition of new on-site conveniences. Also consider your work-from-home policy. Some team members may experience extra challenges with care responsibilities, commutes, etc.

Creating the guide

- + **Define your language and set the tone.** Curate an etiquette guide that is aligned with your culture. Semantics are important for effective communication with your employees. Lead with employee health, safety and security, reassuring employees of the steps you are taking to create a healthy workplace for everyone. Clearly communicate new protocols and expectations for employee behavior.
- + **Review existing protocols.** If you have existing company guidelines and/or an etiquette guide in place, review and revise the contents. Provide a post-pandemic update to help your company understand the new policies and procedures. Let employees know that existing procedures such as noise considerations still apply. However these new guidelines are going to be put in place to ensure their safety.



During re-entry

- + **Deliver guidelines.** Use the release of guidelines as an opportunity to reiterate your message and share the steps the organization is taking to ensure employee safety. Consider a virtual town hall or hands on meeting to introduce the back-to-the-workplace plan of action. In addition to the sample guidelines presented, develop support materials such as new office plans, remote work guidelines, seating and storage assignments, technology instructions and codes, wayfinding materials and any other references that employees can consult.
- + **Support managers.** Coach and train supervisors and managers to help them succeed in their key roles as change agents. Ask them to set expectations, model desired behaviors and foster a team spirit.
- + **Centralize information.** Provide a central location, such as an online community board, for information to be shared and easily accessible to employees.
- + **Offer support and outreach.** Establish a help line and/or recruit change “champions” to direct employees to additional information and resources.

After re-entry

- + **Continue to reinforce behavior.** Environments often prescribe behaviors; people will revert back into old habits unless it is clear that there are new expectations.
- + **Monitor and adjust.** Assess the successes and shortcomings of the re-entry process. Make regular rounds to observe how the policies and protocols are working and how employees feel. Encourage feedback to better understand when adjustments to the plan should be considered. 



SAMPLE GUIDELINES FOR A RETURN TO A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

M E M O

Dear Colleagues:

We look forward to welcoming you back into our workplace when the time is right. In order to make the transition as smooth and safe as possible, we have created the attached “Improving the Way We Work Now” guidelines and etiquette handbook.

These guidelines are subject to change and may evolve as local and state governments as well as the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization revise Covid-19 health and safety protocols.

We are aware that this is a time of transition and our return is a work in progress. We ask you to follow these guidelines but are open to your feedback for how we might improve and refine our procedures. In the meantime, we appreciate your patience, understanding and compliance.

Improving the Way We Work Now

The ABC Company's guide to returning to a healthy workplace

Our Commitment to Your Health & Safety

Your health and safety remain our #1 priority. This Guide is your playbook for getting back to the workplace, with information for everything from arriving at work, to strategies for maintaining social distancing standards during the work hours.

Our goal is to provide a great workplace for everyone.

Arriving at the Workplace

During this unprecedented time, we are returning to the workplace with very new expectations and with broad guidelines and etiquette guided by local and state governments as well as the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization.

ABC Company has implemented the following office entry procedures to keep our associates safe.

- + Upon entering ABC Company's office associates, visitors and clients will be asked to complete a screening process:
 - Answer a health-related questionnaire.
 - Complete a thermal scan of your forehead. The scanner will not touch you; it will take approximately 2 seconds for your temperature to register. The person providing assistance with the scanning will be wearing gloves and a face mask. If your temperature is within a normal range (below 100°F or 37.8°C), you will be permitted to enter the facility. Temperature and health data will not be recorded.
 - Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet (approximately 2 meters) between you and others while waiting to enter the office.
- + At this time, elevator usage is limited to 2 occupants at a time.
- + Associates are encouraged to keep a personal daily log of in-person business contacts using your smartphone or paper notebook.

Flexible Work Strategies

To prepare for our return to the office, we have reviewed and made changes to our flexible work strategies.

Managers, in concert with Human Resources and Leadership, have implemented a range of flexible schedules for teams to reduce office occupancy.

- + We are returning to the workplace in stages. You will be advised of your group and target entry date via email shortly.
- + Designating groups (A/B team). For the foreseeable future we will stagger entry and exit times and corresponding office hours to streamline ingress and egress. For example, Team A's hours will be 7 am to 4 pm and Team B's hours will be 9 am to 6 pm.
- + We will continue to support remote work/work-from-home on a part or full-time basis. You are responsible for coordinating scheduling with your manager.
- + Along with your manager, we have assigned dedicated change champions to answer any questions or concerns you may have. The name of your change champion will be emailed to you in a separate email.

Workplace Changes

We have reimagined our office space planning strategy and have made the following changes:

RECEPTION AREAS

We've reduced the number of seats in reception areas and rearranged the furniture to reflect social distancing guidelines. We've allocated dedicated meeting areas for visitors. Visitors are only permitted into these dedicated spaces.

WORK AREAS

To continue to support safety, right now, it is important that we keep a healthy distance from others. We've reduced the density of work areas in the open office by creating 6 feet (approximately 2 meters) between workstations, providing enclosure with screens where applicable and rearranging seating so people are not face-to-face.

SHARED SPACES

Meeting rooms, cafes and other shared spaces have been redesigned. In general, the capacity of these spaces has been reduced and many shared spaces have been converted to individual workspaces. New signage will indicate maximum occupancy. In addition, many open collaborative areas are now defined by soft architectural solutions—wall systems, drapery, screens. Some of these solutions may be portable; we ask that you keep them in their original location.

PANTRIES

Where possible, we've mandated directional flow in pantry areas and limited countertop items to assure that surfaces are sanitized regularly.

SANITATION STATIONS

To encourage workplace hygiene, we've created areas with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes and supplies to disinfect phones and screens. Office managers are responsible for maintaining sanitation stations. Please keep these materials in their original location.

OFFICE TRAFFIC PATTERNS

We've prescribed new circulation/traffic patterns with fresh branded signage and wayfinding. You'll notice social distancing queues in reception areas, elevator vestibules and pantries.

ADVANCED CLEANING AND DISINFECTION STANDARDS

To ensure a safe environment we have reviewed our general cleaning standards and have worked with our cleaning partners to increase the frequency of general office cleanings. Additionally, we have provided additional sanitation stations around the office environment for all to use.

Meeting with Visitors and Guest

Now is not the time to host large meetings.

We ask that only essential get-togethers with outside guests take place. If you have the need for a vital meeting, we have established the following protocol.

- + All visitors' names must be submitted to reception the day prior to the meeting to be entered on the day's guest list. Guests will not be allowed entry if they are not documented by reception.
- + Before meeting with any of our associates, visitors must complete a temperature scan and the health-related questionnaire.
- + We have created dedicated visitor meeting areas. Visitors are not permitted to entry into work areas or other shared spaces.
- + Meetings should be kept to fewer than 10 people.

Workplace Life

New procedures, new behaviors.

As with any change, our entry back to the workplace brings challenges and opportunities. It will require some conscious adjustments to adapt to the new norms and standards. Please refer to your guidelines and communications as many frequently asked questions are answered in the materials provided. Please visit the community boards for updates. If you have questions or need additional information, please consult your manager. While we have itemized out specifics, we hope mutual respect, tolerance and consideration for your fellow co-worker will guide your behavior during this time. Our cooperation is critical to assuring that our entire office is safe for you, our clients and other visitors.

Starting Your Day

PLEASE ARRIVE HEALTHY

If you are feeling ill, feverish or mildly under the weather, please stay home.

COMMUTING TO THE OFFICE

If you commute to work by public transportation, avoid overcrowded buses and trains; wear a face mask and gloves, as appropriate; and practice social distancing.

SAFETY ATTIRE

For the foreseeable future, all ABC Company associates are asked to wear face masks at work. Each associate will be provided 2 reusable face masks. Our office will also have disposable gloves for associates' use.

ENTERING THE OFFICE

Temperature checks will be conducted in the building lobbies. You may be asked to dispose of disposal personal protective equipment (PPE) in designated lobby trash receptacles prior to proceeding to the elevator. Elevator procedures and occupancy will be posted as well. You will also be asked to complete a simple health-related questionnaire.

KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN

Upon arriving at work, wash your hands before going to your workspace.

BRINGING FOOD TO THE OFFICE

If bringing food to the office, please pack in containers that can be cleaned on the outside with disinfecting wipes upon arrival at the office. Do not bring homemade or store-bought snacks to the office to share with other associates.

For the foreseeable future, overnight storage of food in pantry refrigerators is prohibited.

YOUR FIRST CUP OF COFFEE

Our pantries/kitchens have been redesigned with mandated directional flows where practical and are stocked with disinfecting cleaning supplies.

Throughout Your Day

MOVING AROUND THE OFFICE

We've prescribed new circulation/traffic patterns with fresh branded signage and wayfinding. You'll notice social distancing queues in reception areas, elevator vestibules and pantries.

YOUR WORKSPACE

+ **Respect Personal Space.** We've dedicated all workstations and have reduced the density of work areas in the open office with a space of 6 feet (approximately 2 meters) between workstations, providing enclosure with screens where applicable and rearranging seating so you are not face-to-face with a colleague. We have marked distances on the floor. Please be respectful of your colleagues and be considerate of their personal space.

+ **Keep It Tidy.** We've also provided you with cleaning supplies for you to use at your workstation. Disinfect your workspace at a minimum at the start and end of each day. It is important that we maintain an easily cleanable environment; remove any personal items from your workspace such as photographs or mementos.

RECEIVING DELIVERIES

Company-wide food deliveries and packages are only permitted to be received in the reception area.

KITCHEN ETIQUETTE

For the foreseeable future, we have removed all bulk snacks and reusable glasses, mugs and flatware. Only prepacked snacks are offered. If you need to prepare any food in the kitchen, please bring your own utensils and clean the area thoroughly afterwards using the provided cleaning materials. No personal food should be left in the kitchen overnight.

MEETING WITH VISITORS

Associates are required to wear a face mask for a visitor meeting or appointment and maintain appropriate social distance with visitors. Gloves are not required unless you are handling food. Associates are encouraged to wash their hands frequently and use provided hand-sanitizer.

Use the dedicated visitor meeting area in the reception area for meeting with guests. Visitors are not permitted to entry into work areas.

USING SHARED MEETING SPACES

+ **Time to Meet.** We've limited the number of people permitted to be in shared spaces. Please see the posted signage outside of each space and abide by those limits.

+ **Leave Time to Clean.** It is important that we all work together to create a clean and healthy environment for each other and our visitors. We have made all rooms bookable. When booking time please allow 10 minutes between meetings to wipe down all surfaces, including phones and audio/video equipment, to leave a clean and sanitized space for the next user.

NO TOUCH

In order to limit the amount of physical contact with shared tools and objects we have exposed all garbage/recycling bins and have provided wipes in elevators and near stairwells. Additionally, we are asking that all non-security doors be left open at all

times. If you must have a private meeting, please make sure to wipe down door handles when exiting the room.

RESTROOMS

Observe maximum capacity signage posted for restrooms.

HAVE YOU WASHED YOUR HANDS LATELY?

Practice frequent hand washing throughout the day.

BE CONSIDERATE

Share your on-site days and remote work arrangements with teammates and coordinate with your manager and the reception desk on visits from guests to keep traffic to a minimum.

Time To Go Home

CLEAN DESKS

To make it easier for cleaning and janitorial personnel to assure that workspaces are cleaned thoroughly, remove and any work materials and supplies from your desktop nightly and stow in your designated storage.

Working Across Locations

During this time, when we cannot all be together in the same place, we are committed to fostering a community of collaboration through virtual and other communication tools such as on-line meetings, webinars and conference calls.

Here are a few tips for conducting meetings when many teammates are virtual:

Before the Meeting

- + Share all materials in advance of the meeting.
- + Test all technology (including camera/video, WiFi, screen sharing, sound) before the meeting.

During the Meeting

- + Introduce everyone during the meeting and give everyone a chance to contribute. Pay special attention to include online participants.
- + Keep your camera on when possible.

- + Maintain eye contact with online attendees by looking into the camera.
- + Speak clearly so that everyone can hear you, especially those online.
- + Mute yourself if background noise occurs.
- + Don't ruffle papers or make unneeded sounds.
- + Don't interrupt other people when they're speaking or attempt to speak over them. Use the chat box if you need to ask a question when someone is speaking.
- + Don't work on other tasks, such as checking your email
- + Turn off all notifications and make sure your cell phone is on silent.
- + Make sure all online team members are in a quiet area free from unnecessary distraction.
- + Do not conduct any in-the-room side conversation with onsite participants that online teammates cannot hear.

At the End of the Meeting

- + Confirm everyone is clear on next steps and action items to be taken
- + Address any questions or matters that need clarification (especially remote colleagues who were not privy to the on-site discussion)

Additional Remote Work Resources

Here are some additional resources to help you get set up and maintain your workflow.

[Tips for a Healthy Workspace](#)

[Tips for Remote Work Success](#)

[Strategies for Managing a Remote Team](#)

Stay Connected

We will continue to post communication updates to our ABC Company Return to a Healthy Workplace internal website. If you have any additional questions, please reach out to your manager or your dedicated change champion.



Through research, Knoll explores the connection between workspace design and human behavior, health and performance, and the quality of the user experience. We share and apply what we learn to inform product development and help our customers shape their work environments. To learn more about this topic or other research resources Knoll can provide, visit www.knoll.com/research