

# WHAT'S NEXT?



## THE TOTAL WORKPLACE

### THE SITUATION

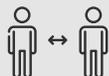
#### The World's Biggest Work-From-Home Project

We are all now participating in the world's biggest Work-From-Home (WFH) pilot project. In response to the health crisis, many organizations turned on a dime and continued without much disruption; others embarked on massive laptop purchases and scrambled to set up secure connections. Still others had their workers spend countless hours learning new apps that are critical for successful collaboration (which perhaps they should have been using all along). Depending on where they worked, some folks were lucky to have a home office that allowed for seamless transition, while others faced the hard adjustment of working from dining tables with dogs barking and kids milling around in the background. Across the board, we've all learned hard lessons.

Whether your organization experienced calm or chaos – and despite the shock and dismay caused by this terrible crisis – we are all speculating on how long it might last and what will happen when we are given the “all clear” to return to our offices. Being prepared is the first important step.

### APPROXIMATE PROXEMICS

Informally, proxemics refers to **personal and interpersonal distances**. There are four types of distances that people tend to keep – intimate (0-18 in.), personal (18 in.-4 ft.), social (4 ft.-10 ft.) and public (over 10 ft.). This may vary depending on different cultures around the world, which complicates the creation of global workplace standards.



### FOCUS ON A HOLISTIC PROCESS

*Organizations are preparing now for the return of employees to their workplaces. Creating a sense of safety and security will be the first priority.*

### OUR COLLECTIVE ANXIETY

#### Proximity and Perception

For perspective on what it will take for people to feel comfortable working under one roof again, we can go back to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which ranked the five basic needs all of us require to have a balanced life. Feeling safe and secure is one of them. In a post-crisis world, all organizations will be challenged like never before to ensure that workplaces restore and reinforce this fundamental requirement – and keep their workers' minds at ease.

Pivoting the physical workplace to relieve the anxiety of returning workers presents challenges on numerous fronts. To chart a course in repositioning your facilities, it's important to address changed attitudes about:



#### 1. Proximity

How much distance will workers need in order to feel safe and able to function?



#### 2. Perception

Will workers feel confident that their employer is doing everything necessary to keep them safe?

The term “social distancing” is now embedded in our collective vocabulary. While the strategy of creating specific distances between people to achieve an outcome (i.e. protect health), the study of the human use of space called “proxemics” has long been used in workplace design to calibrate productivity.

Proxemics principles are used by workplace strategists to determine the effects of density on behaviour, communication and social interaction. Interfering with certain “bubbles of space” can cause great discomfort and anxiety for people. While it's always been important to examine the impact of shared spaces, whether collaborative or individual, it's become an urgent imperative for organizations to assess and make changes to their workplace to ensure workers feel safe and secure.

## CREATING DISTANCE AND SMALL DETAILS

Some organizations may go back to assigning individual spaces to provide maximum separation between workers, while others may decide that easily cleanable panels will suffice to emphasize separation between workstations. Small details, such as containing wiring in raceways, clean-desk policies and limiting access to certain spaces should be considered. Clearly, workplace solutions will vary significantly depending on each organization's culture and long-term strategy.

## MARKING TERRITORY

Coupled with proxemics is the need to mark territoriality – a distinct and primal aspect of human nature. Providing territories for people (or groups of people who are engaged with a high degree of trust) will take on a new importance. Part of understanding territoriality is accepting that humans are protective over certain spaces and objects.

## COMFORT = CLEANLINESS

In addition to using objects as personal markers for illustrating personality, ownership provides a sense of comfort. This sense of comfort extends to the perception of cleanliness. While we can make checklists for cleanliness, disinfect objects frequently, and perhaps engage full-time cleaning staff, the perception of cleanliness during the post-pandemic period will be just as important as the cleaning itself – a critical step needed to build trust.

## MAKE CLEAN VISIBLE!

We must think of clean as not just a necessary service to protect our health, but as a marketing initiative for employees. We must assume that all high-touch surfaces are suspect and implement new visible strategies to eliminate some common practices and keep surfaces sanitized on a regular basis. For example, the common coffee pot – touched by many hands throughout the day – may become a thing of the past. New protocols will be needed to address multiple areas to quell employee anxiety.

The need for clean in a post-pandemic world will be a universal priority. First and foremost, in the short-term, ensure all workplace cleaning services are highly visible. Services that are not visible do not have the same perceived value as those that are readily and consistently seen by employees.

## LONG-TERM INNOVATIONS

Long term, breakthroughs in workplace design may offer solutions: self-cleaning surfaces, nano-technology-enabled fabrics, automated doors and UV lighting used at off-hours to kill germs. Building science may also shift. Sunlight and natural ventilation, a proven method for combating infection, may become top of mind for building engineers. As well, innovations in building material and science will start to materialize, which will turn the spotlight on the development and building industry to demonstrate a new level of leadership and responsibility in a post-pandemic world.



# HOW WE CAN HELP

## WORKPLACE ASSESSMENT

A successful workplace blends multiple characteristics and is carefully balanced to promote productivity, efficiency and wellness, while inspiring innovation and loyalty. A well-designed workplace is responsive and can pivot to accommodate the inevitable changes that arise over time.

The Total Workplace includes a Holistic Process and measurement tool used to assess the office environment through the lens of six key categories with the goal of an organization becoming more:



The effectiveness of each category is then measured against its support of three critical business areas: Place, Technology, People.

By using this tool, we deliver a clear assessment of your workplace, with an emphasis on your post-crisis readiness. This includes an evaluation of desking allocations and mobility ratios, proxemics, shared services and amenities, as well as an assessment of your technology platform and how it supports maximum productivity, particularly given the rise of remote working.

## CHANGE MANAGEMENT

### Return to Office Strategy

During this challenging time, organizations must communicate with employees about the workplace and the safety protocols that have been established in order to alleviate anxiety upon return to the office. Simply asking everyone to come back without a 'Return to Office' strategy will only heighten stress. The easiest way to mitigate anxiety and reinforce a culture of trust is to create a roadmap with specific communication tools for re-entry. This may include a Pulse Survey, "What's Different" Communication Plan, Re-Entry Protocols and Process Guideline, Updated Flexible Working Guidelines, Visitor and Security Protocols, Onboarding Document and a Graphics Package for Protocol Management.

## CLOUD READINESS

An organization's current and future technology platform should work as a powerful enabler to deploy innovation, maximize flexibility, drive progress and increase revenue capabilities. Technology should allow your workforce to seamlessly perform no matter where they're working with no disruption to business operations. It can be used as a tool to hire top talent and retain it, and of course, drive external client engagement and satisfaction.

Cushman & Wakefield's Digital Transformation team will assess your existing technology platform to identify under-performing areas. Our professionals will recommend and implement innovative solutions, which will ultimately create new efficiencies and support your overarching business objectives. Implementing next generation technology architecture will:

- ✓ Make your business adaptable
- ✓ Provide you with financial clarity
- ✓ Ensure transparency and efficiency
- ✓ Optimize deployment, lowering your spend
- ✓ Future proof your business
- ✓ Eliminate common technology obstacles and mistakes



**SAMANTHA SANNELLA**  
Managing Director  
Strategic Consulting Canada  
Direct: +1 416 359 2582  
samantha.sannella@cushwake.com



**Cushman & Wakefield ULC, Brokerage**  
161 Bay Street, Suite 1500  
Toronto, Ontario, M5J 2S1  
[cushmanwakefield.com](http://cushmanwakefield.com)