

The Workplace Reimagined

New Normal Series

Pandemic preparedness will shape design best practices.

Facing a new reality, we must reconsider what the future of workplace design looks like. Clients will continue to rely on their trusted consultants for guidance on how to solve for a new set of challenges.

As experts in workplace strategy and design, PDR has developed four categories of considerations to help navigate through design-related decisions. Combined with a renewed set of policies and improved building systems, we can holistically achieve a better way to come together.

1 Human Connection

A Renewed Purpose for the Workplace
A Need for Social Interaction
Innovation is Still King

2 Planning Strategies

A Blended Model of Workers
Embrace Modular, Flexible Planning
Maintain Physical Distancing
Minimize High-Touch Surfaces

3 Furniture

For the Individual Workspace
For Collaborative Spaces
Ensuring Safety in an Agile Environment

4 Materiality

Specify Products with Cleanability in Mind
Daylight and Antimicrobial Surfaces
Increased Importance of Durability

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1 Human Connection

A Renewed Purpose for the Physical Workplace

Space to amplify the brand experience to reconnect individuals with the organization's mission, vision and values

Human connection is necessary to foster a strong culture that is inclusive and where employees feel they belong

Gaining a sense of identity in contrast to others reveals the value of one's unique individual impact to the greater goal

A Need for Social Interaction

Feeling isolated and lonely leads employees to be less engaged, less productive and less creative

Employees that form meaningful, positive connections at work tend to be more happy, dedicated and motivated to perform their best

The design of the physical workplace shall continue to be a platform for engaging social interactions; Striking a balance between safety and comfort will be key

Innovation is Still King

Impromptu collisions that happen in the physical workplace foster cross-collaboration between groups of people, leading to new innovations that would otherwise be unlikely to happen

The overall experience of the physical workplace can energize and inspire; Key attributes of a space that supports a culture of innovation

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1 Human Connection

2 Planning Strategies

A Blended Model of Remote Working and On-Site Working

- Permission for employees to feel they have a safe choice
- Rotating on-site schedule to lower occupant density
- Accelerate activity-based working to optimize space and provide choice

Embrace Modular, Flexible Planning

- High end-user choice and adjustability
- A minimal 6'x6' modular planning grid supports safe physical distancing guidelines
- Ability to re-densify later when designated safe to do so

Maintain Physical Distancing

- Seats within individual workspaces shall be positioned 6' apart in all directions
- Collaborative spaces shall hold no more than 10 people, with ample space between seats
- Touchless virtual tools shall be used to collaborate with more than 10 people
- Circulation throughout shall double in width or adopt a one-way circular flow

Minimize High-Touch Surfaces Where Possible

- Launch a BYO policy, eliminating the need for self serve drink stations or vending areas
- Provide touchless controls for lighting, audio-visual tools, faucets and other devices
- Provide touchless door operation at all high traffic doorways
- Explore strategic spatial connectivity to control the abundance of microbes

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For the Individual Workspace

For ease of daily cleaning, adopt a clean desk policy throughout
Add bag hooks to workstations so that personal items never sit directly on the floor
When closer than 6', provide 24" high screens as a smooth, wipeable health barrier
Avoid the use of sit-to-stand desks when bench-style systems are used; Instead create a zone with static standing-height desks for people to utilize when desired

For Collaborative Spaces

Consider personal mobile tablet armchairs to allow for easy distancing
At tables, reduce the number of chairs by half than what has been typical in the past
Limit or Avoid adjustable features on furniture in all shared collaborative spaces
In addition to safe selections for textiles at soft seating areas, avoid specifying products with too many seams, folds or piping that can trap pathogens
Provide proper training and signage to educate all on the safe use of collaboration spaces; Frequent and visible cleaning will be needed

Ensuring Safety in an Agile Environment

All shared spaces to have sanitation caddies to support a *clean-when-you-arrive-and-go* policy; Provide proper training and signage to educate all
Assign lockers to individuals instead of providing shared or day-use lockers
Avoid sharing accessories; Instead personal accessory caddies shall be used to store needed supplies such as post-it notes, pens, headsets, wireless keyboards and mice

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Specify Products with Cleanability in Mind

Limit or avoid products that can trap pathogens and/or be difficult to clean for horizontal surfaces and fabrics for upholstery

Continuous, non-porous counter tops and flooring materials are easiest to keep clean
Crypton and other like-treated fabrics offer a fluid-resistant, non-porous surface that can withstand cleaning with hospital-grade disinfectants

Consider low pile, solution dyed synthetic fibers that can be aggressively cleaned

Daylight and Antimicrobial Surfaces Support a Healthier Workplace

Daylight reduces the viability of bacteria compared to dark spaces

Products like ionic silver infused plastic laminate, Microban antimicrobial paint, or cooper infused textiles reduce the growth of microbes

Glass, ceramic, stone and steel products with photocatalytic coatings have self-cleaning and antimicrobial properties

Copper, Brass, Bronze and Silver have natural antimicrobial properties; Consider these metals for high touch hardware such as door levers or cabinet pulls

Durability in High Traffic Areas is More Important Than Ever Before

Consider fabrics with a higher double rub count to withstand heavy and frequent cleaning

Avoid wood on handrails, door pulls, chair arm caps and boardroom tables where transfer of alcohol-based hand sanitizer can damage the wood finish