

Returning to the workplace post COVID-19





Make a plan

COVID-19 has dramatically changed the workplace. What was deemed acceptable 6 months ago is now considered threatening to the health and wellbeing of the workforce. We will all need to adjust.

Flexibility will be key, as swiftly as we set up working from the safety of home we will need to adjust back into the workplace. There will be custom solutions which will work for some businesses but not others.

Many businesses need their employees to collaborate and be present – to achieve this in this new working environment workers will need to feel safe before they return. Privacy, distancing, protective barriers and space allocation will be paramount. The office must adapt and infection control will need to be maintained – a clear plan will allow businesses to meet standards and expectations.

Businesses will be under strain to keep productive and ultimately survive, competition will be fierce as we all vie to remain strong and relevant.





Creating a safer workplace

We are now making the shift to less human interaction so the pressing question is - How do we achieve this whilst still providing a workspace where you can still collaborate, brainstorm, work in teams yet stay distanced.

We recommend you start with looking at your current set up.

Key attributes to creating a balanced post COVID-19 space include:

THE NEED FOR MORE OPEN SPACE - More floor space allows for an easier distribution of staff.

The modern office has trended towards an open plan environment which will help enable us to transition. Air flow and traffic flow are crucial.

THE DEFECTION AWAY FROM HIGH DENSITY OFFICES - There will be a calculated shift away from high density occupancy. Offices will need to strictly adhere to guidelines as to how many workers can occupy a space. We predict that employees will show little flexibility towards this aspect - for employees to return into the workplace they will need to feel safe.

CAN WE STILL HAVE COMMUNAL SPACES? Ask the question will lunchrooms become dormant spaces or remain in full use? If they are in full use what needs to be implemented to achieve safety.

BREAKOUT ZONES - These areas are usually inspiring, dynamic spaces designed for high use, multiple users and are in many cases a more intimate style of collaborating. Will these spaces be deemed as a high infection-spreading risk and be phased out?

As we all move our businesses forward there is one common concern - businesses cannot risk an outbreak which forces shutdown. What needs to be implemented to prevent a rapid infection spread needs to be implemented now.



Assess your workplace

What guidelines need to be enforced, are physical distancing requirements being achieved, how do we partition and install barriers for protection, are hygiene procedures firmly in place – these are just some of the issues which will need to be considered in the coming months.

EVALUATE YOUR FLOORPLAN – Spacing distances between co-workers has now increased, the expected width of a walkway has increased and the expectation that workers can limit being within a close proximity to each other, yet still make a coffee in the lunchroom or access the printer, will result in offices needing to redesign their floorplan.

POTENTIAL RELOCATION – In the long term some businesses will need to relocate, obviously this is costly and as we strive to simply survive and reopen this isn't a luxury most businesses have currently – so we need to reconfigure and adapt.

IS THERE A STAGGERED RETURN INTO THE WORKSPACE FOR CO-WORKERS?

This needs to be strategically approached, a realistic plan needs to be devised. Questions as to how many workers will come back into the office, how many will continue remotely and will there be allocated days for co-workers. For offices which utilise Hot Desking a well thought out roster will need to be devised.

MODIFY EXISTING FURNITURE - Can your office furniture be modified to provide more protection? The addition or free standing of mounted screens co-workers can be protected, these screens can be either temporary or permanent and can be installed quickly with little disruption to the office. Options include steel framed screens with pinnable fabric coverings, glass or perspex screen which are custom designed or the use of melamine framed screens which can tone in with existing workstations. The option to increase the height of existing screens could be another solution.



The need to act now

The COVID-19 pandemic is here now and your business needs to move smartly and swiftly.



DECREASE YOUR DENSITY

Enforce physical distancing - remove chairs from space to reduce temptation, separate workstations to allow 2 metres between workers, eliminating face-to-face seating and opt for a staggered layout.



RECONFIGURE DESKING

Rotate desks so users face in different directions, remove face-to-face layouts and opt for a back-to-back configuration to reduce the risk of infection spreading.



DIVIDE THE SPACE

Partitions and screens can be installed/amended to give workers protective barriers. Screens can be higher than usual and used in between co-workers. Screens can be either desk-mounted or floor-based. Perspex panels can be installed to provide protection yet still allow eye contact.



RESTRICTING HOT-DESKING

If hot desking is essential companies will need to enforce a strict cleaning routine and usage roster.



SOFT FURNISHING RESTRICTIONS

Soft furnishing will need to have clear guidelines instructed in regards to being single use. Any communal lounges will need to be clean regularly and spaced apart.



MARKINGS AND VISUAL GUIDES

Arrows to direct traffic flow, suggested standing positions will need to be measured, marked out and installed. This not only educates occupants and visitors it also sets clear expectations.



ELIMINATE TOUCHABLE SURFACES

Remove all contact surfaces which are not currently essential. Remove magazines from waiting areas and encourage workers to provide their own personal essentials.



SET UP A COVID TEAM

Assign a staff member to take responsibility and help navigate forward. Provide strict checklists which will assure your business is Post COVID ready and will meet the required goals.



Occupancy

Office spaces must provide minimum 6ft/2m space between people

Reduce multi-user desks

Make use of open spaces and outdoor zones for meetings & gatherings

Roster and rotate your employees to reduce those on site at the same time, stagger start times

Strategies

Layout

Increase the space between workstations & desks

Rearrange your office furniture to comply with distancing

Invest in free standing furniture items which can be easily moved to reconfigure a space

Rotate desks to reduce face-to-face desk layouts

Divide

Install barriers & screens at higher heights to reduce risk of infection

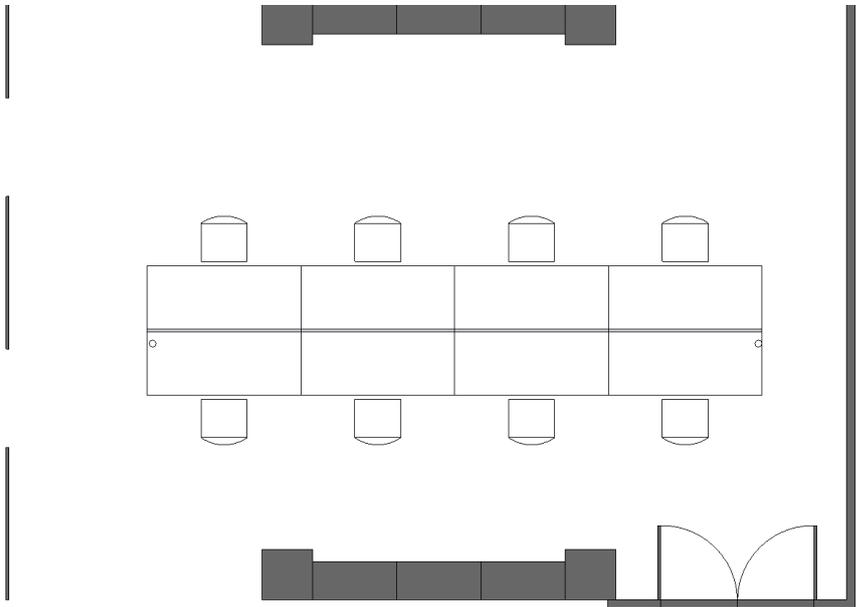




Making the shift

Before Floor Layout >

The brief was to create a safer workspace where co-workers can re-enter post COVID-19 that will adhere to all distancing requirements and prevent infection spread where possible. The client requested the use of existing furniture where possible.

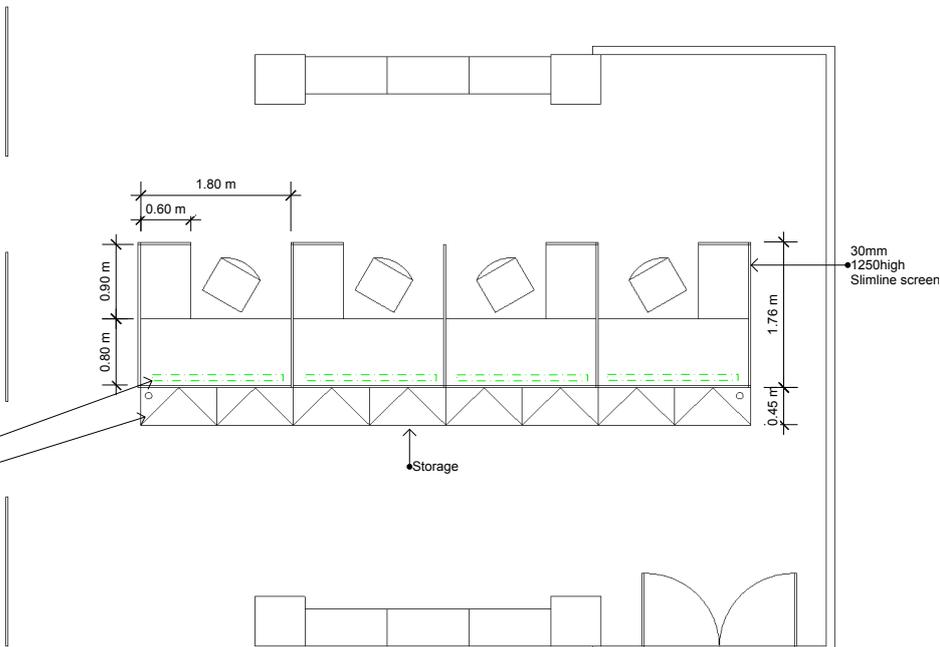


Post COVID-19 Floor Layout >

Key points of this reconfiguration include:

- The use of existing furniture, power & soft wiring.
- The use of storage units to create an additional buffer and protective barrier.
- The new floor plan has gained each user a 1.8metre workspace which complys to social distancing.
- Co-workers are rotated to eliminate direct side-by-side desk usage. Where possible the option is for co-workers to be positioned back-to-back which will help with infection control.
- An increased height of dividing screens to 1250mm(h) to provide a safe space to coexist.

Re use existing Soft Wire
Re use existing power pole





Working from home

With many workers still indefinitely working from home it is vital to review your home office to make sure it meets all health and safety requirements. Ergonomic seating and appropriate work surfaces which meet ergonomic requirements will reduce injury from poor posture. Sit-stand desks are perfect in the home as they can encourage movement and can adjust to suit multiple users.

In many cases various users are sharing the home work/study space which means there are needs for designated spaces. Invest wisely in your home office space.

Plan and prepare your home office as you would in the work place.



Ergonomic Seating to prevent injury



Desk which is correct height Consider a sit/stand desk



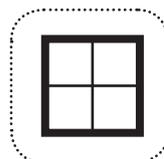
Use a monitor arm to ensure correct screen ergonomics



Mobile storage options will help stay organised



Check your lighting and adjust as needed



Opt for a space with fresh air if possible



Hygienic Contact Surfaces

Cleanliness is essential in reducing risk of infection. Selecting surfaces which are smooth and easy clean will help stop the spread. Some surfaces will deteriorate through excessive cleaning which need to be considered. High quality Melamine board is a durable solution which will wear well. Fabrics can be specified in commercial grade fabric which can be wiped down easily. Another tip is to have a cleaning log/roster which calls for all users to be accountable for the cleanliness.

We will see the emergence of hard and fabric barriers which can deflect the virus.

Specify Durable Australian Made Melamine Board

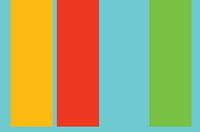
Laminex® polytec



Flexible furniture & power

Free standing furniture which can be reconfigured and easily moved around in the space will allow for flexibility. As the office occupancy increases in density free standing furniture can be moved to create distancing. Mobile power is a great option to increase office flexibility

Mobile whiteboards and electric presentation boards which can easily be moved throughout the office can act as an effective communication mode. Large scale mobile whiteboards can be viewed from a distance and can be shifted throughout the room to fall into different viewpoints.



Get Up & meet

Less communal contact surfaces in the shared office space will help stop the spread.

Stand up meetings will become the norm as we eliminate the use of communal stools and chairs throughout the COVID-19 period. High tables which can allow users to gather, placing themselves around and across the table at appropriate distances will emerge as we address the need to meet face-to-face with minimal contact. Incorporating standing into the work day also has health benefits which are known to boost productivity and creativity. Standing meetings will potentially help with the overall square metre demands as users will make a smaller footprint.

Key Product

Hard surface that is easy to wipe down and will withstand vigorous cleaning.

High Table height which allows users to meet and stand around the table to eliminate contact points.



Table is on castors so can be moved around office space.



First impressions are vital

As we enter an unknown office space we will subconsciously assess the business on their adherence to meeting expected health and safety requirements. As soon as we step into a foreign space we will expect to have a sense of safety – in some cases if we don't trust the space we will not enter and therefore businesses who are not seen to be actively providing protection will be left behind.

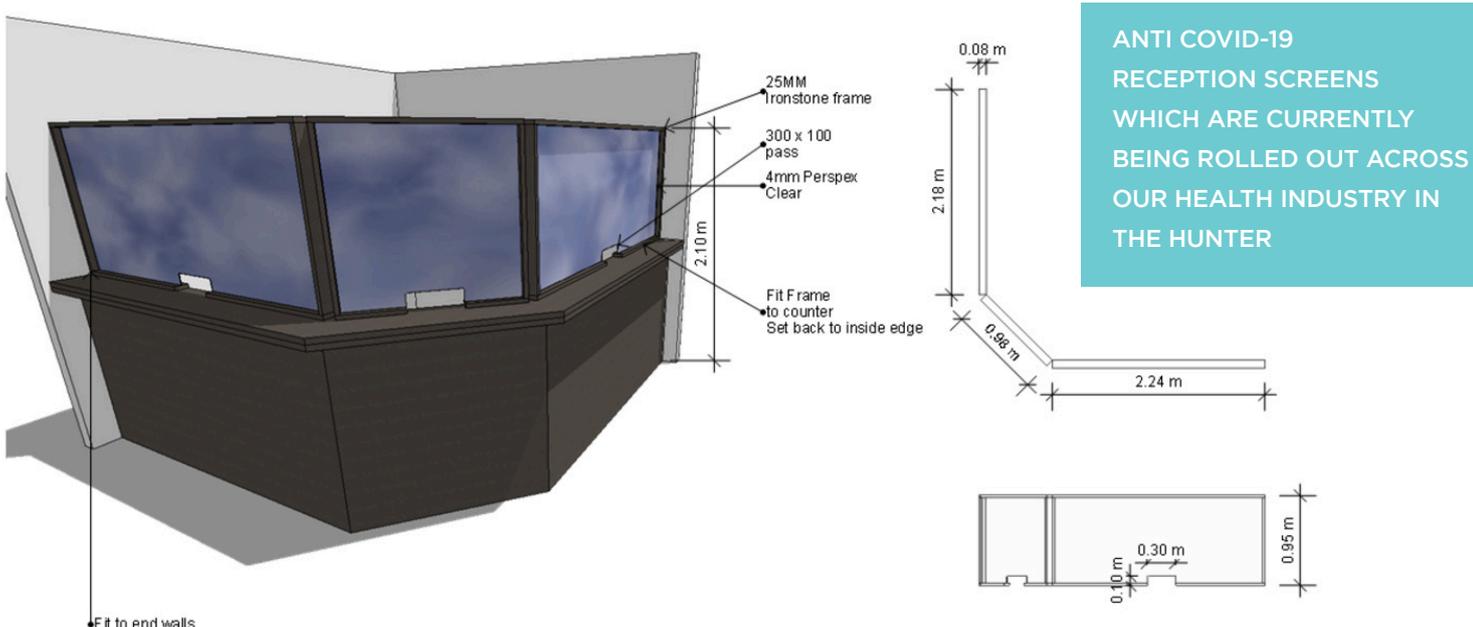
The reception is another high-touch space which will need to be reconfigured. Waiting rooms cannot continue with close seating arrangements – recommended spacing of the seats will need to occur.

The reception counter can be upgraded/modified to include screens which can eliminate face-to-face contact between occupant and guest. Clear perspex screens can be installed as a shield, and easily removed when the pandemic risk subsides. These screens can be custom sized with cut outs as needed.

Reception counters can also be designed with a panel to offset the communication line, encouraging the guest to stand at a diagonal from the occupant and gaining extra distance between the users.

Disability access needs to be considered – a lower end of the counter which could accommodate a wheelchair would solve this.

Computer Render of actual Anti COVID-19 screens designed and manufactured by EOF





There has never a better time to choose Australian Made products

As uncertainty is unprecedented and delivery time frames have never been so crucial the importance to choose Australian Made products have never been greater.

Australian Made Melamine board which meets all Australian Standards allows us to manufacture office furniture of the highest quality. We offer our Australian Made Academy Range online and instore which is durable, high quality office furniture which is manufactured in Newcastle, NSW.

Our joinery division gives our clients the option to custom design an office either at home or in the workplace which meets your individual requirements.

Please Call us today on 02 4952 1555 or visit our online store at www.experiencedofficefurniture.com.au

**The EOF team is here to assist your business
move forward post COVID-19.**

**We can equip your workspace with office furniture
which not only meets all COVID-19 requirements but gives
your staff the protection it needs to re-enter the workplace.**

**We can redesign your floor plan, modify your current
furniture or install new furniture in a short time frame
with minimal contact.**

**Please call our team on 02 4952 1555 to arrange
a free onsite consultation and allow us to help
navigate your business forward.**



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