

August 31, 2020

Safe, Hygienic and Healthy Workplaces

COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the way we work. As businesses begin to reopen, there is an increasing awareness of the need to adapt the workplace to ensure the health and safety of employees, and in turn the community. While the number of COVID-19 community cases in Singapore has largely been stabilized, the office presents an additional health risk given the increased contact between staff. If not properly managed and sanitized, the workplace could pose a health hazard for returning employees.

To facilitate safe return to the office, a number of regulations have been introduced by the government to ensure that firms take adequate precautions. Concurrently, the business community has developed best practices, services, and products to comply with those regulations.

Drawing on insights from industry experts, this publication delves into the best practices that businesses can adopt to ensure a healthy, safe, and hygienic workplace for employees, and how organizations can use technological solutions to complement such efforts.



Protecting Your People Through Clean Office Design

While the world slowly adapts to life during the COVID-19 pandemic, there's still a need to stay alert and prevent infection. Did you know that 72% of infections can be transmitted by touch?¹ Or that the average desk holds 10 million germs? We all know the importance of ensuring employee health and safety in the workplace, but how can companies look to improve the office and restore lost confidence outside of the home?

Unispace has been blending science and design to outsmart viruses and refresh offices – it's a win-win. Studies have found that COVID-19 can stay on plastic or cardboard surfaces for two to three days, whereas on copper surfaces, it can last only up to four hours.

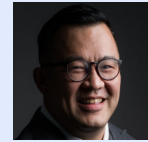
Key Takeaways

Unispace has identified the best materials and hardware solutions to use in your workplace to reduce the risk of infection and maintain business continuity.

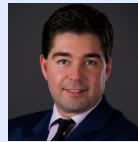
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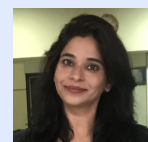
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¹ <https://trafficdev.steelcase.com/eu-en/research/articles/topics/wellbeing/creating-more-health-conscious-work-environments-through-antimicrobial-materials/>

- **Vertical surfaces:** Using curved walls and surfaces, which are more difficult for people to infect, and antimicrobial coatings, ceramic tiles and grout to eliminate viruses. Where fabric panels are required, these can be treated with Microban.
- **Countertops:** Viruses are attracted to flat surfaces, so ensure you use materials that are easy to wipe clean. These include Corian® and ceramics, which make it much more difficult for germs to populate the area. Other materials include copper – which is resilient to microbes – for counters and backsplashes.
- **Fabrics and textiles:** Antimicrobial fabrics and textiles have been treated to prevent the growth of microorganisms, and even kill them outright. The types deployed in Unispace’s projects include antibacterial silver fabric (which has a 99% antibacterial rate), polyester, vinyl and acrylic. These fabrics can be used on furniture, joinery, curtains and cushions.
- **Flooring:** To stop viruses from spreading in offices, it’s also wise to use non-porous, hard materials for flooring. Natural material, like timber, is durable. Cork, on the other hand, possesses antimicrobial properties, and is cost-effective, sustainable and eco-friendly. Other good choices include vinyl, carpet and porcelain tiles, and resin-polished concrete.
- **Ceilings, air quality and lighting:** Viruses and bacteria can be controlled using UV lighting, air filtration systems and HVAC air cleaning systems. Ensuring adequate ventilation to allow the flow of natural air will also help, as will deploying an ioniser, which destroys 99.8% of virus or bacteria build-up. Eliminating light switches and installing motion sensors around desks will also limit surface contact.
- **Hardware and accessories:** Copper and brass are the best materials to repel viruses, but use of touchless and voice-activated technology can reduce contact. These, alongside antimicrobial coatings, help eliminate viruses on surfaces that people touch regularly, such as doorknobs.



Importance of Hygiene in Office in the COVID Environment

Why is hygiene so important especially now? For one, government regulations require that places of work practice good hygiene and cleaning process to prevent employees and customer exposure to pathogens to reduce the risks of infection. Aside from the regulations, good hygiene practices and systems reduce the chances or risks of employees falling ill, increase employee welfare, minimize the economic and financial damage caused by loss of work and in today’s world, the risks of a second wave of COVID-19. It is also socially responsible to safeguard your employees, customers and wider society.

How do you introduce good hygiene practices at offices? Good hygiene cannot be introduced in isolation. Businesses should go beyond posters and stickers to implementing a hygiene system and process in the organization. A task force comprising of leaders, managers, employees and building management can help.

Offices are not hospitals nor meant to be sterile environments and shouldn’t be treated as such. That being said, it is important to know how pathogens such as COVID-19 spread, and be aware of the higher risk areas within an office environment. Transmission primarily tends to be through droplets and particles in the air or via contact or contamination of surfaces. Certain bacteria and viruses can remain infectious for a long time on inanimate surfaces and so it is important to not only conduct proper hand hygiene, but also to regularly disinfect surfaces.


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 Cleaning Markets

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Higher risk areas are anywhere with a lot of traffic, such as entrance and waiting areas, lifts, common areas and door handles. Finally, to be successful it is important to embed hygiene fundamentals into daily business activity and processes and also set up a regular cleaning routine.

To learn more about [hygiene concepts and designing programs](#), check out DTO's recent training webinar and contact DTO for custom consultations.

Key Takeaways

- **Hygiene systems:** Implementing good hygiene in the workplace should be thought of as setting up a system VS a distinct task. Businesses should not rely on standalone measures like hanging posters on the wall and providing disinfection dispensers in the office. Hygiene practices have to be embedded into business activity and cleaning routines.
- **Leader driven:** Company leaders must make clear the importance of hygiene. Decision makers and management should first be made aware of hygiene fundamentals. For larger firms with complex operations, setting up a hygiene task force should be considered. Smaller firms can appoint a leader who is a hygiene champion.
- **Company-wide:** The hygiene infrastructure must be set up so that the entire organization takes an active part in hygiene with ease. For example, appropriate placement of hand disinfectants in the office.
- **Implement, benchmark and improve:** Training and embedding hygiene in day-to-day activity ensures adherence by employees. Once an initial system is set up, it is time for ongoing review and continuous improvement. Benchmarking against historical trends and other organizations will also be useful.



Reopening the World's Workplaces

CBRE believes that corporate real estate and facilities (CRE&F) executives and their teams are poised to lead the way in reopening the world's workplaces. To continue supporting organizations in what may ultimately be the most important undertaking to date for our industry, CBRE has prepared a comprehensive suite of [Reopening the World's Workplaces guides and resources](#).

CBRE believes collaboration across borders, functions and lines of business to develop intellectual insights, global best practices and thoughtful guidance is critical to an integrated response. As the COVID-19 situation evolves daily, this information must be kept current to address new and emerging needs. CBRE's COVID-19 CRE&F Executive Resource Guide is helping executives address the full spectrum of COVID-19 considerations and recommendations – from enterprise strategy, to welcoming employees back to the workplace, to long-term workplace evolution. CBRE is also sharing key resources such as its own office reopening playbook and office signage templates. The response to COVID-19 requires new approaches, leveraging digital solutions to provide safe, hygienic and healthy workplaces. CBRE leverages its Host service line to support office re-entry via an on-demand "welcome back" experience focused on service delivery, digital activation and elevated workplace hospitality.

CBRE

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Host's digital services are driven by an employee-facing mobile app that brings office environments and buildings to life. It supports re-entry strategies for organizations, featuring quick activation and robust resources to bolster both lobby and individual work experiences – creating environments where people feel welcome, supported and comfortable as they enter the workplace.

Key Takeaways

- CBRE recommends four guiding principles to steer organizations on their reopening journey, for both their strategic and tactical recovery efforts:
 - **Safety:** The safety of employees, visitors, contractors and the general public must guide all strategic and tactical decisions.
 - **Compliance:** Public health organizations (e.g., the World Health Organization, various global Centers for Disease Control & Prevention) and governmental agencies should guide organizations' planning and implementation.
 - **Collaboration:** Returning employees to the workplace requires expertise from across organizations – from Line of Business Leaders, to Finance, to Health, Safety & Environmental (HSE), to Human Resources (HR), to CRE&F, and more.
 - **Agility:** Stay ready to adapt and respond. Even in workplace environments that have reopened, new exposure concerns have arisen. Be prepared with appropriate protocols and if necessary, to reinstate full or partial work-from-home regimes at a moment's notice.
- The implications of COVID-19 have been profound and the path to business recovery remains fluid. With uncertainty still ahead of us, it's hard to plan with confidence—but organizations around the world can benefit from detailed, location-by-location reopening readiness efforts. Working together with internal stakeholders and partners, CRE&F leaders can benefit from open, proactive and practical dialogue on how the total workplace environment needs to perform for a safe and healthy return to work.
- CBRE has taken a holistic approach to re-entry providing comprehensive information through its Reopening the World's Workplaces guides and resources. CBRE is actively supporting organizations in developing and implementing plans and protocols, creating and consolidating leading practices, and forming recommendations about how to rethink, reopen and re-enter workplaces when the time comes.



Technology For Safe Work Place

Adapting to a 'new normal' means overcoming new challenges. Enterprises need the agility to acclimate to best practices and changing regulations while preparing their business for this 'new normal'. The three key elements required to promote safety for employees are:

1. Personal and Workpsace Hygiene & Sanitization
2. Following Social Distancing Rules and Monitoring Breaches in Protocol
3. Having the Ability to Produce a Contact Tracing Report


A technology-based solution combining contact tracing with user-level alerts will help contain exposure and empower workers to maintain distance. Bluetooth (BLE) technology-enabled enterprise devices can help monitor and record the social distancing events.





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For example, if two employees with these BLE devices come within an unsafe distance of each other over a specified time limit, a proximity event is recorded and sent from the devices over Wi-Fi to a cloud database with an anonymous id. These records can be pulled into an instant, graphical display that shows not only who the employee was near, but also the secondary contacts. If the employee was COVID-19 positive, this automated contact tracing tree makes it fast and easy to identify who needs to be notified and to begin prevention measures such as testing, quarantine, and deep cleaning of workspaces to avoid further transmissions. BLE technology is the best enabler to ensure a safe and secure feeling amongst the employees while returning to work in this post-pandemic world. Instead of relying on slow, labor-intensive, manual contact tracing practices, dependent on people's memory of record and their discipline to track, you can reduce risk using available technology.

Key Takeaways

 **INCREASE AWARENESS WITH PROXIMITY ALERTS**
Empower workers to separate from others with on device alerts to avoid proximity events.

 **ENFORCE SOCIAL DISTANCING WITH PROXIMITY EVENTS**
Use proximity event dashboard to see occurring events and spot patterns to help managers coach workers and enforce distancing protocol.

 **IDENTIFY EXPOSURE WITH AUTOMATED CONTACT TRACING**
Get full view of possible worker exposures easily with web-based contact tracing report. This allows you to efficiently identify the right individuals, saving time with high degree of accuracy.