



# WORKPLACES

IN THE **TIME** OF **COVID-19**

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GOING  
**BACK TO**  
**WORK,**  
NOT GOING  
**BACK TO**  
**NORMAL**

***“And when you can’t  
go BACK, you have to  
worry only about the  
best way of moving  
FORWARD”***

***The Alchemist***  
Paulo Coelho

## **Business owners and office managers**

are starting to feel the tension between getting up and running again versus risking the health of their employees. This is a valid argument that is not only a moral, but also a legal one. There will also be other issues that your employees will be facing, such as the anxiety and stress of going back to work, and the fear of being exposed and vulnerable to the virus. Then there will be the ones that enjoyed working from home, making it a challenge to come back to the office.

But here in this report I put together ideas, suggestions, and considerations that you - as a business owner or an office manager - can put into practice to ease the transition back to work.

***According to the Q1 2020 PandemicEX Survey done by Forrester, 41% of workers reported that they are afraid to go back to work.***

Different agencies, such as the **Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA)**, **The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)**, and the **Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** have developed safety guidelines to protect employers and employees. Business owners, office managers and HR departments should refer to those documents.

## **Returning to work and opening business will be a process.**

In order to comply with social distancing, many companies will have to come up with and enact their own systems. This should include clear and written procedures and communications. ***The focal point will be the quick identification of possible positive cases and a quick response in order to minimize the exposure of the other employees and ward off the spread of the coronavirus as well as to maintain a strict enforcement of social distancing.***



## **Temperature Checks**

businesses should consider use of a touchless infrared thermometer to check the temperatures of employees each day and each client who enters the business. Take also into consideration that there are many cases of COVID-19 that are asymptomatic and there are people that may have fever but don't have COVID-19. The person facilitating this procedure has to be trained and have PPE.

## **Screening questions**

During the pandemic, according to the EEOC, employers may ask employees whether they are experiencing any symptoms of the virus, such as fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath and sore throat. All this information should be kept confidential. An example would be *“Have you had a cough? Have you had a fever? Have you been around anyone exhibiting these symptoms within the past 14 days? Are you living with anyone who is sick or quarantined?”*

## **Limit People at the workplace**

According to the Phase 1 of reopening the economy in Texas, starting on May 1st, the business should be limited to 25% of their normal occupancy, and depending on the results or the behavior of the pandemic it may be increased to 50% on May 18th.

## Here are some suggestions

- **Bring the employees back in waves in order to comply with social distancing**
- **Be flexible and consider letting employees work from home**
- **Schedule employees in shifts**
- **Communication:**
  - *Develop an emergency communication plan*
  - *Have written guidelines and communicate them in a clear and concise manner.*
  - *Provide a space for your employees to voice their concern and needs*
  - *Implement educational signage of safe practices and procedures (CDC and OSHA have many printable posters)*
  - *Provide signs for social distancing practice.*
- **Implement incentives to encourage employees to wear masks at work**
- **Encourage frequent hand washing**
- **Encourage respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes. Provide customers and the public with tissues and trash receptacle**
- **Have available disinfectant and hand sanitizer on each desk/work station and common areas, as well as unscented moisturizer lotions.**
- **Make arrangements for employees to have lunch at their desk**
- **Create a cleaning schedule for the common areas**
- **Encourage everyone to commit to regularly cleaning high touch surfaces**



- Avoid switching desks or using other employee's equipment.
- Clean own space when done for the day or if switching places.
- Educate and implement incentives regarding tidying up and cleaning
- Minimize business travel and meetings. Rely more on remote communication.

## ***Considerations for the physical workplace that will decrease “high touch areas”***

### **If possible, transition to:**

- Motion sensor lights
- Motion sensor faucets
- Motion sensor soap dispenser
- Motion sensor towel dispenser
- Toilet seat covers
- Motion sensor doors or swinging push doors
- Providing or encouraging employees to bring their own mini refrigerators
- Installing High-efficiency air filters
- Increasing ventilation rates
- Installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards
- Professionally cleaning and disinfecting your workplace at the end of each day

## **A thorough cleaning of the entire workplace is a critical aspect of warding off the spread of the disease.**

- **Mop and vacuum floors on a daily basis**
- **Clean and disinfect high touch areas**
  - *door knobs and handles*
  - *sink faucet handles*
  - *microwave and refrigerator door handles*
  - *keyboards, computer mice, phones*
  - *vending machine buttons, elevator buttons, water fountain buttons*
  - *coffee pot and beverage dispensers*
- **Remove and dispose of trash daily to help maintain a safer environment.**
- **Clean and disinfect common and shared areas to help avoid employee illness.**
  - *bathrooms and breakrooms*
  - *training and meeting rooms*
- **Use professional sprayers, misters and foggers to sanitize places that are hard to reach.**

*Thank you for reading this report, we hope you find it helpful.*

*Sincerely,*

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