



COVID-19 OFFICE SOLUTIONS FAQ

- **How and why are office spaces currently being reconsidered for social distancing/more employees working from home?**

Many reports today are concluding that the office is far from dead, with businesses likely to embrace more remote working practices in the future. Offices will become a buzz with activity in the future as more businesses embrace office designs promoting innovation, creativity, and team collaboration. Surprising for many companies has been their employees can work remotely, be productive, and stay connected.

- **What does the future look like for these spaces?**

Organizations want their people back in the office, but they need to be safe environments for all. Settings need to have either 6 feet of distance between the next closest employee or have a space divider that is at least 54 inches high. Neither is a small task today with the evolution of the open plan office.

In the past few years, the panels are lower or gone completely, spaces more open and work areas denser than ever before. As employees return to the office, they will see more space between their coworkers and dividers of many types to shield them while working. Glass, acrylic, plexiglass, vinyl, and certain new fabrics all satisfy those needs to keep people safe

- **While every job may be different, what are some of the main trends in a modern home office?**

It all starts with technology. With so many online meetings and conference calls, you better have high-speed internet and phone communications available. All those business meetings you attended in the office are now being hosted on video meeting/conferencing apps and will be for some time.

- **What are some ways to create the feel of working at work while still being at home to help people maintain focus?**

Always best to have a dedicated space in your home, primarily for your work. Then, with furnishings similar to your office workspace...a chair, desk/table, monitor arm and/or a keyboard tray, along with whatever storage makes sense. For many, this may be "the office" for a very long time.

- **What are some of the small details that people may overlook when designing their home office?**

Lighting is fundamental to productivity. Home office lighting should be focused, adjustable and dimmable to accommodate all activities. While most often found on the desk, task lights can have wall-mounted and floor lamp options if you would rather keep a clear work surface. To reduce glare on your screen that can cause eyestrain, see if you can place it at a right angle or away from windows and task lights.

Choose an office chair that works within the space while also ensuring your complete comfort. Make your office as ergonomic and enjoyable as possible.

- **For people building a new home, what are some design elements they should consider including?**

Once technology needs have been fully addressed, think of creating a space that reduces distractions. An area that insulates the worker from disruptions in the home as well as the reverse, not to disrupt others.

Given this opportunity, plan the layout of the office. Position the desk in the best possible manner. If you need to see clients coming and going, line it up neatly in view of the entrance. If you have an inspirational view to the outdoors, put the desk squarely in front of the window.

- **Some people may think just a desk and chair are enough. Why is it important to incorporate other elements (nature, art, etc.) into a home office?**

Just as the decor in our homes often reveal our personalities, an office can reflect the feel of our home. An office in the home has a big advantage. It can tell the story of who you are by displaying your talents, accomplishments, and rewards. All very personal and almost expected in a home office setting.

- **Can you discuss the latest in office and retail interior design trends?**

In this post pandemic environment, the immediate needs of our clients are straight forward. They need equipment necessary to provide safe workplaces for their employees returning to the office over the next few months.

Plexiglass Partitions: located in reception/waiting areas and as dividers throughout the workspace, they are being used on long tables where many employees would work side by side and across from each other. Also, as extenders to the top of panels for a more isolated individual work area.

Increased Spacing: Not only will we see desks and workstations spaced farther apart, there will be fewer seats and spread out tables in break rooms, kitchens, collaboration, and conferencing areas. Waiting and reception areas will have fewer seats and dividers allowing for separation.

Sanitizer Stations: Like exit signs, no matter where you are, you will be within sight of one.

- **How has the pandemic impacted workspaces/what do post pandemic trends look like?**

As the public health crisis continues, some are continuing to work from home while others are making their way back to the office. It may eventually become a matter of balance.

Working from home can mean you might be all over the house, moving around from the kitchen table to a patio or a view from another window. Technology allows for us to be constantly connected and never far away from our work. Laptops, tablets, headsets, and cellphones have become the norm.

If you are still working from home and have been struggling with the set-up, go ahead and make the upgrades to a bigger monitor, better lighting, and a proper chair. These are good investments and, not only will they help you until you get back to the office, but those upgrades also will be waiting for you the next time you need to work from home.

Going back to the office, a much different look awaits many. Spaces are being altered so people will feel safer being there. The open, cool-looking office with views to everyone and natural light will give way to taller panels, tabletop dividers and spreading out the remaining workstations. All of this being done to separate you from your co-worker's germs.

Other changes high on facility managers checklists moving forward...touchless technology for entry points and state of the art mechanical systems to filter and bring in fresh air. Social distancing will be factored into every design and layout for years to come.

The trend to reduce the amount of floor space per employee (densification) we were seeing is beginning to reverse. We expect to see more private offices/spaces for individuals with more distance between people in the open plan.

The direction people face is more relevant too. Many layouts will have workers generally facing the same direction with more space between them. There will be greater spacing and fewer seating options in shared areas.