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To our valued clients and partners,

With the Covid-19 pandemic, never has there been so much discussion about the importance of design and work environments. As an organization that exists because of spaces where people work, learn and heal, you'd expect nothing less than a desire for the return to those environments. It's true. We are passionate that the spaces we create bring people together to drive business results, engage learners and support healing, so we do not believe they will go away as some recent discussions suggest.

However, the Covid-19 crisis has affected everyone and elicited a variety of emotions linked to safety as it relates to interacting with others. Returning to these spaces may be stressful for workers, leaders, and businesses alike. Each person has unique circumstances that affect their comfort level. Leaders are challenged with balancing emotional and physical safety of employees with company results. Businesses are focused on developing safe working guidelines while navigating through new HR issues and economic uncertainty. So, while we do want to see people return to these environments; it needs to be in the safest way possible and when it is right for each organization.

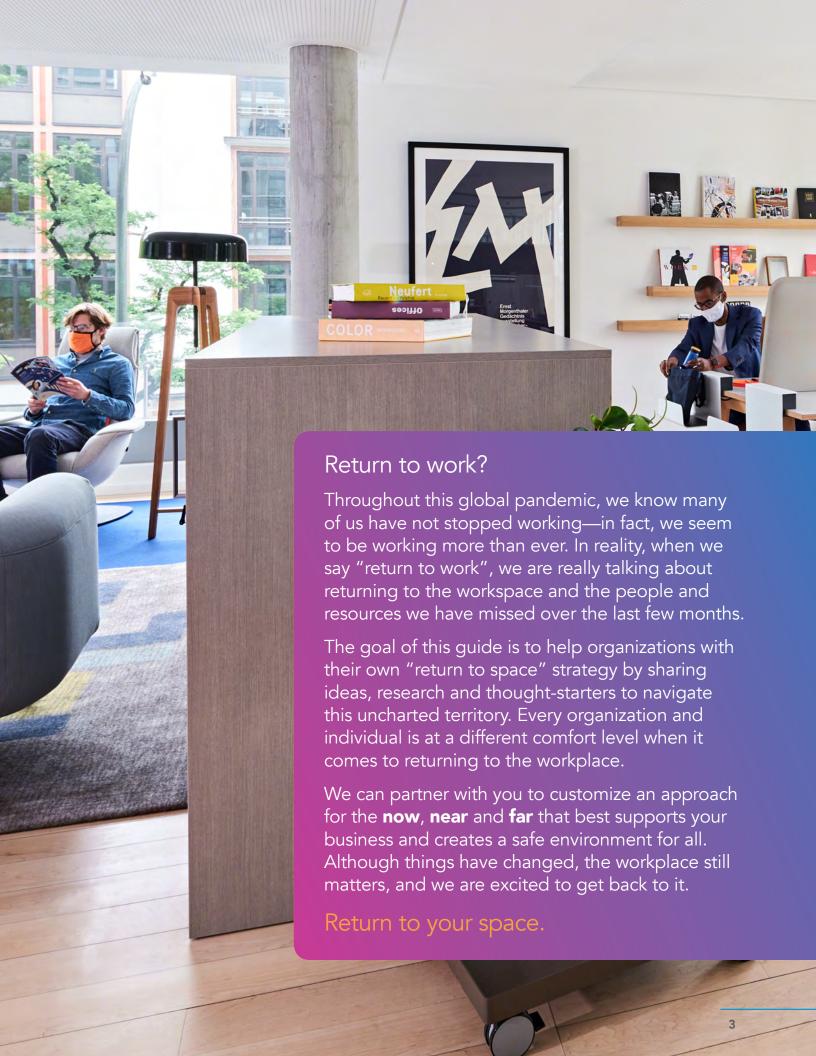
As businesses and leaders, we have an opportunity to rethink how we balance a workplace approach that promotes the success of both the employee and the organization. If people are an organization's greatest asset, our goal should be to support them across a variety of situations. It is our opportunity to consider a blended remote-work and in-person strategy. It is our chance to design spaces that become a destination for collaboration and reflect company culture. It is our challenge to design flexible spaces that can adapt and support a variety of work modes including social-distancing (and whatever trend may follow it) using materials scientifically designed to mitigate disease transmission. It is our responsibility to provide safer, touchless building technology elements with improved audiovisual tools in spaces that reduce the disparity between remote and in-person employees.

We have always believed space matters and feel it matters even more so today. On the pages that follow are a variety of ideas and considerations from our in-house architectural, furniture and technology divisions to support your return to space. Our teams are ready to share their insight on flexible architectural elements and furnishing layouts, as well as the latest technology trends and cleaning solutions.

Your return to space will be uniquely defined to your organizational needs, culture, and comfort. There is no one right answer, and it may change as the situation evolves. It may feel foreign or like uncharted territory, but we are here to help: a little distant, sporting a mask, one small step at a time.

Heather Lanier

Rich Schwabauer







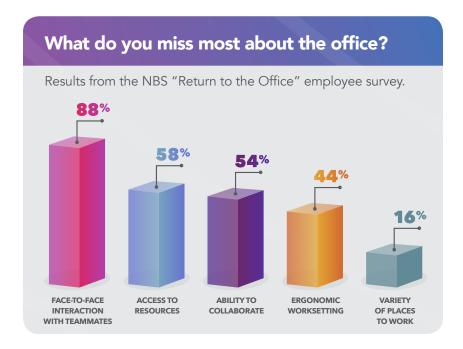
The workplace may change, but it still matters

We know what you're thinking: how and when should people return to the office? Do they even need to return? We believe organizations will bring their people back to the office, but it will be different and address business and employee needs in new ways. There is a necessity now to explore opportunities to add flexibility to the work environment that easily adapt as we plan for the unknown.

Not only consider people's physical safety be considered, but also their emotional state returning to the office after being in a controlled home environment for the past few months. Some people are still reluctant to return to the office due to safety concerns, childcare needs or other stress factors the pandemic has caused. That's why frequent communication around your re-entry plan, improved safety considerations, cleaning measures and other steps being taken is imperative to keeping employees informed and putting their minds at ease.

No matter when you decide the timing is right for your organization to return to your space, one thing is for sure: the office simply can't go away. It's where connections are made, innovation is fostered, and culture is grown. For many, work is a social activity, and the office is where employees have access to the people and tools they need to collaborate and innovate most effectively.

This is why the vast majority of us—88-90%*—want to work in an office again.



^{*}Cushman and Wakefield which surveyed 40,000 people globally reports under 10% will work from home fulltime. *Gensler's U.S. Work from Home Survey 2020 reports only 12% of workers want to work from home fulltime.



Competing in business today requires more innovation than ever. Innovation happens when employees can come together in a safe place, build trust and make ideas visible.

The workplace will no longer be seen as just a place to get work done. We know now work can be done from anywhere. The workplace will become a destination for people to connect to each other, to their purpose and to company culture. Finding ways to strengthen and nurture company culture is difficult when employees are working from home. Face-to-face interactions, even with a mask and at a distance, builds camaraderie and empathy and can achieve desired business output faster then when communicating virtually.

According to a client survey conducted by Harley Ellis Devereaux, the top three things organizations are most concerned about while employees are working from home are loss of productivity, maintaining company culture and maintaining product/output quality.

Reasons Why The Office Cannot Go Away*

- Innovation generation
- Talent management, attraction and retention
- Purpose and working towards a common goal
- Empathy, humanity and connection
- Variety of spaces and movement
- Boundaries between work and personal life
- Culture creation and preservation



THE FORBES

Returning to your space takes careful planning and consideration for employees' safety and comfort level.

Addressing immediate business and personnel needs now, planning for reconfiguration in the near, and looking for ways to reinvent the approach to business and space far into the future.

Action steps may include:

Prioritize wellbeing

of your people including their physical, cognitive and emotional needs with safety measures at the center of decision making.

Provide people with routine communication, **safety protocols** and materials needed to return to the workspace with confidence.

Set work-from-home expectations to allow worker flexibility while maintaining company culture and business objectives.

Address design and spatial needs to return people in a phased, safe way that complies with social distancing.

Enhance cleaning and decontamination with an increased focus on shared spaces and frequently used areas.

Digitally transform your workplace to improve safety and communication measures, including apps, digital signage, virtual collaboration tools and occupancy-driven sensor data.

 $^{{\}rm *From\ Forbes\ article\ ''Why\ The\ Office\ Simply\ Cannot\ Go\ Away:\ The\ Compelling\ Case\ for\ The\ Workplace''\ by\ Tracy\ Brower.}$





Responding to the

NOW

RETROFIT

The first step is bringing people back in a phased, safe manner to set their minds at ease. This means organizations may need to retrofit their current workplace based on government health guidelines.

- Assemble a planning task force and communication plan.
- Develop guidelines for phasing employees back to the office: consider assigned 'in office' days and new shared spaces protocols.
- Consider physical adjustments to the workplace to support social distancing including screens and seating removal.
- Outline health screening and safety protocols.
- Prioritize facility cleaning and personal hygiene.
- Implement physical distancing cues and signage.
- Benchmark against industry peers and clients to learn from their experiences/challenges.
- Shift leadership style as appropriate to support the new needs of employees.



Planning for the

NEAR

RECONFIGURE

As the first wave of workers adjust, organizations can start bringing back additional employees and implementing changes to reconfigure the workplace. Solutions should be highly adaptable so spaces can change quickly to support individuals and business needs in the event that future disruptions arise.

- Adjust furniture worksetting layouts.
- Redesign collaborative areas and meeting rooms.
- Define new work processes & protocols.
- Develop a work-from-home or flexible work strategy.



Looking toward the



REINVENT

There will be an urgency to not just get back to where we were, but to move forward, be resilient and thrive. As we reinvent the workplace, science-based solutions will integrate with emerging technologies to promote employee safety and an even higher level of employee wellbeing.

- Enhance the workplace experience by creating a destination where people want to be.
- Create flexible and adaptable workspaces.
- Integrate technology tools, remote collaboration and sensors.
- Incorporate anti-microbial, protective coatings and other advanced materials in products.



Diagram from the Steelcase Navigating What's Next: The Post-COVID Workplace Guide

COGNITIVE

SAFETY

TY COLCAL

EMOTION

Cognitive

People are able to focus and be more productive when they don't fear for their personal safety.

Physical

People need to work in places where they are able to stay healthy and minimize exposure to pathogens that cause illness.

Emotional

Everyone needs to feel safe at work. They need to be confident their employers have done everything possible to create safe environments.

"The office must immediately be made safe, but also more resilient and more adaptive to the changes we can only imagine as competition intensifies in a post-COVID world."

- Jim Keane President and CEO, Steelcase, Inc.

Prioritize wellbeing

We are undergoing a complex and volatile business climate none of us have experienced before. Organizations are tasked with not only maintaining or growing their businesses, but putting a greater focus on their employees' mental, physical and emotional states as they understandably carry with them anxiety, stress and uncertainty about their professional and personal lives. In one way or another, your people will return to the office changed, and in order for them to return, they must feel safe.

Amidst the pandemic, the most basic human needs are now at the forefront of decision making for organizations.

Referencing Maslow's hierarchy of needs, organizations went from being focused on the top tiers of employee psychological and

Maslow's Heirarchy of Needs

SELF-ACTUALIZATION
ESTEEM
LOVE AND BELONGING
SAFETY NEEDS
PHYSIOLOGICAL NEEDS

self-fulfillment needs to the most basic needs. Our definition of wellbeing revolved around amenities like access to daylight, nature and options to stand and change postures. These things still hold true, but more than ever wellbeing will be looked at as a basic human necessity, not just an office perk. If organizations can't address people's basic needs, they will find it very difficult to achieve business results or grow.

Organizations are keenly aware that the transmission of infectious disease within the workplace can not only shut them down again, but also break employee trust and damage their brand, and their ability to attract new talent. The future workplace will not only need to mitigate health risks, but approach workplace wellbeing much more holistically. This will become a key competitive edge for businesses going forward.

Ways to support employee wellbeing:

- Routine communication at a company and manager level to keep employees informed, connected and build trust.
- Added safety measures and documented protocols to assure employees the environment they are working in is safe.
- Blended work-from-home and in-office schedule as appropriate.
- Increased cleaning and decontamination throughout the facility and added sanitation stations in addition to promoting personal hygiene.
- Conduct surveys to gain employee feedback and get a pulse on where emotions are.
- Focus on brand and culture and finding ways to reinforce both with distributed teams.



NBS conducted a survey three weeks post-reopening to understand how people were feeling returning to the workplace. The results were encouraging.

- of those surveyed have been back to the office since we reopened.
- said they were comfortable practicing and abiding to the safety protocols in place.

Our leadership team has learned team members' comfort levels and personal situations continue to shift as changes in the pandemic take place. The current reality, compared to the survey results above, are slightly different. Many team members are still choosing to work from home or only coming into the office occasionally, due to their personal situations. Our goal is to have all our team members return to the energizing, collaborative environments we are used to when the government and health organizations deem it safe.



When it comes down to it, communication is key to put people's minds at ease. People returning to the office should clearly know what's expected of them, timing of the re-entry plan, new protocols, and what to do if an employee becomes sick.

Addressing safety and health screening procedures for outside visitors is just as important. Not only does this protect your visitors and clients, but illustrates to employees that their wellbeing and safety is your first priority.





Returning to your space — PEOPLE

In challenging times like these, it's important to build trust and confidence with employees, especially with those who may be nervous about returning to the workplace.

- Assemble a task force to put new processes in place, develop safety guidelines and assess the current workspace layout.
- Develop communication plans that offer transparency into the steps being taken to re-open the workplace.
- Create a company safety protocol book and/or checklists to provide clear direction and emphasize that safety is a top priority.
- Implement a daily health safety screening check or thermal temperature scanning process.
- Follow State-defined personal protection equipment requirements, as well as giving guidance for proper ways to use it.
- Place sanitation stations throughout the building featuring hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes and communicate best practices for personal hygiene as well as wiping down any shared surfaces or equipment touched.

Managing in a Post-COVID work environment will be very different and will come with its own set of challenges. As the situation remains fluid, check-ins with employees on how they are feeling should be regular practice. How people feel may change or vary as things unfold or situations evolve.

Managers and leaders should not underestimate the additional time and mental commitment required to lead people through this time. More than ever, employees will need one-on-one coaching, connection and inspiration. Empathy is a priority for everyone.



Working from home

Working from home in some capacity will become a new normal for many. After millions were forced to stay home and work, many discovered they were able to keep productivity up and they enjoyed the flexibility. Now research is showing that even though individual task work is up, creativity and collaboration is going down.*

There are perceptions that working from home saves costs, produces the same productivity and creates a better work-life balance. Research and survey feedback contradict these beliefs.* Extreme work-from-home can come at a risk to company growth, culture and innovation. Social capital can be lost over time, and it is extremely hard to get back without being together as a team.

Adopting a new partial work-from-home strategy will likely become the preferred approach for many organizations. It's all about finding a new balance, one that provides the flexibility people want without sacrificing business objectives. Supporting employees with tools and resources as they continue to work from home will become an important go-forward strategy for talent attraction, mentorship and employee retention.

Ways to support remote workers:

- Establish protocols
 around who can work from
 home based on role and
 responsibilities as well as
 guidelines for appropriate
 frequency.
- Set up routine touch-points with employees to check in on how they are balancing workloads and if they need additional support to achieve the productivity and out-put desired.
- Offer employee training on new technology tools, video conferencing etiquette and building a personal workfrom-home strategy.
- Consider implementing a home office purchasing program to provide ergonomic furniture, lighting and worktools to help avoid injury from poor posture, repetitive movements and eye strain.

According to a client survey conducted by Stantec:



86% of the respondents said remote working will continue after the pandemic, with **82%** saying this trend will have a long-lasting impact.



86% said that remote work would be between one and three days per week for their employees.



CLICK HERE

* Learn about work-fromhome perceptions and how to compete in the post-COVID era.



Three key strategies to consider when retrofitting spaces now or reconfiguring in the near term:

Returning to your space — DESIGN

Most of today's open plan high-density workspaces, with increased hotelling and shared ancillary spaces, will need to be modified. Pre-COVID workspaces were designed to fuel creativity, innovation, speed and collaboration. They were not designed to mitigate the spread of disease. Moving forward, the design objective will be to create spaces that are safe, smart and healthy, while instilling confidence and security in the occupants who work, eat, socialize or learn in those spaces.

The development of a strategy for the physical work environment that follows new safety guidelines, while continuing to support creativity, productivity and collaboration needs, will be key to a successful return-to-workspace plan. Many organizations will choose to bring their people back in waves, and they will want to focus on retrofitting what they already have, allowing for an evolution over time to recreate or reinvent spaces altogether as business needs and circumstances change.

The new workplace may have a different purpose. Organizations should think about why their employees would want or need to come to a physical place. What will draw them in? Spaces should be designed to achieve those objectives while still offering flexibility, choice and control over where and how employees work.

Reduce Density



- Encourage physical distancing of at least 6 feet by removing chairs, labeling or covering them in meeting spaces, cafés and lounge areas.
- Consider a staggered work schedule, assigning employees certain in-office days each week.



- Reduce or eliminate shared desking and shift to more owned individual spaces.
- Create a checkerboard seating pattern at benching stations so no one is sitting beside or in front of another person.
- Utilize open spaces for meetings with more than five people.



- Provide visual safety and social distancing cues:
 - Post printed signage and/or leverage digital signage to communicate physical distancing reminders and maximum occupancy numbers in shared spaces.
 - Place arrows on the floor to direct one-way traffic flow in narrow hallways and corridors.

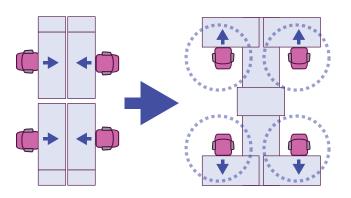
Change Geometry



 Widen aisles between workstations to increase distancing.



 Reconfigure desking to reduce face-to-face orientation, turning workstations to 90-degree angles to prevent workers from working directly next to, across from or behind one another.



Add Space Division



 Add screens, storage elements or panels when the 6-feet minimum can't be achieved. The higher, wider and more easily cleaned, the better.



 Include moveable whiteboards or partitions in shared spaces to create barriers while also adding writable surfaces and/or acoustics.





These strategies should be used in combination with one another to create spaces that, when accompanied by new safety guidelines, allow people to confidently come back into the workplace.

Organizations will want to strategize how they can retrofit now, reconfigure later and reinvent for the future.



A safe return starts with a clean space

Employees are more likely to want to return to their workspace if they know it's clean and that cleaning measures will continue to be monitored and enforced going forward.

- of workers say infection prevention and control is the most important consideration in returning to work.*
- of companies plan to use disinfectant fogging in high-occupancy environments as a new hygiene protocol.**
- of microorganisms are killed on surfaces and in the air with decontamination cleaning.

*iHASCO Return to Work Survey results
**McKinsey & Company executive survey

Protect people, spaces and surfaces

It comes as no surprise that a top priority for businesses and workers alike is that the workplaces they are returning to are clean and virus-free. We also know it's impossible to remove every risk, but there are ways to proactively make things safer.

Reduce risk while giving employees peace of mind

The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted many individuals' definition of cleanliness. It's not just about the dirt we can see anymore, it's safeguarding against viruses and pathogens we cannot see.

Germs and bacteria cover virtually every surface in every office. By implementing a proactive program that enhances the cleaning routine you already have in place, employees will see that their safety is a top priority. When it comes to maintaining a clean and safe work environment, consider the frequency of cleanings as well as the types of processes, from surface cleaning to sanitation to decontamination.

As companies consider how to transition people back to the workplace, cleaning practices must not only change, they must also be more transparent to give employees confidence that the spaces they work in and surfaces they touch are clean. This can be achieved through email communication, digital signage, printed signage, window clings, room reservation blocks, and more.





Enhance regular cleaning routines

- Augment janitorial cleaning with decontamination services from third party experts.
- Provide more visibility to cleaning routines by increasing daily cleaning procedures and posting signage throughout the facility.
- Ensure proper training, PPE and products for all cleaning staff.
- Increase cleaning of high-traffic and touched spaces like common areas, meeting spaces, elevator buttons, cafés and restrooms.
- Make cleaning wipes and sanitizer accessible and ask employees to clean before and after use of shared spaces.
- In addition to cleaning and decontamination, surfaces and materials with antimicrobial properties can be integrated into the workplace to prevent bacteria and other microorganisms from attaching to them.

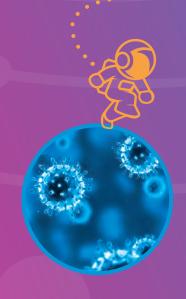
While many organizations will schedule additional cleaning measures after business hours, some are considering reducing operating hours to facilitate enhanced cleaning or requiring employees to take sanitization breaks during the day.

By proactively treating both the surfaces and air of a facility on a regular basis, we effectively create a cleaner, healthier environment while reducing the potential health risks caused by invisible threats.

Safe products get results

NBS Commercial Cleaning uses EPA-registered and NSF- (National Sanitation Foundation) certified safe products and non-corrosive disinfectants that help kill and protect against workplace odors and pathogens including bacteria, viruses and mold.

- Fogging creates a fine mist to treat objects, walls, floors and ceilings in a matter of minutes.
- Covershield provides ongoing protection that lasts several months and kills microorganisms that come in contact with it.
- Puradigm freestanding purifier system emits advanced oxidation to reduce pathogens in the air and on surfaces while people are present.





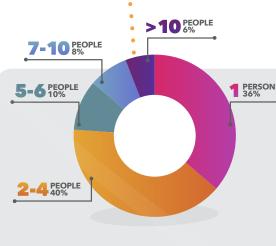
Digitally transform — TECHNOLOGY

Technology will be critical as we re-enter the workplace and adapt to new health and safety standards. We've already experienced working remotely and collaborating through virtual tools. Time and interaction with others have become even more precious commodities. Implementing smart, impactful ways to communicate and utilize technology will enhance workers' experiences whether they are working from home or in the office.

There are a variety of considerations when developing a return-to-space technology plan. First, you will want to identify where there are technology gaps in conference rooms, collaboration spaces and common areas, addressing a now, near and far strategy to make enhancements. Going forward, traditional collaboration practices will be replaced or supplemented with apps and conferencing software such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, GoToMeeting and others.

Ways to use technology to support people in the workplace:

- Offer employee-facing apps that support communication and safety
 like a daily health screening app or company news app.
- Install room reservation systems that can help with wayfinding and can be touch-free through app or desktop booking. Consider integrating cleaning notifications into your room reservation and wayfinding applications for increased transparency into safety measures being taken.
- Leverage digital signage to communicate to employees new protocols, updated cleaning procedures and best safety practices.



Percentage of Usage by Meeting Group Size

Meeting Room Density

Studies show that even pre-COVID-19, smaller group meetings were far more common than larger ones. Huddle rooms for 2 - 4 people are the likeliest to be at or over capacity going forward, meaning they should be prioritized for social-distancing efforts as well as increased in number throughout the building. Consider adding integrated cameras and sound bars in these areas as video conferencing will remain a top collaboration tool.

Hands-free and fewer shared devices



Let's face it, our hands are germ-spreading machines. The good news is technology tools can be used to limit touching shared devices.

- Provide a first layer of health screening protection with a nontouch infrared temperature scan.
- Utilize mobile apps that allow people to reserve meeting spaces without touching the device itself.
- Propose shifting meeting rooms to a Bring Your Own Device "BYOD" style of presentation which can support multiple platforms (i.e. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, WebEx, etc.).
- Discourage physical contact with devices such as cables, adapters and touch screens to reduce the spread of germs.
- Shift from hard-wired and dedicated room systems to cloudbased solutions to enhance both remote and in-office worker experience while limiting physical contact with shared devices.

Virtual collaboration is here to stay



Virtual collaboration will be the main form of communication for the near future. Between distributed or remote teams and social distancing guidelines, the ways we communicate, learn and collaborate will predominately happen virtually, even when people return to their workspace.

The amount of time and frequency we meet may also change. A study from Microsoft found that meetings in general were up by 10% and meetings of less than 30 minutes have increased by 22%.

Offering enclosed spaces in several sizes, allow individuals and teams to take video calls and collaborate virtually without disturbing others. Architectural pods and demountable walls are a great solution for virtual chat rooms that can be moved or adapted overtime.

Use data not guesswork to make decisions



Occupancy sensors can help make data-driven decisions related to creating a safer workplace. This information can be invaluable for leaders and facility managers trying to understand where to put their focus as they return to their space. Data from sensors can be used to:

- Decide if furniture reconfigurations or screens are needed to increase social distancing in populated areas.
- Identify highly used spaces for increased cleaning and disinfecting measures.
- Uncover which spaces are underutilized and can be redesigned with a more effective application or technology solution.



Integrated interior solutions

As a partner to our clients and industry peers, NBS is uniquely qualified to help plan, design and build safer, more effective workplaces. Integrating architecture, furniture and technology is a cohesive workplace strategy to build a holistic and engaging work environment that will be resilient over time. Taking an integrated approach, we can help organizations get their people back to their workspaces faster all while being safe and smart in the process. Working with a single company means less exposure in your building and fewer points of contact allows us to streamline communication and limit risks.

We understand businesses are more cost conscious than ever. As an external resource, we can provide space planning, consulting, day-2 support and services to help make the transition back to your space easier. Our dedicated team can address the needs of your business now, while also providing products and solutions that are easily adaptable over time.



Safer

- Strong safety protocols.
- Fewer vendors in the building means less opportunity for risk.
- Possibility of fewer safety incidents.
- Protect people and spaces with sanitizing, decontamination and integration of antimicrobial materials.



Smarter

- Experienced and knowledgeable team that understands work, workers and the workplace.
- Single point of contact.
- Procore[™] Project
 Management software.
- Seamlessly integrated in-house divisions.
- Designing with a flexible kit of parts.
- Product flexibility on day-2.
- Strong Steelcase warranty.
- Integrated technology options and data sensors.



Faster

- Shorter design, process and execution time.
- Faster and less costly construction.
- Fewer vendors means less time, effort and energy.
- Pre-manufactured products save time in the field.
- Less labor and time onsite to construct interior work environments.
- Steelcase "One Truck" delivery.
- Quicker adds, changes and reconfigurations.





We are here to help you navigate this uncharted territory and get back to the spaces, people and resources we have missed.

Contact your NBS representative, visit our website, sign up for our newsletters and follow us on social media for our latest thoughts and insights.

Together, we can reimagine the future workplace.
One small step at a time.

Closing thoughts

As we move forward and make plans to return to our spaces, we need to be mindful not to make changes that diminish creativity, community and productivity. These are the key reasons to have an office in the first place and will help organizations compete as the economy rebounds. We have an opportunity now to approach the workplace differently, to create environments where people want to be instead of have to be.

The role the workplace will serve in the future will be more important than ever. Shifting from a fixed environment to one that is more fluid will allow organizations to easily adapt and be resilient to respond to future disruptions. Giving individuals and teams the flexibility to tailor their workspaces depending on the work at hand and privacy desired will become essential. The workplace will become our outlet for connection, focus, learning and growing professionally, all of which are harder to achieve working solely from home.

It's time to re-imagine the workplace and the role it will play for organizations and employees now, in the near term and far into the future. Companies who create adaptable spaces with smart technology and a focus on worker wellbeing will have a winning advantage in their market and competition for talent.

"...within every crisis lies an opportunity. If we harness this moment, we can create a new & improved workplace and reinvent our experiences at work."

- Jim Keane President and CEO, Steelcase, Inc.





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