ThinkFurniture

Return to Work

A Manifesto for Change

Introduction

Its not often you realize you are walking through history in the making but certainly 2020 will be remembered in the history books as a pivotal time for a sea change in both our thinking and our ways of working.

This document is designed to give a short overview of some of the changes and strategies we believe will help to make our places of work more safe from viral infection and allow for companies and employees to navigate a route through these turbulent times.

"Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

John F. Kennedy

As the Government and COBR will attest we all love a simple three point slogan so in keeping with that format ours should be:
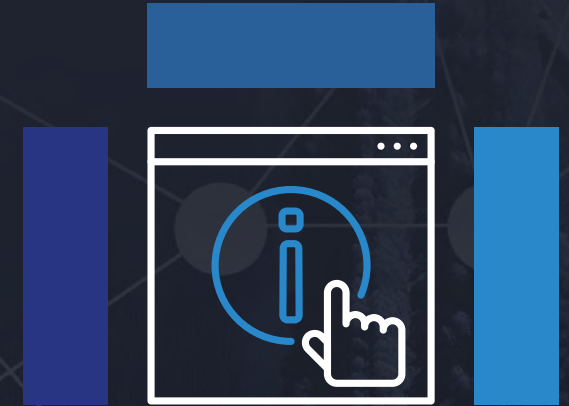
Return to work message

- Manage the workplace

- Manage the people in the workplace

- Reduce the risk of infection

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Manage the Workplace

Covid-19, like any virus, is the ultimate opportunist and can / will find any route into a workplace and eventually into its hosts body.

Our strategies therefore must reflect this challenge and the starting point is to reduce the opportunity for the virus to enter and spread within the workplace.

RETURN TO WORK

Manage Workplace

Manage People

Manage Risk

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Manage the Workplace

Manage Borders and entry points into workplace.

Protocols

- Screening visitors and employees (Temperature checks).

- Threshold controls : Barrier mats and sanitizer stations.

- Reduce reliance on touch button systems (lifts /sign in pads /keypads etc).

- Manage routes within workplace and entry / exit points.

- Review current equipment and if still fit for purpose post Covid.

- Computer screens, touch screens, keyboards and mice are a breeding ground for microorganisms.

- Are individual workspaces assigned to one person or multiple users and time lapse between users.

- Are workspaces kept clear and therefore easier to clean and disinfect.

- Power chargers – one per user or are people touching, sharing leads or chargers?

- Office chairs and fabrics are often primary location for dust mite or allergens and biological particles.

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Manage the Workplace

Review Cleaning regimes and level of risk you are prepared to accept.

We have already touched on personal equipment but how about open plan spaces, water coolers, coffee machines and door handles etc.

Does your cleaning strategy rely evening workers coming in and emptying bins or wiping work surfaces?

What about keyboards, mouse and phone disinfection?

What about mobile phones (often have more pathogenic bacteria on surface than your average toilet seat!)

Containment and Clean Air

- Social distancing helps reduce the spread but within the workplace the need to ensure containment when individuals are in closer proximity and also fresh air circulation raise their own issues.

- Solutions such as Face masks, Protective screens (between desks), Desktop air filters, purifiers and HVAC with better filtration and disinfecting qualities are all tools at our disposal to help ensure we reduce the risk of airborne cross contamination.

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Managing People

Most virus's will find their way into both workplaces and ultimately new hosts by two routes of transmission:

1. Airborne

2. Direct contact

If we can make the workplace as clean as possible the only way any virus's can easily enter will be via individuals.

This can be on clothes, bags, phones and most likely shoes. If an individual is asymptomatic they will also be distributing viral load with every breath they exhale - hence the necessity for some social distancing protocols between work colleagues or work rota's to reduce risk of complete workforce being infected.
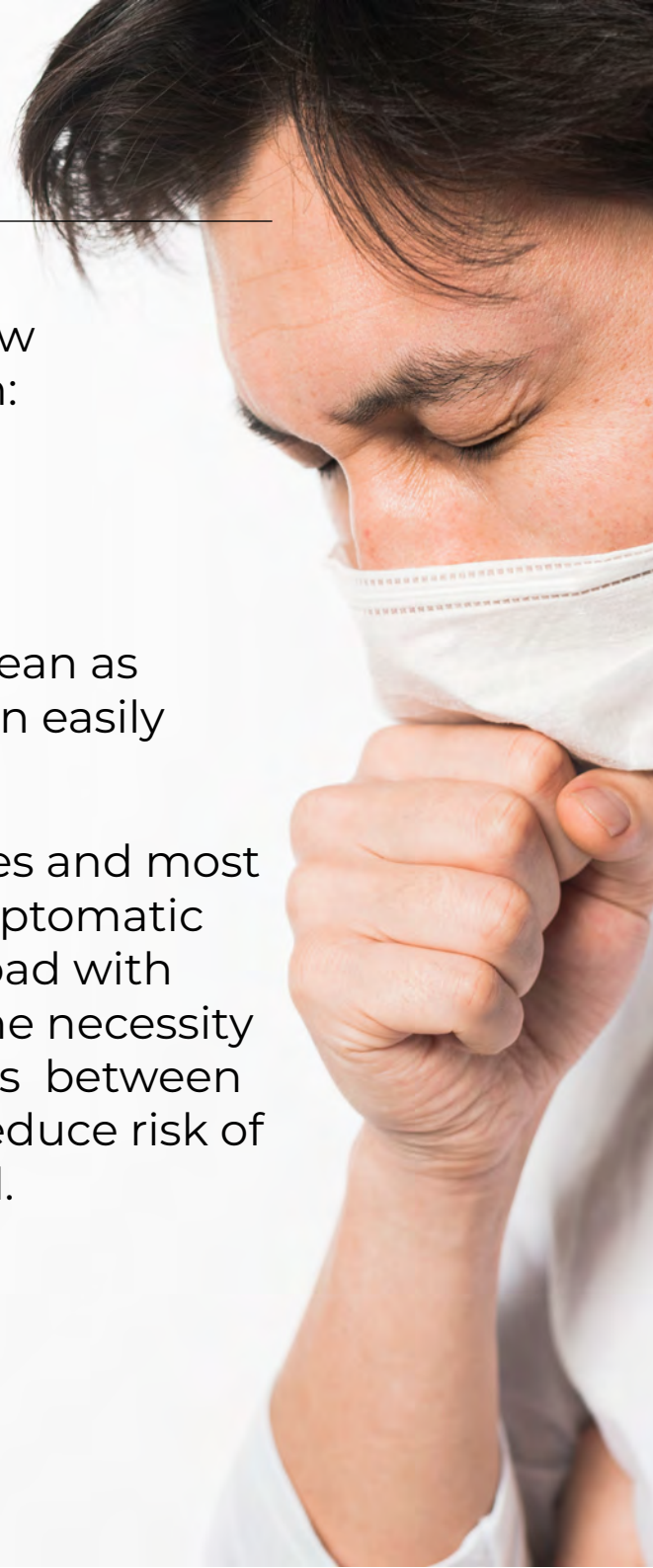
Information

Coughing
Air can exit the mouth at speeds of 60–70 mph and travel up to 20 feet (6 metres)

Sneezing
Fastest lab test sneeze recorded at 103 mph. Sneeze aerosol can travel more than 25 feet (8 metres)

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Managing People

Knowledge is power and if everyone can become more aware of how germs and virus's are transmitted then that knowledge along with various tools and protocols will allow us to reduce the risk of contamination within the workplace and beyond.

Culture of Clean

- Knowing what is correct is one thing but doing is another thing. If employees feel empowered (and incentivized?) to maintain good hygiene standards then this alongside other protocols will significantly reduce the likelihood of spread from within the workplace.

- The positive effects ,aside from reduced sickness, will be employees feeling safer to return to work and having a more optimistic outlook towards their company and workplace.

- Provide staff with the tools and knowledge to reduce viral spread:

- Screening of Staff and Visitors (avoid the trojan horse)

- Workplace protection (at desk and beyond)

- Cleaning regimes and systems

- Tools and equipment to minimize risk of spread

- Visual Re-inforcement of tools / strategies to staff

Reduce the Risk

The Bad News : Fighting virus and microbes is like trying to stop the tide coming in (ask King Canute how that worked out!)

The Good News: By being alert and aware of the risks and putting in place strong strategies to reduce spread we can drastically reduce the risk of infection.

Moreover if infection occurs then a reduced viral load is far more acceptable and likely to cause less serious illness than receiving a heavy dose of virus...its all about minimizing risk.

"The initial dose of virus and the amount of virus an individual has at any one time might worsen the severity of COVID 19 disease. Viral load is a measure of the number of viral particles present in an individual.

Higher SARS-CoV-2 viral loads might worsen outcomes, and data from China suggests the viral load is higher in patients with more severe disease.

The amount of virus exposure at the start of infection, the infectious dose, may increase the severity of the illness and is also. linked to a higher viral load.

Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine

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Strategies and Solutions

Put simply the the whole objective is to stop any virus from moving from Point A (clothing, surfaces, air etc) to Point B (respiratory system of human).

Unfortunately we cannot live in a vacuum and are, by nature, social creatures so the main strategy is one of reducing the risk by minimizing or containing the virus's ability to get from Point A to Point B. Of course if between those points we can eradicate as many of their number as possible we start to reduce the risk and indeed help manage the viral load that people are exposed to .

Working alongside our clients we would look to develop a roadmap and a working strategy based on that companies needs and attitude to acceptable risk. There are many quick and easy wins in terms of strategies as well as more involved or complex options depending on the needs and demands of the company.

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Think Furniture are workplace specialists.
For more information on 'Return to Work' and also 'Work from Home' strategies please get in touch.

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