HAWORTH

Return to Work(place): Navigating the New Normal

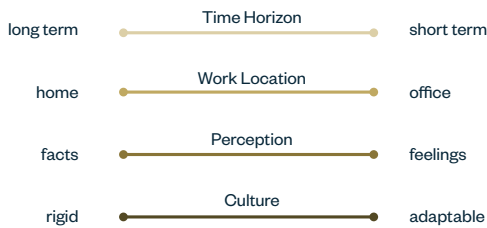Haworth International Edition | May 2020

Introduction

COVID-19 closed the office and turned our homes into our workplace. This has impacted everything about daily life. Our family members and roommates have become our coworkers. Saturdays feel like Wednesdays. Boundaries have disappeared, our colleagues call around the clock. We work at our dining room table, in bed, on sofas, at card tables and— if lucky—in a home office.

Physical distancing norms, health, and safety concerns are at an elevated state. Going forward, finding the balance of how to create personal interaction and virtual collaboration will be critical for our well-being and of a functioning society.

Like most of you we all left our workplace in March, uncertain when we could return. Every organisation is seeking to understand what short- and long-term workplace changes to implement—from facility needs, to work rotation and the sequenced return of the workforce. We are challenged with sustaining our cultures while keeping people safe, confident, and effective.

Last but not least is the view on the different culture types for physical, cognitive and emotional well-being. As differently grounded people react differently to environmental changes and also have different needs, not all necessary changes are perceived in the same way and thus successful.

In the following, we look at the implications for work at home and in the office, in short term and long-term horizons. We have considered fact and emotion in our point-of-view.

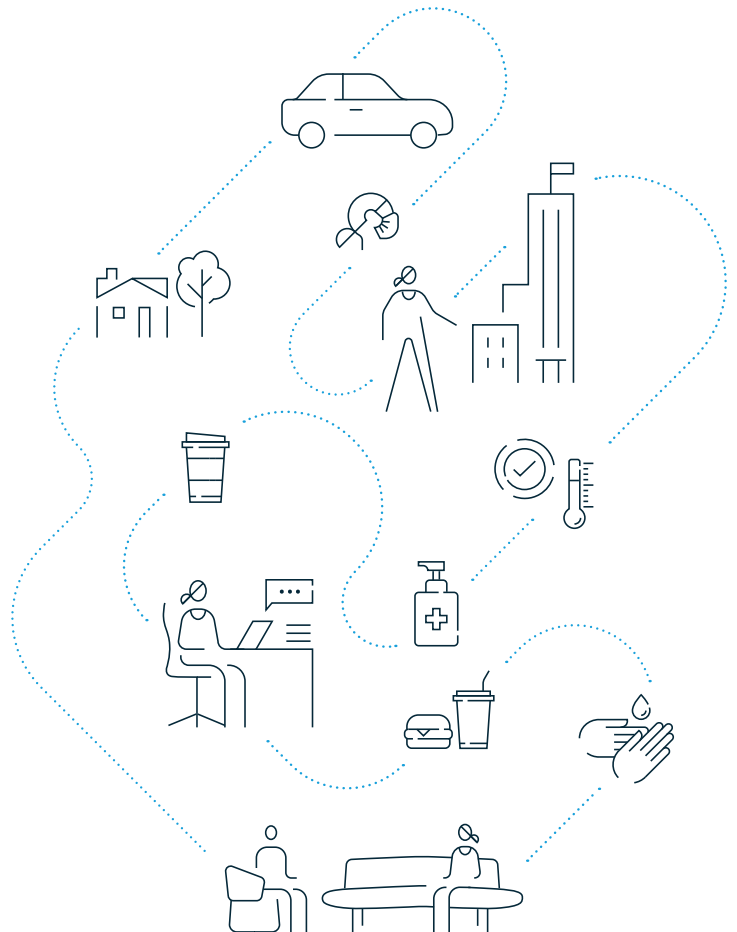| long term | Time Horizon | short term |
home	Work Location	office
facts	Perception	feelings
rigid	Culture	adaptable

Haworth's Unique Approach: Organic Workspace

Organic Workspace is our perspective and process for understanding the work environment and how people use it. Leveraging our global knowledge, unique design point of view, and product and space expertise, we have developed best practices to help you balance the needs of your people and space as we navigate returning to the workplace. When you engage with Haworth, we will help you through this transition.

Work Considerations

Many of us closed the office and turned our homes into our workplace, hunkered down trying to grasp what is next for the world of work. We have the same challenges you do— and a plan for returning to the workplace that can inform yours. Here are some considerations to start with as you look at your workplace through a different lens.

- What happens in the home office?
- Will your employees be wearing masks?
- How will your entrance and lobby look different (protocols and space)?
- Will you be screening for temperature?
- What are your protocols for cleaning?
- What tools do you have so people feel secure?
- How do you enhance employee comfort in the workplace?
- How will circulation paths change?
- Will your employees bring more items to work (lunch and supplies)?
- How will your amenities change (cafeteria, refresh areas, outdoors)?
- How will you communicate wayfinding, safety, and cleanliness?
- How will you ensure physical distancing?

Home and Office, not one or the other.

Apart from the time horizon (short vs. long term) there are other dimensions to be taken into account when describing the influence the COVID-19 crisis might have on the world of office work. As work was moved, by order, to our homes we had to adapt to the new situation quickly. While this made the disadvantages of home office work apparent it showed us also the advantages and we will likely see the home as a more influential alternative to the office.

Another dimension is perception. While we can base our reaction to COVID-19 purely on science-based facts we might not satisfy the expectations of our employees because the "feeling" of safety is minimum as important as fact-based health and safety. A good example of this is the use of masks. While it is scientifically only proven that masks reduce the spread of potential viruses the masked person is wearing (active safety) we feel that they will also help us to protect us from infections coming from others (passive safety).

While the latter assumption is not fact based (i.e. scientifically proven) it will still help the employee's mental well-being at work.

Haworth has identified three critical areas of focus to help you navigate return to the workplace in a COVID-19 environment:

Employee Well-Being
Supporting people's physical and psychological health to build confidence and enhance performance

Organizational Culture
Understanding and developing your culture to empower your workforce and leverage your space in new ways

Transforming the Floorplate
Addressing facility requirements, density, and exposure while mitigating risk

Social interaction is a mutual need.

The workplace is an important physical environment in which both the employer and employee benefit. The employer needs to bring its biggest asset together to innovate, to create. Value creation is the core of the organisations existence, and ongoing competitive advantage. The importance of collaboration has been the centerpiece of workplace strategy for more than a decade. There is plenty of research to support the premise of employees benefiting from their human connections in the workplace. The cultural element of a physical workplace is the stickiness that retains and attracts talent.

The reason organisations invest in space, branding and in team building is to establish a unique organisational culture that binds and celebrates the team. The office is the physical embodiment of team culture and belongingness, and the special sauce that organisations strive to achieve.

Design Implications

Remote Work
- Identifying total occupancy by floorplate
- Defining the quantity of specific positions needed on site
- Determining which roles are optimal to perform remote work
- Assessing your floorplate density level to meet physical distancing guidelines
- Determining the ratio of individual workpoints and the maximum space occupancy
- If space doesn't allow, determine sequencing and work rotation for remote workers

Cleanliness
- Provide legible cues for cleaning and disinfection
- Publish and communicate guidelines for cleaning and use of spaces
- Assess material cleanability on all surfaces and switch out when needed

Safety

- Convey clear understanding of new safety protocols in lobbies, receptions areas, security checkpoints, food and beverage areas, etc.
- Shift unassigned spaces to assigned spaces for individuals
- Adjust workpoint configurations to allow appropriate boundaries between workers

Density

- Address facility flow and circulation areas to achieve appropriate distancing
- Repurpose collaboration areas for individual work as needed
- Modify individual workpoints to comply with physical distancing norms

Interaction/Collaboration

- Assign specific group spaces to teams
- Offer physical and virtual solutions for personal interaction and team collaboration
- Integrate technology to connect on-site and off-site team members

User Control

- Provide individuals a variety of spaces to safely accomplish their work
- Offer options to increase mobility and flexibility in dense areas
- Allow for people to define and personalize their space
- Provide supplies for occupants to clean their own space

Technology

- Identify and publish supported platforms for communicating internally and externally
- Create protocols for communicating between on-site and off-site teams
- Provide cleaning procedures for personal and group touch-screens
- Utilize floorplate public display for messaging/communications

The short term – office

The much anticipated return to work requires careful planning to ensure the safety of employees. Haworth is undergoing a deep analysis of each of its offices and constituents. We are assessing the appropriate capacity of occupants given a 2-meter distance parameter for each employee. Our office team will recommend space layout changes or work point buffers on workstations, meeting rooms and collaboration spaces that will keep employees at a safe physical distance. Signage has been created to educate and create awareness of the spaces that cannot be occupied. Proper documentation of employees and visitors present will help with potential contact tracing.

The physical space can be augmented to create further separation with top panels, screens and dividers. Creating barriers between and beside workstations provide additional elements for protection to employees while working.

Understanding the capacity of the space, enables human resource team to create alternating presence groups to ensure the right mix of employees are in the office and that each employee has the opportunity to meet with their team regularly while rotating working from home. While maintaining capacity, human resources will additionally provide workplace guidelines for norms and behaviours that might include physical distancing during meal times, hygiene standards and the use of elevators and doors. In high frequency areas even aisles could become "one-way-streets" to reduce physical contact where possible. The assembly of employees for town hall meetings will need to be re-planned and carefully communicated. Meeting rooms will have to be more pre-set and less variable to warrant for safe distancing, but they still must be adaptable in order to compensate for different meeting and collaboration formats.

Haworth Malaysia Office
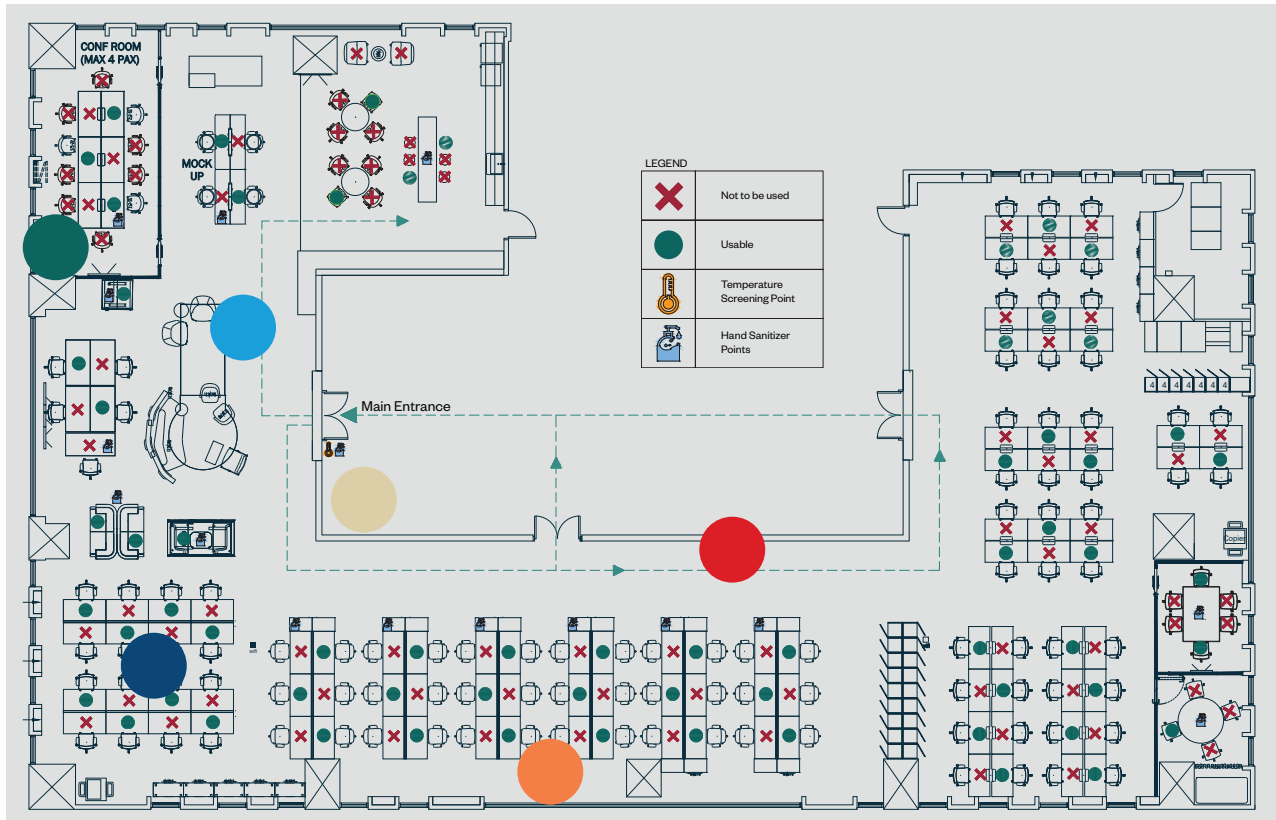
Physical Distancing
- Floorplate density to meet physical distancing guidelines to maintain safe capacity.

Aisle Widening
- Creating greater physical distance from from traffic areas and the workstations.

Traffic Routing
- Singular circulation flow to reduce opportunities for contact.

Employee Capacity / Rotation
- Rotating work schedules to achieve capacity planning guidelines and create redundancy in workgroups.

Collaborative Positioning
- Convert unassigned spaces to assigned spaces to address density challenges.
- Repurpose collaboration areas to individual work areas to address density.
- Reposition collaborative furniture into individual touchdown areas for safe working.

Hygiene Station
- Mandatory temperature screening on entry.
- Hand sanitizer for entry and re-entry.
- Regular disinfectant cleaning of high-traffic areas.

The short term – home

The rapid shift from office based working to home office has been a big learning to many. Navigating the new parameters of home/work life that balance family commitments, home schooling and enables productive working has been challenging. Three factors are topmost in creating an effective home office; space, ergonomics, acoustics and the development of daily routines. Recognising that in the short-term, many don't have dedicated home-office spaces and

often share their homes with family members, creating an effective workspace is critical. When established with appropriate acoustics and ergonomics, this area defines the work life and creates boundaries. Employees need to remain physically healthy, as they would in the office. Consequently, we have observed a significant investment in ergonomic seating for the home office.

The long term – office

In the long term the world of work will not look so much different as before. Humans need human interaction. We do not only want to hear and see each other on a laptop screen. We want to see and feel each other, in the emotional sense. Many cultures also desire demonstrative affection when greeting our colleagues.

Further, we believe people want to be in groups inside and outside the office. People need concerts, sports events or also 'Town Halls'. The feeling of belonging to something is one of the human needs. The objective of the long-term office will be to enable employees to engage, interact and collaborate with their colleagues as necessary. Workplaces need to be a positive experience and a desirable destination for employees. There will be a greater focus to make offices feel "natural" again.

Office spaces will remain dense in the mega-cities of our working world. Younger generations want to live in the city, want to experience the vibe of global metropoles, want to have the convenience of work, culture, sports and other private life activities to be close by. If you are living in a city like New York, London, Paris, Shanghai,

Mumbai, Tokyo or Singapore you know that there is only little you can do to avoid contact with others in daily life. In our geographies, a world of high panels and cubicles is not feasible or preferred. We anticipate lower panels and space dividers with controlled open plan. At the same time, the office needs to flow with safe physical distancing that makes sense for the density of the occupants. Technology will be deployed to support optimal capacity of spaces as well as providing real-time distance calculations and alerts to employees.

There will likely be a continued vigilance of hygiene. Regular deep cleaning and behaviour norms will be maintained and become natural part of office work-life. This could result in a greater investment in services providing Indoor Air Quality and Biophilia.

Biophilia can be used to create congestion buffers in space and increase the quality of human experience and health. In addition, worksurfaces may incorporate antibacterial coatings to provide greater peace of mind, even if they do not help against virus spread.

We believe these changes will be adopted positively and organisations will be able to attract and retain talent with post-COVID19 workplace police.

Office: Current State

Office: Short Term
- Higher above the desk screens
- Removing middle desk occupancy

Office: Mid Term
- Added Biophilia
- More open above the desk screens
- Adding end panels and side screens

Office: Long Term
- Return to middle desk occupancy
- Adding storage to maintain distancing

The long term – home

Working in the home office is great. For a certain, self-determined period. There are complexities that can make working from home sub-optimal and counter-productive for concentrative work or phone conferences. Many share the home with housemates that have a different daily rhythm. Many share the home with family members that need special care and attention – often children, sometimes parents or grandparents. For many, the size of apartments limits the ability to have dedicated spaces.

Many estimates suggest that up to 30% of the workforce will work from home in the future, either full-time or permanent part-time basis. Employers have a responsibility to enable their employees with effective work-points at home or close to home. In addition to ergonomics, acoustics and space discussed as short-term implications, we believe lighting and technology will also be important considerations for home working. Home offices will be technology enabled with additional

computer monitors and video conferencing equipment. This will support better ergonomics and better video conferencing experience. Companies may need to augment their IT/Cloud strategy to enable productive data access and sharing outside the office server infrastructure. Secondly, dedicated work-point lighting creates a positive experience in terms of the working comfort but also for video conferencing.

The home-office will either be a highly effective dedicated space (where space is available) or an adaptable work point that integrates beautifully into the work-homelife. We also see potential for a new way of co-working in close proximity to residential areas, as an intermediary between home office and office-based work: Previously the community and collaboration was at the core of co-working, in the future concentration and workplace ergonomics could significantly grow in importance The community and collaboration will happen within the company's CBD office – reach in safer off-peak hours exactly for this purpose.

Home Office: Small
- Active seating
- Height adjustable table
- Task lighting

Home Office: Medium
- Ergonomic seating
- Fixed height table
- Desk lighting
- Acoustic solutions

Home Office: Large
- Ergonomic seating
- Height adjustable table
- Desk lighting
- Acoustic solutions
- Alternative work areas

Home Office: Extra Large
- Ergonomic seating
- Desk lighting
- Acoustic solutions
- Alternative work areas

Practical considerations outside the office

Insomuch that the office can control the physical environment and policy safe distancing and hygiene, there are hundreds of opportunities for people to violate these protocols. Every human contact from mass-transit to shopping and public dining provides opportunity for infection. Microbe transfer is also possible in elevators and when co-workers forget to cough into their elbow. Until a vaccine is available, the solution must be to make social interaction safe for all people involved. There will be a growth and higher acceptance of the use of technology such as tracking apps to identify and alert potential health risks. This informs people to know when and how their health might be compromised and facilitates immediate action to limit its impact, including quarantine and isolation. But the responsibility for how much risk an individual is prepared to accept must stay with the individual.

Last words

Humankind is adaptable and flexible. We have recovered from SARS, MERS, H1N1 and other pandemics. We believe that once these long-term measures are defined in detail and implemented, the workplace strategists in the office will focus again on how to make space more productive instead of restricting opportunities to collaborate by physical distancing rules and screens. We very much look forward to the old-new world – where human beings can socially interact with each other in a safe environment.

Appendix

Implications by Culture Type

Preserving your unique culture to empower your workforce and leverage your space is essential in this time of uncertainty. Culture serves as a guidepost for people's needs and organizational goals. Through the culture lens, we understand that each customer will approach this challenge differently to create an effective workplace. With knowledge and expertise, Haworth meets you where you are—listening to your needs so, together, we can leverage your space more efficiently based on your culture in the COVID-19 environment.

In order to enhance the performance of your people, organization, and facility, it's important to understand cultural implications—what people value and how it affects space. Leveraging the Competing Values Framework, we looked at organizational and individual needs by culture type: Collaborate, Create, Control, and Compete.

Competing Value Framework by Robert Quinn and Kim Cemeron.

Collaborate Culture
Do things that last

This culture emphasizes community, cooperation, and the development of knowledge, while operating like a small family.

- Physical distancing will be difficult.
- New norms will be essential as they transition into the physical workplace.
- People may grieve that they no longer have the physical closeness.
- Their unified behavior produces a strong organizational image in the marketplace and the idea of community extends to customers.

Considerations:
Employee well-being:
- Addressing workplace change and finding ways to encourage people to talk about their reactions and feelings.
- Sensitivity to psychological impacts from extended periods of remote work.
Organizational culture:
- Involving people who will be affected by change in the planning and implementation of a new workplace.
- Allowing people to share their opinions and emotions over changes to the workplace will help with transition.
Transforming the floorplate:
- Maintaining appropriate distance to enable conversation among occupants.
- Finding the balance between remote work and physical presence.

Create Culture
Do new things

This culture pursues breakthrough innovation with a wide array of experiments—and the new workplace could provide opportunity to create.
- Least impacted by the COVID-19 changes implemented in the workplace.
- They will embrace new ways of working.
- Too many rules and protocols may stifle their creativity.
- Flexibility and adaptability should be emphasized.
- Embracing new technologies and processes can lead to breakthrough products and services.

Considerations:

Employee well-being:
- Offering new spaces that stimulate and inspire people to think creatively and provide a sense of belonging while enabling workplace distancing.

Organizational culture:
- Finding ways to hold idea-sharing events and speculating about emerging opportunities based on new ways of working.

Transforming the floorplate:
- Re-establishing a flexible and open workspace that empowers new product development in smaller groups.
- Finding the balance between remote work and physical presence.

Control Culture
Do things right

This culture thrives on a sense and security and performance metrics.
- Clear guidelines for appropriate physical distancing are important.
- People need a systematic approach to move seamlessly between different work settings.
- A remote work policy will be essential to foster a sense of security and performance while the organization balances remote work and physical presence.
- Potential for employee burnout is a concern if management is not clear about remote work expectations.

Considerations:

Employee well-being:
- Having clear policies and obtainable work standards can reduce work stress.

Organizational culture:
- Understanding how to engage with team members on- and off-site using appropriate technologies.

Transforming the floorplate:
- Change in density to allow for more space between coworkers and more separation between groups in shared spaces.

Compete Culture
Do things now

This culture will adapt the fastest to the new world of work, as they are competitive and results-oriented.
- Need to emphasize the importance of cleaning and physical distancing.
- People need clear guidelines for shared spaces—their usage and need for cleaning.
- They are quick to learn and embrace new technologies, processes, and ideas.
- Require easy and fast access to information and their network.

Considerations:

Employee well-being:
- Providing for quick face-to-face or virtual interactions while adhering to physical distancing guidelines.

Organizational culture:
- Providing easy access to company, team, and project information to maintain a competitive edge.

Transforming the floorplate:
- Finding the balance between remote work and physical presence.

Additional Resources:

Human Resources

General Guidelines

For further information, please contact your Haworth representative or email **haworth.international@haworth.com**