



The Future of Work

Global impacts shaping the
way we design workplaces

15.05.20

Davenport Campbell

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Introduction

Preparing to return to the workplace.

Relaxing social distancing and bringing the economy out of hibernation will challenge organisations to ramp up productivity whilst adhering to the Safe Work guidelines. This economic re-opening needs to be done without comprising employee health and safety. Wellbeing is paramount.

In Sydney alone, this impacts the lives of 500,000 office workers so it really is a big deal.

We all need to feel safe at work. Everyone needs to be confident that their employers have done everything possible to create a safe work environment.

For business this is a critically important factor when talking about productivity. People who fear for their personal safety are distracted which will undoubtedly impact their ability to do their best work. Designing for the wellbeing of workers has never been more important.

As workplace design specialists, our role is to help model the physical solutions to create a workplace that truly supports wellbeing.

Modern workplace design pre-COVID was focused on fuelling creativity, connection, innovation and collaboration. As designers we achieved this by creating as many 'bump' opportunities as possible to enable people to share and cross-pollinate ideas. The challenge for us now is how to continue enabling people to connect and share with each other whilst mitigating the spread of disease. Vaccine or no vaccine, a workplace that functions at optimal levels while COVID-19 is still transmittable is the scenario we need to contend with.

Our task therefore is to create a new version of where we do our best work. One that works right now with some quick fixes but is adaptable enough to serve a number of future outcomes along with the needs of workers and businesses as we navigate towards a new and somewhat unknown version of the future.

So, What are we learning right now and how will it impact the future of work?

The future is now.

We have been tackling issues of flexible, remote and distributed working, and seeking the ultimate work life balance for decades; then 2020 comes along. Within the span of a few short weeks the world has shifted to a distributed workforce, working and schooling from home.

During the peak of this shift in workstyle, in April 2020, Davenport Campbell completed a survey in collaboration with the University of New South Wales (UNSW) with a sample of 28 organisations and 162 Individuals. The survey spanned our entire client base and beyond.

We have gathered data from global tech giants, multinational financial institutions, Australia's largest retailers, Commonwealth Government agencies, and a broad range of professional services firms.

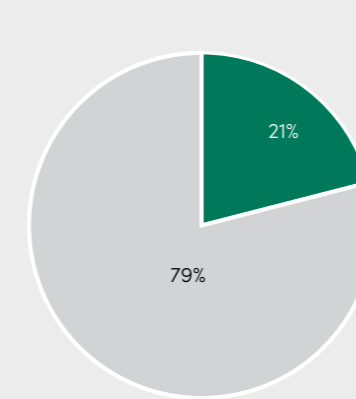
So what are the clearest insights and how will these help us understand and guide the future of work?

Firstly, and not surprisingly the majority of people have been working from home at least since the beginning of April. Up to 82% of organisations' employees are working from home full time; a dramatic increase from only 30% in 2019 prior to COVID-19.

What is really interesting news is that most individuals are feeling more satisfied despite other complications like home-schooling currently affecting their lives. And despite some challenges in day to day team co-ordination, the sense of community is going strong.

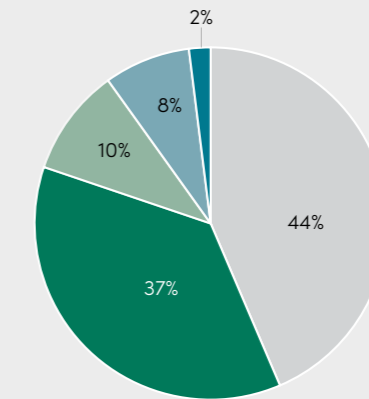
Remote working seems to be instinctive, with only 4% of respondents feeling that they would never adjust.

If this working so well - how can we extract the benefits and apply them in combination with a safe physical environment to create the future workplace?



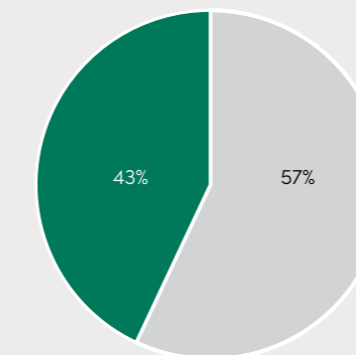
Q. Are you currently working remotely full time?

- Yes
- No



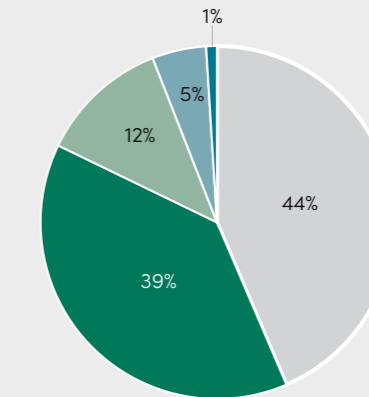
Q. How satisfied are you with flexible remote working?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied



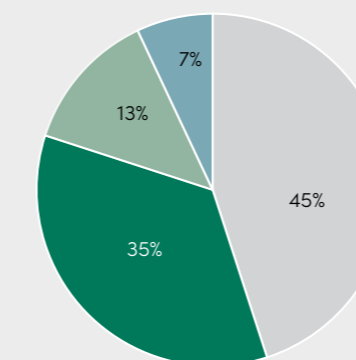
Q. Are other factors impacting your sense of satisfaction with remote working? [e.g. family, home-schooling, childcare, life events?]

- Yes
- No



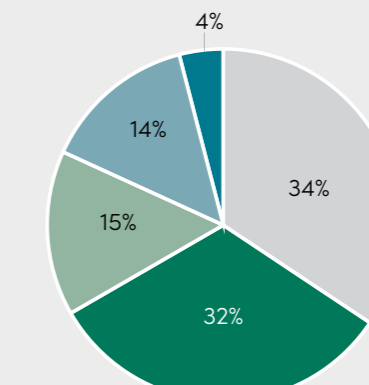
Q. How would you describe your sense of cohesion with your team in your daily interaction since the shift in your working arrangements?

- Somewhat challenging
- Same as before
- Slightly better than before
- A lot better than before
- Very challenging



Q. How would you describe your sense of connection and community in your organisation/team since the shift in working arrangements?

- Strong
- Neutral
- Little
- Very Strong



Q. How quickly have you adjusted your work style from the workplace to remote working?

- Immediate and instinctive
- A couple of days
- 1 week
- 2 weeks
- Never

Survey Results:

The impact of working from home and how it will shape the future of work, April 2020

A collaboration between



Built Environment

Davenport Campbell

The current situation

We have been thrown into a global survival mode as we struggle to maintain business as usual on all fronts. And whilst unprecedented Government support packages are keeping us from the brink of financial disaster right now, everyone is doing whatever necessary to keep a roof over their heads and their loved ones safe and healthy. This is not exactly an environment where we are being driven by our usual motivators.

For workplace designers trying to pre-empt what's next, this is a fascinating moment in time and a unique opportunity to learn more deeply about what is important in the physical workplace. We can then apply these lessons in new ways to create a COVID-19 safe environment that works now and is adaptable for the future.

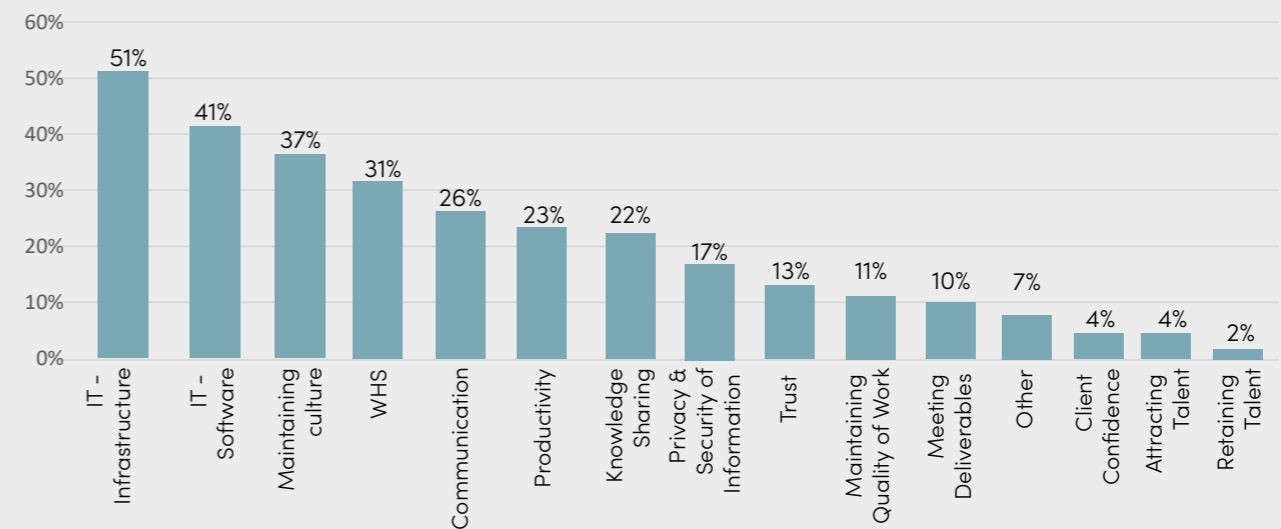
Here are some of the survey findings that help develop a picture of how people are managing.

A shared experience

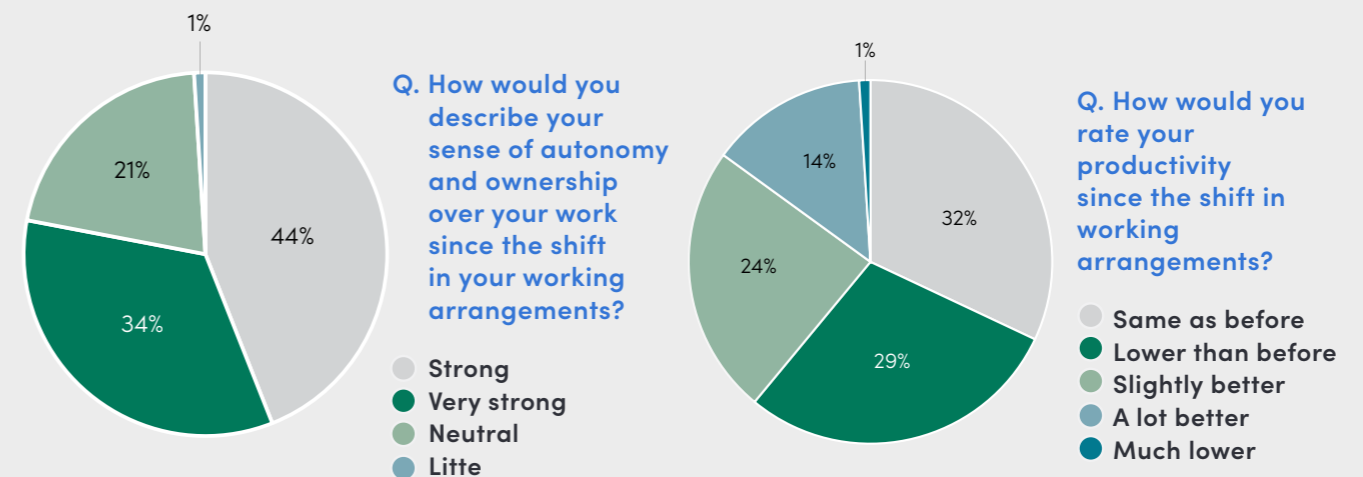
One of the most interesting insights of the current situation is that we are seeing seismic shifts in how we work across all industries, with minimal variations between sectors. Individuals and organisations are also startlingly aligned. Our survey captures a snapshot of the working from home landscape and people's experience in April 2020 through a cross-section of Government, property & construction, technology, finance, media, retail, legal & business services, manufacturing, sales, health, welfare, HR, research & education, data, defence & telecommunications.

The top challenges faced during this transition by organisations were IT infrastructure and software, maintaining culture, workplace health & safety concerns, and communication.

Q. What are the top 3 challenges that your organisation has faced in the rapid transition to remote working?



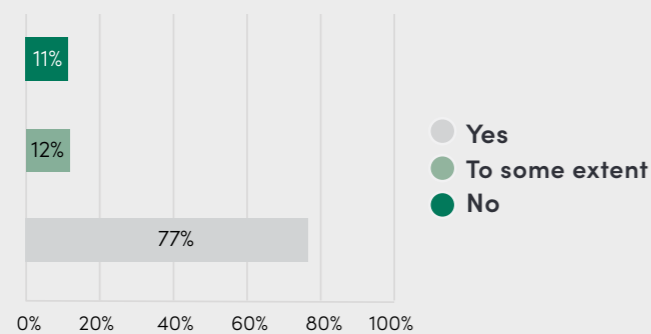
Yet, Individuals reported feeling more autonomous and productive over their work since the shift.



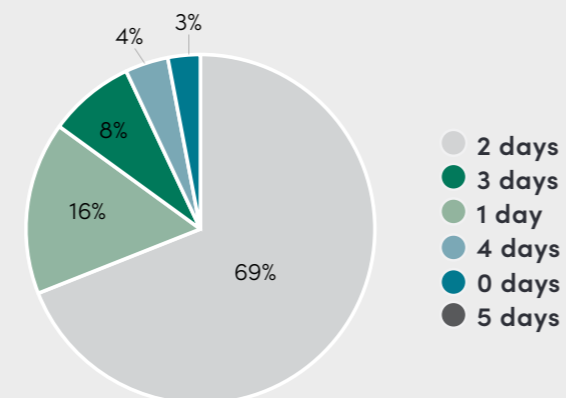
Remote working seems to be instinctive, with only 4% of respondents feeling that they would never adjust.

The survey data also shows that the preparation work has been done over years of strategic workplace change with 77% of organisations already having existing flexible work policies in place.

Q. Prior to the shift in work arrangements, did your organisation have a policy that supported you to work from home?



Q. If you had the choice in the future, how many days a week would you like to work from home?



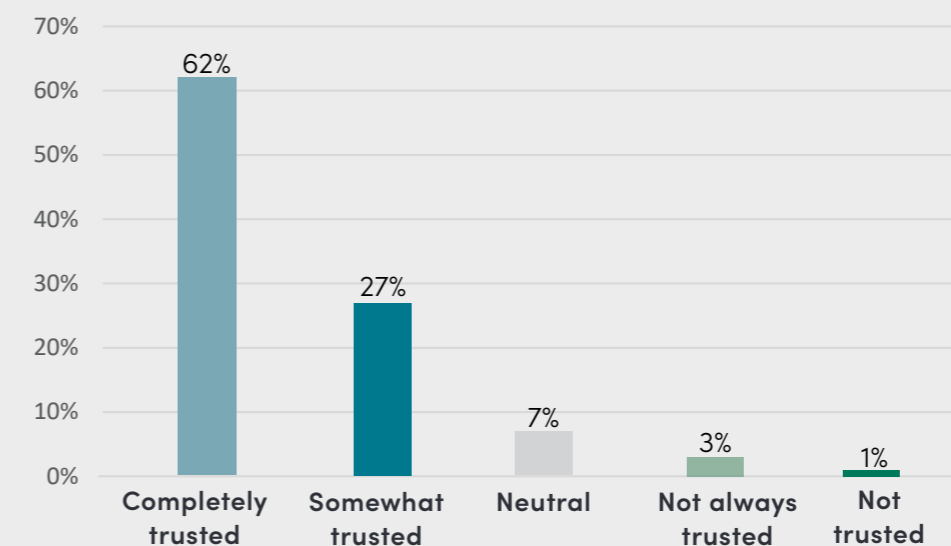
So now that we know that the preparation work has paid off and we've all proven we can effectively work from home, are we ready for an increase in remote working? Yes, but not full time. Only 3% of individuals said they would choose to work from home full time, compared to 67% who chose 2-3 days and only 4% choosing none.

Trust

One of the commonly perceived inhibitors to major workstyle change is organisational trust. Some previous thinking might suggest that organisations simply don't trust, for various reasons and to various degrees, that all of their employees will be accountable and productive if they are not present or supervised.

Our data is suggesting otherwise. What we are seeing is that many companies have built a solid foundation of trust across their teams and workplace culture. COVID-19 has also given them no choice and an opportunity for shifts in leadership mindsets to embrace trust building behaviours such as treating employees as equal partners, focussing on shared goals and doing what is right regardless of personal risk.

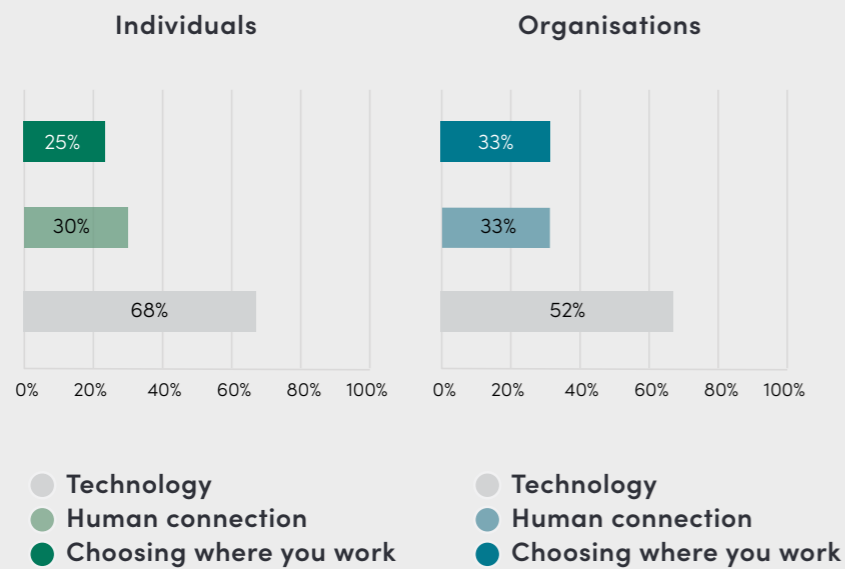
Q. How trusted do you currently feel by your organisation/team?



What do we value? What's important?

As for what are emerging as the most valuable enablers of work, this survey snapshot reveals what most workplace researchers, designers and strategists would already recognise.

Q. From the current situation, what have you found to be the most valuable enablers for work?

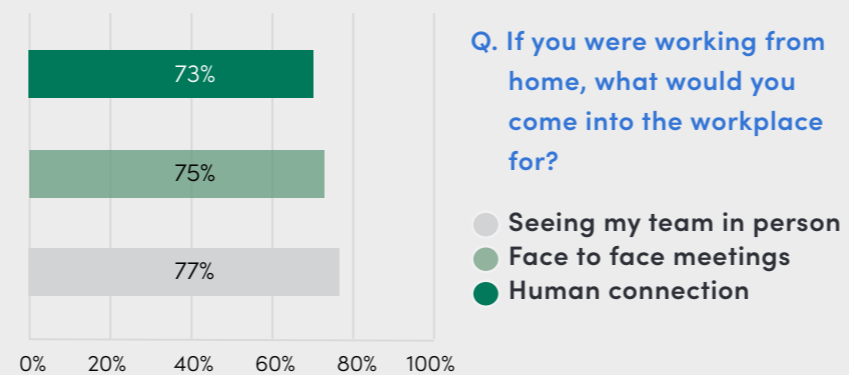


Not surprisingly, technology has been identified as a key enabler to enhance our work and support efficiency. Although we have unexpectedly discovered that it can replace and often streamline the face to face meeting, we are still social beings that need connection and validation.

The key is giving people the power to control how they meet with others. Choice is the glue that holds a satisfied workforce together.

Research has long supported the importance of personal choice in workplace satisfaction, productivity and wellbeing; the proof is in the pudding.

The crisis is driving global upskilling and innovation, ruthlessly testing out assumptions about the way we do things and why. We each have a chance to re-establish what we really value about the workplace, and to assess whether we want to bring it forward into the post COVID-19 world of work. For employees, the experience so far has shown how much people need connection, collaboration and community.



Q. If you were working from home, what would you come into the workplace for?



These insights into the need for humans to personally connect need to be balanced with the understanding that a viral transmission within a workplace can force another shut down. Social distancing and new hygiene measures are a given and modification is unavoidable.

We must not however, modify the office in a way that weakens connection, collaboration and community - the key reasons why workplaces exist.

The real challenges are yet to emerge but commercial work space is not going away just yet. The task now is for organisations to develop flexible work policies, whilst making the physical workplace a safe place, physically and psychologically so organisations can return to peak performance in this new post-COVID playing field.

What happens next?

As we plan for the future, our approach needs to be thorough and integrated. Solutions must be holistic beyond just the layout of furniture and workstations. Consideration should be given to technology, materials, planning principles and perhaps most importantly, behaviours and protocols.

Social Infrastructure

Bringing people together in spontaneous conversations, connections and innovation is what powers successful organisations. Our survey results are clear – coming together works best when we actually come together. The physical workplace is still the best place to do this, it just needs to evolve.

It is also clear that now and in the future, the opportunities to physically come together may be reduced so we need to consider a framework that connects people regardless of where they are.

The key to this may be in the creation of a 'social infrastructure' that lives at the centre of the culture of an organisation. It exists in a physical form and also extends beyond the workplace to enable people to feel connected even when they're working remotely.

This infrastructure may include a diverse range of physical spaces as well as a set of shared experiences and protocols that shape how people interact with each other and make connections.

It also extends to shared values and a strong sense of belonging. This can be nurtured via a reiteration of an organisation's purpose, strategies and long term vision.

This all leads to forging connections and building trust to fuel levels of engagement which in turn supports a culture of high performance and productivity.





Physical Environment

Now that National Safe Work principles have been set out by the Australian Courts, priority one is to create a physical environment that meets at least the minimum standards.

Whilst some things may change, others will remain.

A democratic workplace is still something we value culturally and the open plan office is the outward demonstration of a flat organisational hierarchy. We don't believe a return to the cubicle is the way to go.

Our work from home experience has had an incredibly levelling effect– there's no corner office in Zoom. We believe there would be overwhelming resistance to a return to individual offices and closed doors. So we need to be clever in our design solutions to ensure we maintain the best elements of an open environment whilst supporting Safe Work principles.

Having said that, it would be highly presumptive to propose a fully resolved set of design principles for the remainder of 2020 and beyond. Great design is borne from testing and learning and as we progress through the transition back to the workplace it is critical that there's a mechanism to capture and apply learning as well as a willingness to modify and update.

The focus should remain on the outcome, not necessarily on a set of rigid, pre-determined actions. The most important thing remains: a simple desire for people to enjoy being at work, to be able to interact with each other and be supported to do their best.

Helping people feel really good about coming to work is the mission here.

From this foundation we propose overlaying a toolkit approach. Recognising that this is definitely not a one size fits all scenario, our thinking leads us to crafting bespoke solutions using a kit of parts allowing elements to be combined in unique and infinite ways to tailor an approach that works specifically for individuals and organisations.

An important recognition is that we need ideas that can be adopted quickly as the first wave of workers return to the office, but in a considered way that also builds a baseline for mid and longer term approaches.

Equally important is the recognition that given the economic stress almost all businesses are under, any solutions need to be cost effective, quick to install, able to be tested and changed, and easily adaptable to meet the needs of unknown future requirements. The approach we believe in right now is a fast, inexpensive pivot rather than permanent, long term change.

How to approach a solution

Set out on the following pages is our toolkit of ideas. The ideas are organised into each space types and then physical and behavioural protocol solutions:

1. **Altering the physical environment to promote and support social distancing, and reduced contact measures**
2. **Using protocols to reduce occupation densities and manage the flow of people through the workplace, whilst embedding new behaviours**

We believe organisations will adopt a hybrid approach taking a selection of different tools and applying them in their own way with different measures being implemented at different times.

Firstly we look at the practical steps organisations can take to adhere to safe work guidelines via the implementation of physical measures. From removing task chairs, re-arranging workstations, installing screens and barriers to aid social distancing, one way thoroughfares, or the creation of COVID-19 'mud rooms', there are a host of different physical solutions to be explored. Each option has been identified as low, medium or higher cost.

We also examine how protocols can be brought into play to enable workplaces to be 'de-densified', to trigger new practices and embed behavioural change. Using successful work from home practices as a basis, we can create a high performing workforce who operate from a number of different physical locations and at different times throughout a 24 hour period.

Using the tools in a variety of combinations - we have proposed possible scenarios, categorised into short, medium and long term solutions.

We have also included a series of plans to demonstrate what these ideas might look like when applied to the work environment.

The aim here is not be prescriptive but to offer a wide range of solutions and demonstrate that when applied in a combination specific to an organisation, these simple strategies can be useful in tackling the challenging task of creating a COVID-19 equipped workplace.



The toolkit

Set out below is our toolkit of ideas. The ideas are organised into types of spaces and then physical and behavioural protocol solutions. We have identified each idea as a low, medium or higher cost item - indicated by one two or three dollar signs.

Building Entry



Physical

- No-touch, smart entry and 'people finder' technology to buildings and workspaces \$\$
- 'Mud Room' \$\$
- Sneeze guards at reception counters \$\$

Behavioural Protocols

- Consider using lift for arrival and stairs for exit

Floor Arrival



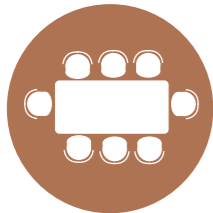
Physical

- No-touch, smart entry and 'people finder' technology to buildings and workspaces \$\$
- 'Mud room' \$\$
- Sneeze guards at reception counters \$\$

Behavioural Protocols

- Consider using lift for arrival and stairs for exit
- Develop a health screening regime: employees are required to 'self-screen' daily before arriving at work

Enclosed Meeting Spaces



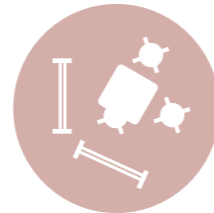
Physical

- Remove loose seating to limit group sizes and face to face positions \$
- More video meeting technology that support remote participants more inclusively \$\$\$
- Meeting rooms are opened up with maximum capacities reduced \$\$
- Add an abundance of sanitation stations \$
- Install sensors tracking usage and occupancy of spaces to inform usage protocols and/or cleaning regimes \$\$\$
- Room capacity reminders on video screens, posters or wall graphics \$

Behavioural Protocols

- Establish protocols for the number of people who can occupy an enclosed space
- Staff are tasked with wiping down all surfaces before and after they've used them: including workstations, loose tables, benches and lighting

Informal / Open Meeting Spaces



Physical

- Remove loose seating to limit group sizes and face to face positions
- More video meeting technology that support remote participants more inclusively \$\$\$
- Utilise highly mobile furniture that can be easily reconfigured \$\$
- Mark shared furniture such as lounges as 'single occupant' or remove and replace with single seat options if possible \$
- Add an abundance of sanitation stations \$
- Install sensors tracking usage and occupancy of spaces to inform usage protocols and/or cleaning regimes \$\$\$
- Area capacity reminders on video screens, posters or wall graphics \$

Behavioural Protocols

- Establish protocols for the number of people who can occupy an enclosed space
- Concierges to help keep high-use shared spaces clean and monitor social distancing practices
- Staff are tasked with wiping down all surfaces before and after they've used them: including workstations, loose tables, benches and lighting

All areas



Physical

- Reminders on video screens, posters or wall graphics:
 - Frequent hand washing
 - 1.5m distancing
 - Room occupancy protocols
 - No handshaking
 - Covering coughs and sneezes etc
- Intensified and highly visible office cleaning regime
- Hygiene Stations to all locations:
 - Hand Sanitiser
 - Anti-bacterial wipes
 - Bins

Behavioural Protocols

- Workers continue to work from home for individual work and come to the workplace just for collaboration in small groups
- Workers return to work part time on a rotational basis
- Start and finish times are staggered
- Using a 'hub and spoke' model to reduce the commute to work and minimise use of public transport
- Staggered or scheduled breaks and lunch times
- Develop illness protocols to define self-quarantine or isolation procedures if employees present symptoms
- Host first day back onboarding to reinforce new practices and protocols
- Have a plan to communicate evolving guidelines as protocols change
- Decrease workplace densities - reduce the number of people assigned to each work floor

The toolkit

Circulation Spaces



Physical

- Visual cues to remind of keeping 1.5m distance for breakout areas and floor arrival \$
- No-touch fixtures eg bathroom fittings, lighting & entry doors \$\$\$
- No-touch fixtures eg bathroom fittings, lighting & entry doors \$\$\$

Behavioural Protocols

- Consider using lift for arrival and stairs for exit

Breakout & Social Spaces



Physical

- Reduce loose furniture settings to limit capacity and ensure 1.5m distance is maintained \$
- Separating kitchen functions and appliances \$\$
- Utilise highly mobile furniture that can be easily reconfigured \$\$
- Install sensors tracking usage and occupancy of spaces to inform usage protocols and/or cleaning regimes \$\$\$

Behavioural Protocols

- Removal of shared snacks and provisions - BYO coffee and tea
- Develop a health screening regime: employees are required to 'self-screen' daily before arriving at work
- Concierges to help keep high-use shared spaces clean and monitor social distancing practices
- Staff are tasked with wiping down all surfaces before and after they've used them: including workstations, loose tables, benches and lighting

Workspace



Physical

- Remove a percentage of task chairs to separate workpoints and encourage physical distancing \$
- Reconfigure workpoints directly beside or in front of each other \$\$
- Add cleanable screens or panels between workpoints, between workstation rows or at the end of workstation clusters \$\$
- Utilise highly mobile furniture that can be easily reconfigured \$\$
- Install sensors tracking usage and occupancy of spaces to inform usage protocols and/or cleaning regimes \$\$\$

Behavioural Protocols

- Assign seating - one person per workpoint or at least reduce the number of people using a workpoint to single occupant use per day
- Establish protocols for the number of people who can occupy an enclosed space
- Staff are tasked with wiping down all surfaces before and after they've used them: including workstations, loose tables, benches and lighting

Lockers & Utilities



Physical

- Separate personal lockers from workstation areas \$\$

Behavioural Protocols

- Staff are tasked with wiping down all surfaces before and after they've used them: including workstations, loose tables, benches and lighting

All areas



Physical

- Reminders on video screens, posters or wall graphics:
 - Frequent hand washing
 - 1.5m distancing
 - Room occupancy protocols
 - No handshaking
 - Covering coughs and sneezes etc
- Intensified and highly visible office cleaning regime
- Hygiene Stations to all locations:
 - Hand Sanitiser
 - Anti-bacterial wipes
 - Bins

Behavioural Protocols

- Workers continue to work from home for individual work and come to the workplace just for collaboration in small groups
- Workers return to work part time on a rotational basis
- Start and finish times are staggered
- Using a 'hub and spoke' model to reduce the commute to work and minimise use of public transport
- Staggered or scheduled breaks and lunch times
- Develop illness protocols to define self-quarantine or isolation procedures if employees present symptoms
- Host first day back onboarding to reinforce new practices and protocols
- Have a plan to communicate evolving guidelines as protocols change
- Decrease workplace densities - reduce the number of people assigned to each work floor

Crafting a tailored approach

Using the ideas in the tool kits, we've detailed a number of scenarios using a combination of tools to meet short, medium and long term requirements. In order to help define the timing of the requirements a suggested measure is:

Short term: 0-50% of workers return to the physical workplace

Medium term: 50-75% of workers return to the physical workplace

Longer term: 75 – 100% of workers return to the physical workplace

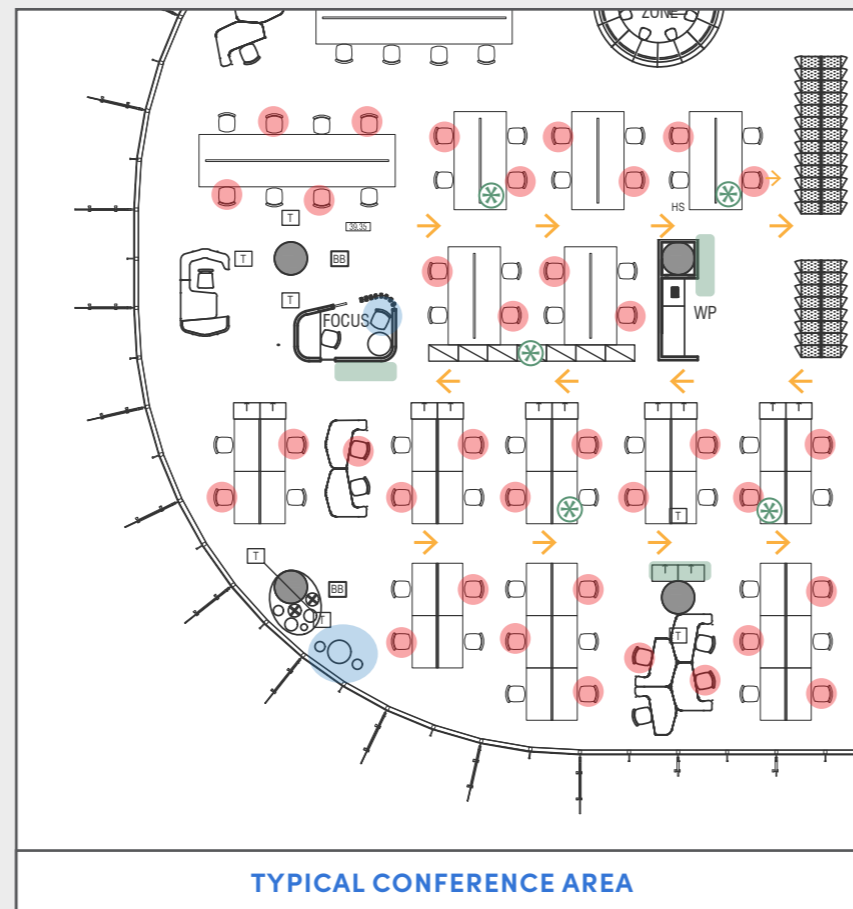
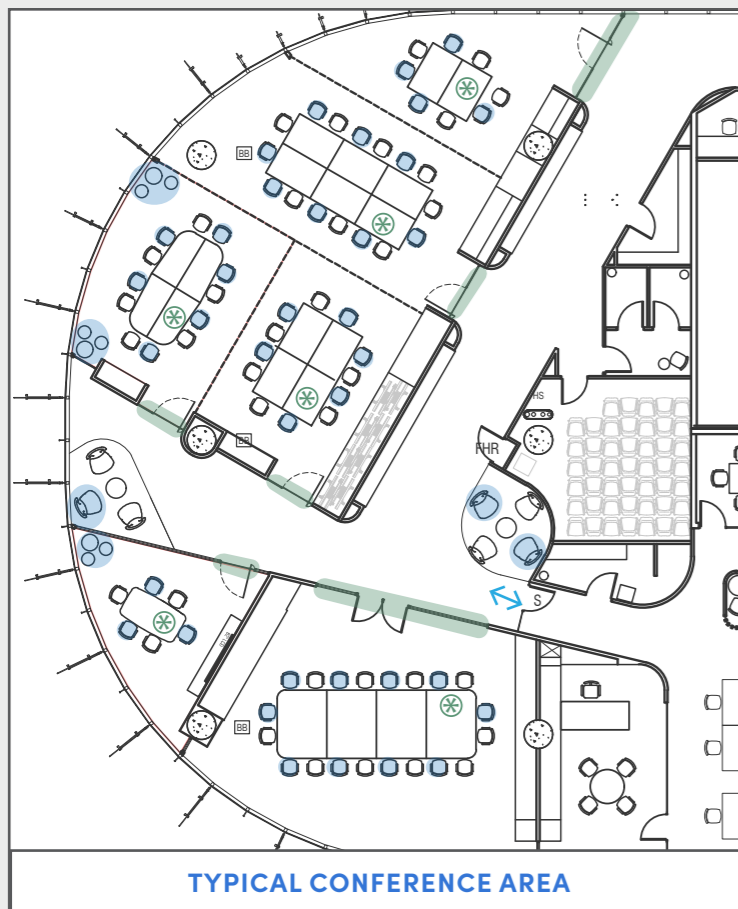
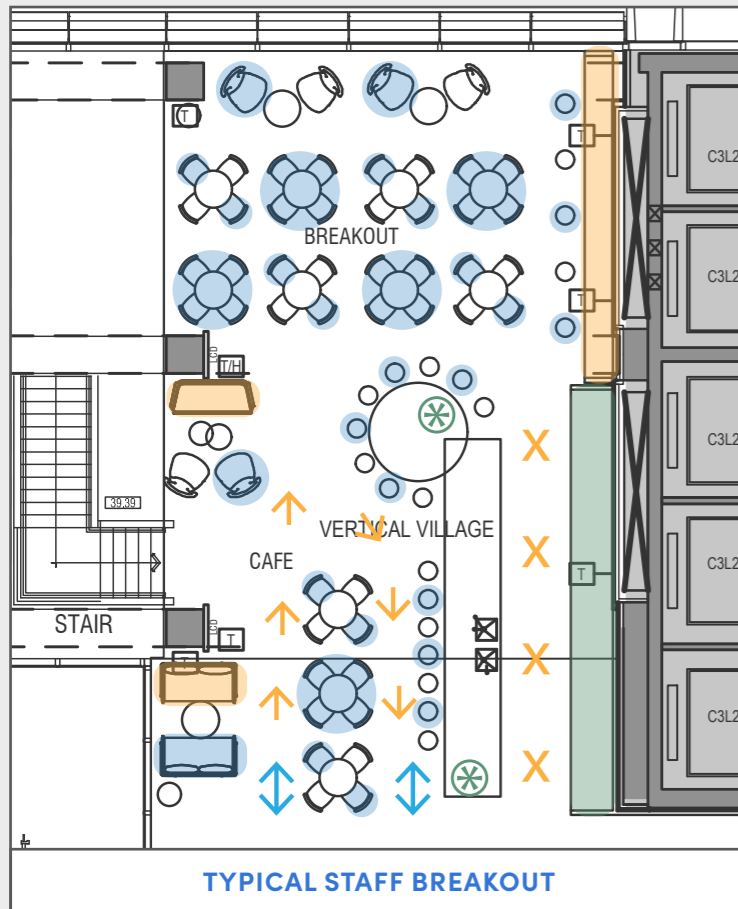
The right timing and combination of tools will be different for each organisation. But in all cases a number of different smaller actions can work together to create a practical solution that is testable, scalable, fast and in many cases inexpensive to apply.

We've included (right) a typical workplace layout that is an example of the modern workplace pre-COVID.

By way of comparison, we have then adapted this layout to show how the tools can be applied in the 3 time periods: short, medium and longer term.



Short term



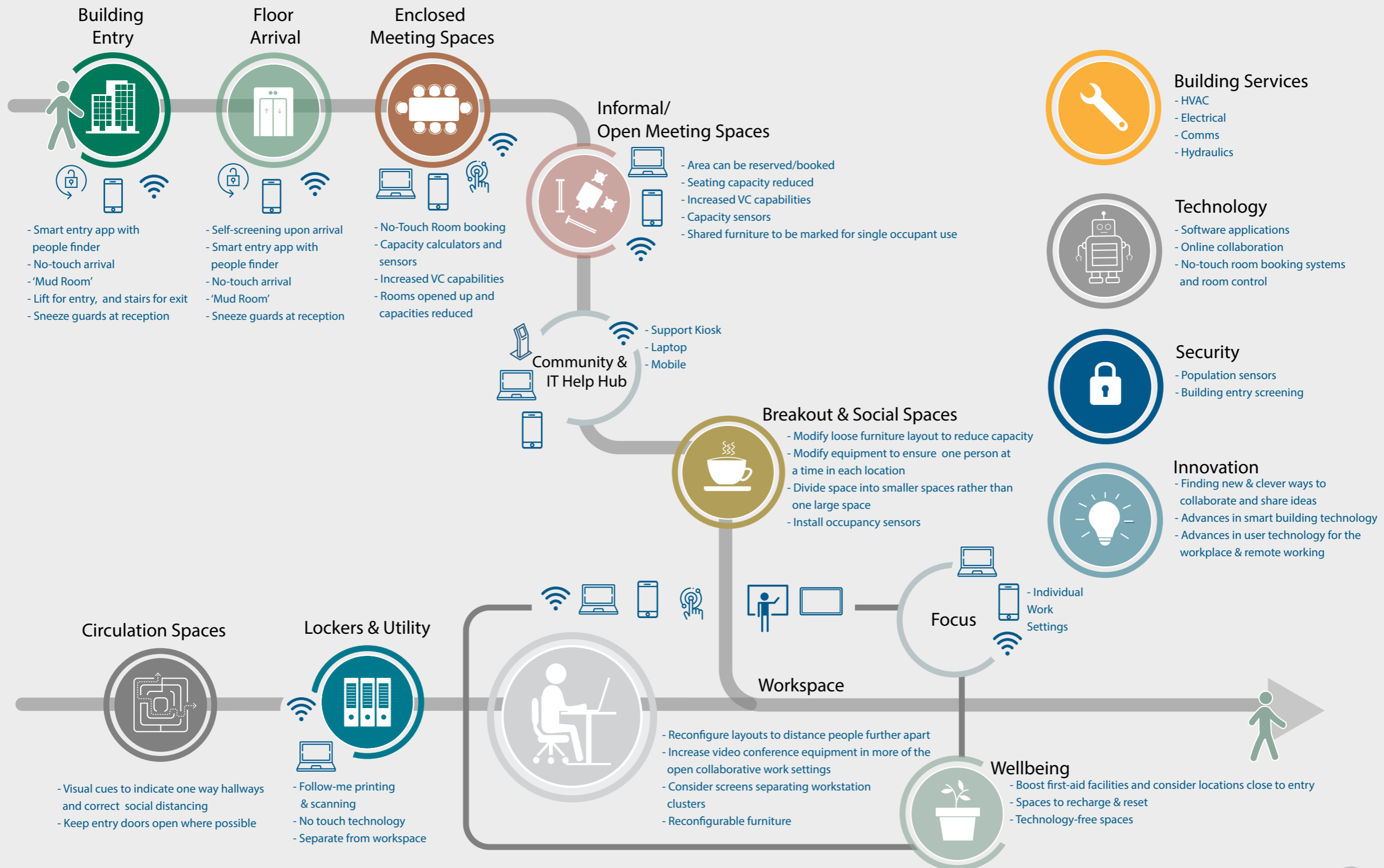
PHYSICAL

- Remove a percentage of task chairs to spread workpoints and encourage physical distancing
- Remove a percentage of loose furniture to limit group sizes and face to face positions at benches, breakout café tables and meeting settings
- Mark shared furniture such as lounges as 'single occupant' or remove and replace with single seat options if possible
- ↑ × Visual cues on floors to indicate one-way hallways and correct distancing at gathering places such as the reception desk and kitchen bench.
- ↔ Keep entry doors open where possible
- ✳ An abundance of sanitation stations positioned at regular intervals throughout the workplace
- Reminders on video screens, posters or wall graphics:
 - Frequent hand washing/sanitising
 - 1.5m distancing
 - Room occupancy protocols
 - No handshaking
 - Covering coughs and sneezes etc

PROTOCOLS

1. Host first day back onboarding to reinforce new practices and protocols
2. Assign seating – one person per workpoint or at least reduce the number of people using a workpoint to single occupant use per day
3. Workers continue to work from home for individual work and come to the workplace just for collaboration in small groups
4. Personal kit bags with stationery and personal sanitation items eg hand sanitiser and wipes
5. Establish protocols for the number of people who can occupy an enclosed space
6. Using stairs instead of lifts, perhaps each staircase in a single direction
7. Staggered or scheduled breaks and lunch times
8. Removal of shared snacks and provisions - BYO coffee and tea
9. Intensified and highly visible office cleaning regime (people need to feel assured that their spaces are being cleaned multiple times daily)
10. Staff are tasked with wiping down all surfaces before and after they've used them: including workstations, loose tables, benches and lighting
11. Develop a health screening regime: employees are required to 'self-screen' daily before arriving at work
12. Develop illness protocols to define self-quarantine or isolation procedures if employees present symptoms
13. Have a plan to communicate evolving guidelines as protocols change

Medium and Long term



Looking forward

The current situation is far from ideal and not exactly what we had planned for 2020. But with change comes opportunity and the opportunity here is to move workplace design forward, not backwards.

This unprecedented time provides the circumstances that are compelling us to take a deeper look at what's really important about coming to work. It is from this position of curiosity that we can create something new and better than before.

The things we're hearing, seeing and learning can be used to provide tailored advice to businesses to suit their specific requirements.

Our expertise sits squarely in the world of workplace design and there has never been a more relevant time to develop strategies and seek practical assistance in this area. Whether it be to bounce around a few ideas, planning adjustments to the current workplace, or a deep re-think in preparation for workplace transformation, we are ready, willing and able to work with you right now.

Get in touch with your Davenport Campbell contact or a member of the Future of Work Team if you think we can help you in any way.

We are also happy to provide a full copy of the survey results or any further information on our findings. Again, just get in touch with your Davenport Campbell team.

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Useful weblinks:

www.australia.gov.au
www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au
www.safework.nsw.gov.au

Photography credit:

Ben Voorderhake (Senior Designer)

