

Workest

Make a set of “no personal contact” rules: Limit handshaking, closed meeting spaces, hugging, or any other physical contact.

Questions to ask: Where is contact made between people in a normal situation? Is contact necessary? Is there any personal protection equipment (PPE) that my staff could use to reduce the transmission of infection for essential contact? How and where can I post new no-contact rules to ensure my staff has read and understood our updated policy?

Encourage “no item sharing” when possible: This includes things like pens, staplers, notebooks, dry erase markers, desk space, file folders, computers, and anything else that can be assigned to individual workers and not shared. We recognize not all businesses will be able to afford a zero-tolerance policy of shared work tools, but where, within reason, a limiting of exposure to shared objects, caution should be made.

Questions to ask: What are the essential tools of my business? And who uses them? Are there any high-risk staff whose job may increase their risk of infection? Are there any PPEs that can help protect my workers? What are the items my business can afford to supply all workers with? How and where can I post new no item sharing rules to ensure my staff has read and understood our updated policy?

Reorganize your floor plan: What can you do to your work space that will maximize 6-foot distance between workers, customers, and visitors? Can you stagger workspaces? Adjust desks to point towards walls or office partitions?

Questions to ask: What are the essential needs for space for my business? What are areas that are underutilized today? Are there any superfluous areas now that folks need 6-foot barriers, and how can I reimagine those spaces to make room for today’s needs? What are we using ____, ____, ____ space for?

Get rid of common “gathering” areas: In accordance with the step above, reconfigure your water cooler hang out spots, too. Can you reallocate these communal gathering places for open-air conferences space or more roomy desk arrangements? Before COVID-19 workers liked to share kitchenettes, breakrooms, and staff lounges, but we might not be able to afford such on-the-job luxury spaces. Where can you minimize hang-out spaces and maximize 6-foot distances?

Questions to ask: Do you have common gathering areas? How do your employees naturally hang out? And where? While not eliminating employee camaraderie, what’s the best approach to minimize staff exposure to one another?

Close breakroom hangouts: Workers will need breaks, legally and mentally. But how will you handle them? Previously, restaurant and retail breakrooms could be found with several staffers relaxing on worn out couches, quickly eating snacks or cracking jokes before returning to the floor. Now, these breaks need to be monitored. Is your staff 6 feet apart? Does your breakroom have

enough room to accommodate the number of workers who would be taking a break at once? What about smoke breaks and lunch breaks? Are there signs posted to wash hands before re-entering the work floor after breaks, just as there were in restrooms?

Questions to ask: What breaks or time off standards are required in your line of work, and how does your physical space address these needs? Are there any easy ways to improve those spaces to make them less partial to contagion? What are you doing to clean these spaces? Is there any way to improve? Do you have signs posted for staff workers to ensure they are washing their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before returning to work?

Create prominent hand sanitizing stations, complete with cleaning supplies: Hand sanitizer might be your newest line item on your profit and loss statement (P&L). Businesses are going to need to invest in safety equipment of both their workers and patrons to keep the confidence of consumers coming back. If your shop feels risky, shoppers might not return. So make a point to buy 60% or more alcohol per volume hand sanitizers and make them freely available across your business or office space.

Questions to ask: Are you able to afford hand sanitizer stations? Where would be the best place(s) to put hand sanitizer stations? What signage would you need to create? Are there hand sanitizer dispensers available for guests, visitors, mailmen, clients, friends, neighbors, customers?

Post communal equipment cleaning rules: If your office has gym equipment or common-use equipment (such as copy machines, metal machinery, and industry-specific tools) consider posting clear directions about how to clean the equipment between uses to keep multi-users safe.

Questions to ask: What are the most common communal equipment uses in your line of work? Are these shared? What are the equipment cleaning considerations you deem reasonably required to keep clean of COVID-19 or other germs? Are there any training sessions needed to ensure the safety of staff while increasing their cleaning responsibilities? How much time would you expect this to take? Does that impact the expectations of each individual contributor's workloads?

Create appropriate face mask rules: States and companies are able to make individual requirements regarding face mask requirements. For instance, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine is requiring face coverings for employees and clients/customers at all times. And JetBlue, the airline company, was the first to require **both staff and passengers** to wear face masks at all times during travel. While heeding federal and local regulations, create face mask rules that you deem are the most appropriate for your line of business. Then, update your employee handbook with your new policies, and make sure employees are clear with your expectations of both them and the customers you serve.

Questions to ask: How close are my employees to customers? How much do you think wearing face masks would increase the confidence of your employees and clients? What is your budget for PPE? Is it reasonable to expect face mask policies? For how long? What all would go in your policy, and what are the consequences for employees who break conduct?

Limit the number of people in a closed room: If you must have a "closed-room" discussion after opening your office, assess the options to either:

Host the discussion in a large enough room to give each attendee a 6-foot space between one another, or host the meeting virtually, wherein each participant may be under the same roof, but the meeting still takes place via a web conferencing tool online, to minimize direct exposure.

As a general rule, post the number of people each room can accommodate, and make sure to update room booking software accordingly. For instance, if your conference rooms were bookable for 10 people before coronavirus, and now it is deemed that the space can actually only host 3 to 4 people, update the preferences so that employees aren't making inadvertent errors in booking meetings.

Questions to ask: How many conference rooms do you have / do you need? Are there any ways to conduct business virtually? How many people can safely fit in your conference rooms now? Are there adequate cleaning supplies and ventilation systems to prevent the transmission of COVID in these spaces? Do you feel comfortable with your workers using these spaces for group discussions?

Break the 9-5: The 9am to 5pm workday might be under societal scrutiny as group dynamics wane in favor for distanced interactions between people. And, it's not just the 9-5ers who need to consider this, but how can your business adjust its hours of operation all together to make room for something new.

Questions to ask: What are other ways your business could reduce the likelihood of infection? Could you stagger workdays into shifts where employees come at non 9-5 hours based on team or function? What are the parts of your business' products of services that can remain remote? As an example, consultancies often set up in-person "discovery meetings" with new clients. Could this remain virtual moving forward? Would employees consider working weekends for two days off during the weekday?