



WORK.LIFE x TWO

**GUIDE TO
RETURNING
TO THE OFFICE**

CONTENTS

3 **Rotating employees**

4 **Reconfiguring your space**

One-way system

Protective screens

7 **Introducing a robust
cleaning process**

9 **Decommissioning
high-risk areas**

10 **Agile working**

11 **Final thoughts**



We can all agree that we won't be returning to the same office situation we left in March. With a host of conflicting advice around personal hygiene, deep cleaning of spaces and keeping a bit more physical distance between us, returning to the office can seem a bit daunting.

Given that there won't be a one-size-fits all solution for everyone, it's time to start considering what options are available to ensure we are able to start bringing people back into the office (if that is indeed the best strategy for your business). In this article, we dive into some of these options to help give you return to the workplace safely and efficiently.

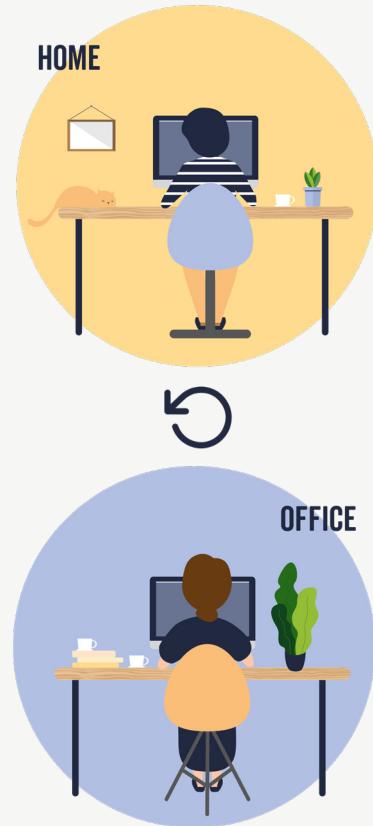
ROTATING EMPLOYEES

Rotation plans and a shift system are obvious first considerations. Whether it be creating morning and afternoon shifts or splitting the organisation into teams to allow for a set group to work certain days, this will help to prevent cross-contamination between the groups.

However, it would be a mistake to just apply this as a blanket approach across the team. Keep in mind a digital-first policy (i.e. prioritising home working when possible) and consider who actually needs to be in the office.

To work out who needs to be in the office, start by rolling out individual assessments. The assessment criteria may include job function, transportation risks, health and age, wellbeing and facilities at home. Additionally, ask whether your employees want to return to the office. Some might be more cautious than others, so it's always good to check on how they are feeling about the return.

Once you have a better understanding of your employees' needs and how they are feeling, you should also consider implementing new office technology and in-home working solutions to ensure connectivity between team members.



Rotating employees between home and office

RECONFIGURING YOUR SPACE

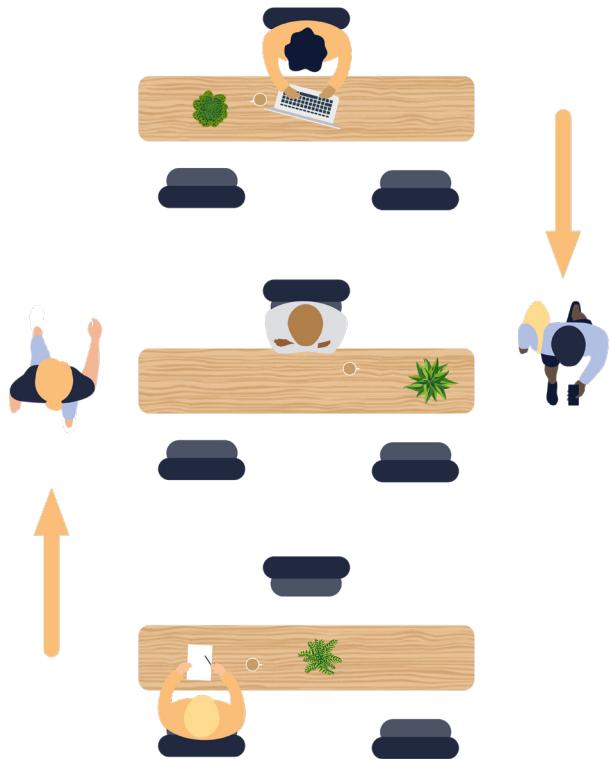


Rearranging certain desks in an alternating pattern

Once you have reviewed the needs of your team and reflected on what is required for your business to operate, it's time to consider the role your space plays in how you move forward. We know the guidance is to keep a '1m plus' distance wherever possible, wear face masks on public transport, and ensure we keep up the high levels of personal hygiene. But what impact does that have on an office?

As teams start to return to the office, you must encourage them to keep their distance. Where possible, you should consider some level of reconfiguration of furniture. One option is to rearrange certain desks in an alternating pattern so that team members aren't sitting directly opposite or directly adjacent to each other.

As you move forward, it will also be worth reviewing the overarching desk density strategy of the business. There is some argument for reducing the number of desks in favour of larger collaboration settings. With social distancing now reduced to 1m plus, employees needn't shout across at each other, so this is certainly a viable option.



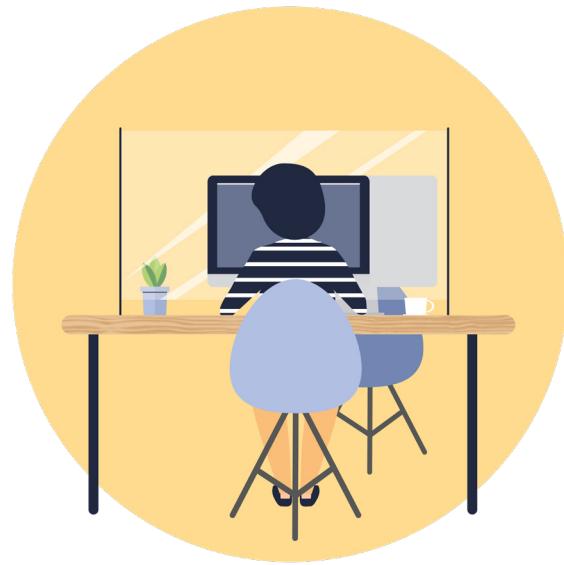
Introducing a one-way system in the office

One-way system

It's also important to consider how team members move about the space. For example, you may need a one-way system or checkpoints to avoid congestion or unnecessary crossover of people as they move about. Even when in the office, it is worth considering joining larger online meetings virtually to avoid overcrowding of collaboration spaces and meeting rooms.

Protective screens

In addition to the reconfiguration, think about what other furniture solutions might help prepare your space for the return of team members. One great idea is to introduce protective screen solutions to stop the infection from spreading. You have already seen these on petrol station counters, so think the same kind of thing but on office workstations and reception desks.



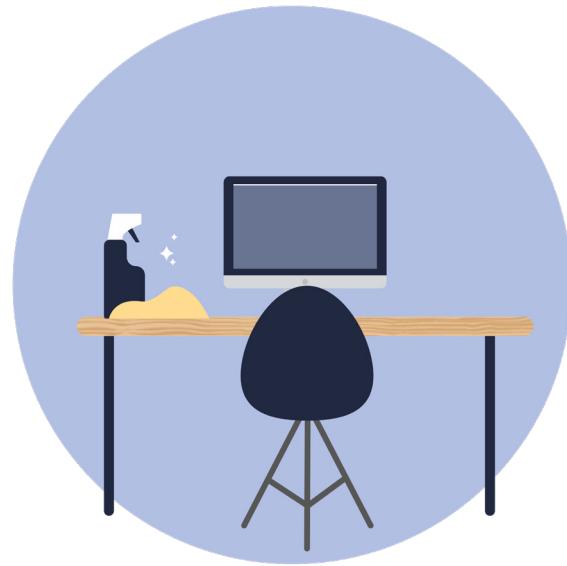
Perspex screens to reduce the spread of infection

INTRODUCING A ROBUST HYGIENE AND CLEANING PROCESS

Though restrictions are easing, we're still vulnerable at this time, so it's crucial that hygiene remains a priority.

To avoid the spread of infection, one critical step is to limit the sharing of equipment between team members. For example, headsets for online chats, desk phones and even pens should not be shared. Sharing crockery and utensils should also be kept to a minimum and cleaned regularly.

Posters and visual aids around the office will help to remind employees about best practice hygiene behaviours. The second critical step is to introduce a robust hygiene and cleaning regime.



Ramping up your cleaning schedule

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:



Ramping up the cleaning schedule

Your employees' safety is a priority, and fear will quickly creep in if employers are not seen to have a clear, thorough and professional cleaning policy.



Improving sanitation

Introduce hand sanitising stations around the office. These are inexpensive and will be essential in combating the spread of infection.



Deep cleaning

Ensure regular and professional deep cleans of the entire office. Additionally, regularly disinfect shared areas and high traffic zones throughout the day.

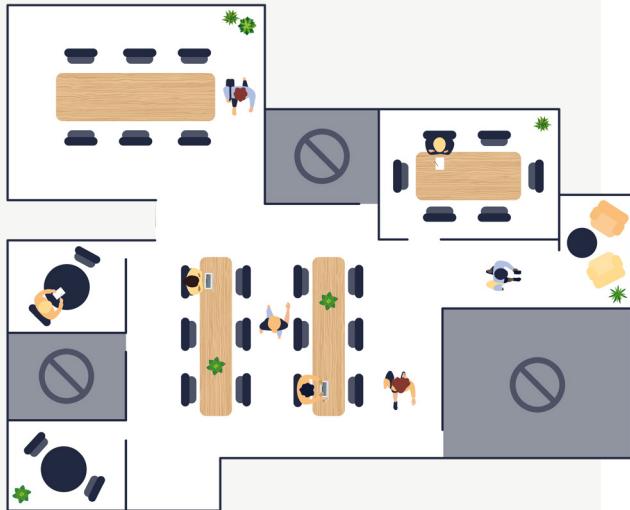


Ensuring individuals are cleaning their desks

Before and after use, make sure employees are being diligent by keeping their workstations clean. A clear-desk policy will help employees to keep on top of this.

Setting out clear policies for hygiene and cleaning may even help you to improve hygiene beyond the re-entry stage and reduce the number of employees taking sick leave in the future.

DECOMMISSIONING HIGH-RISK AREAS



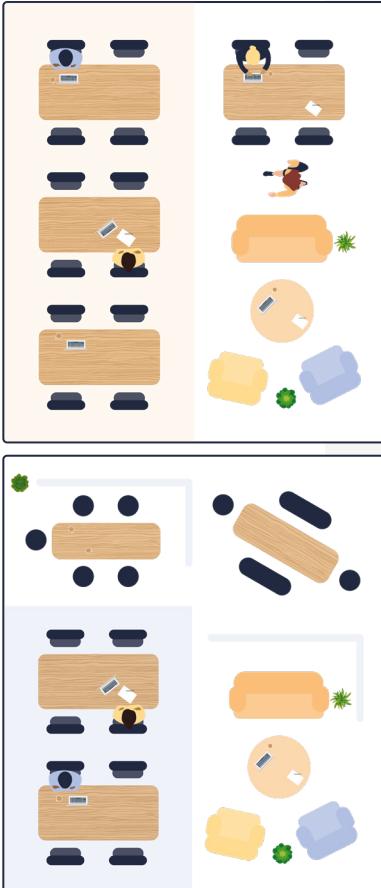
Eliminating high-risk areas

In order to adhere to social distancing guidelines and reduce the number of hot spots (areas where team members will naturally congregate or become congested), you may need to reconfigure your space or decommission high-risk areas in the office. Hot spots can include tea points, print rooms, bathrooms, meeting rooms and collaboration spaces – but we aren't suggesting you decommission your bathrooms!

Potential high-risk zones include hot desks and agile areas, so these should be at the top of your decommissioning list. Consider replacing 'hot

desks' with 'dedicated desks', where each team member books or is allocated their own desk for the day. After they have left for the day, the desk can be cleaned thoroughly.

Additionally, when it comes to kitchen areas, consider whether you can set up smaller tea and coffee points that will help reduce the congestion of people in one area. You may also want to implement a one-way traffic system to help with the movement around the office.



WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

There is no shortage of discussion around what the future of the office will be. Like many others, we have also been talking about how the office has changed over the last few decades and what it will look like in years to come.

The biggest change we are expecting to see is a reduction in physical presence in the de-densified office. One reason for this is that businesses are likely to be met with more requests from employees to work from home, so don't be surprised if agile working becomes more commonplace.

If you are unfamiliar with agile working, it essentially gives employees the freedom and flexibility to work when and how they choose, whether that be in different areas of an office

or remotely. With a greater demand for a better work-life balance looking likely after months of working from home, agile working is an ideal solution.

Given the pandemic, we may also see businesses adopt a robust cleaning schedule. With this in place, booking systems could be required for workstations, booths or meeting rooms. Again, this will likely reduce the number of people in the office at one time and encourage businesses to transition into a more agile way of working.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Ultimately, you need to make sure people feel safe in the workplace when they return. This will of course take some planning and preparation, but the effort will ensure that the infection rate remains low and you can get back to doing what you do best as soon as possible.

While there is light at the end of the tunnel, no one can say for sure if things will return to the exact way they were before. But that's not necessarily a bad thing: you can use this situation to reevaluate the way you operate and take strides towards a better, more productive way of working. Who knows, Covid-19 could be the best thing that ever happened to your business!

