New Office Concepts in the Post COVID-19 Times

7.1 New Work Concepts That Will Stay After COVID-19

The digital transformation is changing the way we work and what demands we place on our work environment and location. The focus is no longer solely on the salary and extrinsic factors. New Work focus mainly on intrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation refers to an individual’s personal interests, satisfaction and enjoyment. The factors affecting it are internal. Therefore, a person learns the learning’s sake without expecting anything such as grades or praise in return. Instead, they are guided by something deeper (Helmold, 2020). A good work–life balance and personal development on a professional and personal level are now playing an increasingly important role. In the case of work processes that run virtually, flexible work models are particularly suitable to respond to the new needs of the new worker and to better combine professional and private life. For future work, it will become more and more important to change old structures and create space for new working models. The Internet makes it possible to work in virtual teams from anywhere in the world. The introduction and use of flexible working models are therefore only a logical consequence. In the following we present you the advantages of flexible working models. Many companies already understand today how we want to work in the future. Giving employees more freedom to choose their working hours and location is a good step in the right direction. Because in the future it will become more and more important that companies respond to the individual needs of their employees and offer flexible working models. In this way, everyone can find out for
themselves which way of working is most effective and satisfactory. Above all, employee satisfaction, trust and appreciation should be increased in order to remain interesting as an employer in the long term. This will enable the highest productivity and the greatest success for the company in the future (Bergmann, 2019).

7.2 New Work Office and Layout Concepts

7.2.1 Post COVID-19 Layout Concepts

The Corona pandemic will have a lasting impact on company operations and office layouts and spaces. On the one hand office spaces will reduce due to the fact that companies are allowing and encouraging their employees to work at home. On the other hand, office layouts must be organised in a safe and healthy way in the light of the post Covid-19 times. Modern science and New Work concepts have recognized, that work design, office layout, lightning, computer work stations, ergonomics that critically affect employee satisfaction, morale and work outcomes (Nab, 2019).

From autonomous cleaning devices to tighter cybersecurity measures, here are the technologies influencing how the office could look during the reopening process and beyond. Get the full report.

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted nearly every aspect of our lives, including tasks as fundamental as going to work. While many office workers are still working from home, others across the world are now beginning to return to their offices in person for the first time in months. However, in the US, 2 out of 3 workers still feel uncomfortable returning to the workplace, according to a Qualtrics study. Outbreak prevention, worker safety, and employees’ peace of mind will be top concerns for businesses around the world as they begin to reopen their office doors. In this report, we dive into some of the technologies that will help address these concerns and influence the future of the office space, from autonomous cleaning solutions to people-counting sensors. Figure 7.1 depicts the future office layout in the post COVID-19 times (CB Insights 2020).

While the World Health Organization (WHO) and other health authorities have issued guidance for companies to make offices safer, reopening plans vary widely between countries and cities. And as we continue to learn more about the virus, no one solution has emerged as a standalone prevention method. For example, some experts point to social distancing as being most vital to reducing spread, while others highlight wearing masks as key. Companies will have to look to guidelines from local and national authorities for each office location. Their strategies will likely involve a combination of approaches to minimize risks for employees, which can be aided by the technologies and start-ups featured in this report. Throughout this report, CB Insights visualizes the tech-enabled in-office journey for an employee as shown in Fig. 7.2. The new considerations and technologies that may impact each part’s looks as follows:

• Pre-Entry Health Checks
• Touchless Entry
Moving forward, many companies will likely reconsider their corporate real estate footprint, whether that involves downsizing or redistributing space to satellite offices. A completely remote workforce seems unlikely, given the intangible...
benefits of social connection, collaboration, and innovation that in-person working provides. Nonetheless, it will be crucial to create optimal conditions for employees to work remotely as well as in the office. To stay ahead of the curve, companies will need to consider key investments across wellness, remote collaboration tools, mobile cybersecurity tech, accessible HR tools and workforce training programs for professional development and upskilling.

7.2.2 Open Office Layout Concepts

An open office is an open-plan work environment where there are no enclosed office rooms or walled cubicles for employees. Usually, employees work in the same room, often beside each other, while seated along a huge desk or on workstations positioned close together. Open offices first came around the 1950s when employers needed to find a way to cut business costs through reduced construction fees. Today, it is the standard office layout for both start-ups and Fortune 500 companies (Helmold, 2020).

Advantages

• Collaboration: Office designs play a huge role in the company culture you want to build. The type of layout can dictate your employee’s satisfaction level, attitude, and organization. So, if you want your company to have a collaborative, social and energetic environment, an open office will help you achieve it. Open offices are believed to encourage better communication and teamwork. Open offices are mostly favoured by companies that rely on employee engagement and participation such as marketing agencies, journalism newsrooms and graphic design companies.

• Cost-friendly: When it comes to financial aspects, it is without a doubt that an open office layout is much cheaper and practical compared to a closed office. With an open-plan, you can squeeze more people per square footage of the area. You need not buy a lot of furniture too. By placing workstations against each other, you can create lots of space to fit everyone in the company.

Disadvantages

• Noise: Too much noise in open offices can prevent employees from working productively. If you have employees working on tasks that require concentration and quiet space, noise from an open office can be a huge roadblock to their productivity. To make matters worse, employees also tend to have different thresholds for noise and concentration.

• Conflicts: When a group of people with different personalities and beliefs are crammed into a prison-like room to work for 8 h a day, there’s a high possibility of misunderstandings and conflicts. If not managed, it can hurt productivity and also increase stress-level among employees.

• Spreading illnesses: Unlike closed office where there are cubicles to separate one another, in an open office you get to interact with everyone in the company. If an employee is sick with a communicable disease, they can easily transfer and spread the virus to the rest of the department.
7.2.3 Closed Work Office and Layout Concepts

A closed office, on the contrary, is a type of working area where employees have their own individual working areas distinctly divided either by using pucca walls, cubicles, or panels. The term “cubicle farms” which used to describe the closed office trend back in the 1980s is now in decline.

Advantages

• Privacy: Segmented private offices are the best choice if you want privacy among your employees. Privacy plays an important role in decision-making process. It also helps bring a sense of security among your employees. With a wall around them, they don’t have to feel afraid of being called out for idling or doing something that’s not work-related (even if they’re working to their best all the time!). They can also personalize their cubicles by hanging family photos or memorabilia that will inspire them to work better.

• Better performance: Unlike open offices, closed offices can help minimize distraction allowing employees to work better and produce quality results. Closed offices are better used for companies with jobs that require concentration and quiet working areas such as law firms, accounting agencies, and other businesses in the financial sector.

• Clear Hierarchy: Closed office environments provide employees a clear understanding of office hierarchy. The higher their position in the company, the better offices they work in. This can be an incentive for new staff to work harder for the company.

Disadvantages

• Costly: Enclosed offices are significantly more expensive to build and maintain than an open-plan office. Since each employee has his own workspace or cubicle, you will need more area to fit every member of your team. A large office space will also require more furniture, heating and maintenance.

• Low Supervision: It’s hard to supervise all employees in a closed office environment compared to the open-plan layout. Because your employees are in their own private offices or cubicles, it can be difficult to understand what everyone is doing.

7.3 Remote Work and Home Office

A further developed form of the home office is the flexible remote work model. Employees work 100% in virtual teams, the employer does not require any time in the office. This model promotes the possibility of putting together international teams that can work with one another regardless of time and location. This gives companies the opportunity to find the best employees worldwide, bring them together and lead them in a virtual team. Networking on an international level enables new perspectives, approaches and knowledge from all over the world to be discovered and used more effectively.
The flexible working model remote work is particularly suitable for people who like to be on the go and do not want to commit themselves to one place of work. For example, remote work has developed in recent years. New Work companies like Amazon or Google established as a trend among travellers. But this model is also suitable for parents who want to better combine work and family life or people with health problems who cannot drive to an office every day. As with the home office, it is important to be able to organize yourself and to actively call it a day. Because this is the only way to achieve a satisfactory work–life balance (Lindner, 2020).

What should you watch out for if you want to work as a remote worker? For one, you can actively look for companies that offer this flexible working model. As more and more companies are open to the work model, actively approaching your employer can also be worthwhile if you have decided to work as a remote worker. A list of the most popular companies that support remote work has e.g. B. Forbes created. On the other hand, there is the possibility of finding out about the latest remote jobs via newsletter or online platforms, or of trying out remote work in an organized manner.

Home office was already possible for approx. Three out of four companies before the corona pandemic according to a survey of the IUBH (IUBH, 2020). 22% of the respondents stated that more than 3 days of home office per week were allowed. 21.6% stated that home office was not possible and 5% of the respondents did not know what the company’s internal regulations look like. Looking to the future, 42% of those surveyed assume that there will be more home offices after the corona pandemic. 27.3% assume that the home office policy will remain the same and 14.9% expect less home office. 15.8% cannot assess the situation. Almost 60% of those surveyed state that they had worked from home at least occasionally before the pandemic. After the pandemic, 79.4% plan to be in the home office at least occasionally. 96% of those surveyed who previously worked in the home office want to continue doing this in the future. In addition, more than half of those surveyed who have not previously worked from home intend to do so in the future. Home office plays a significant role in all activities. 57% of the respondents who stated that they carry out an activity that mostly has to be carried out at work plan to work from home in the future. Of those surveyed for whom home office at least 2 days per week would not be a problem, around 85% also want to work in the home office in the future, and around 90% of those surveyed who could even do 100% home office plan at least in the future to work from home at times. 42.6% of the study participants assume that the corona pandemic will drive their companies’ investments in digitization. 39% said that their companies’ investments in digital business models have already increased and around 30% of respondents describe the company they work for as a digital pioneer in its industry (IUBH, 2020).
7.4 Coworking Spaces and Shared Offices

As the flexible home office and remote work models show, the work environment is important in order to be able to work productively and successfully. The basic idea of the shared offices, so-called coworking spaces, is productive work in a creative atmosphere. Because coworking does not only mean spatial collaboration, but also intellectual. A coworking space is a place that enables both concentrated work and stimulating exchange in a relaxed and creative work atmosphere. They also have the advantage that, in addition to being well-equipped, they also promote networking within a community. This is precisely why they are becoming increasingly popular as a place to work. Especially among individualists, in the start-up scene, among creatives and freelancers. The principle is simple: a coworking space provider rents individual workstations or office space on an annual or monthly basis and even daily to people who want to work in a relaxed atmosphere in the coworking space. A coworking space often offers open workspaces with individual workstations, office and meeting rooms. In addition, open spaces and events promote exchange and networking in the community. While there were only just over 2000 coworking spaces worldwide in 2012, today there are already more than 13,800, which are spread across the globe as international coworking “chains”. We present the most popular coworking spaces:

**Recommended coworking spaces with several locations in Germany:**

The coworking provider Mindspace, founded in Tel-Aviv, offers open work areas, individual offices, meeting rooms and open areas for retreat and exchange. In addition to 24/7 access, there are coffee bars and a number of industry and community events. There are locations in Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich and Hamburg. Mindspace also has international offices in London and San Francisco. The American coworking company WeWork is represented in 65 cities worldwide. Including in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and Frankfurt (WeWork, 2020). The areas are designed by artists, designers and engineers to create a comfortable working atmosphere. Telephone booths or brainstorming rooms encourage concentration and creativity. A reception service and events for networking complete the coworking feeling. According to a survey by Twago, the Betahaus in Berlin and Hamburg is one of the 10 most popular coworking spaces in Germany among freelancers and start-ups. Factors such as equipment, atmosphere and on-site cooperation are decisive. At Betahaus there are also events for networking, different rooms to work and the possibility to use coworking spaces of Betahaus partners all over the world (Twago, 2020).

7.5 Job Sharing

The flexible working model job sharing means that at least two people share a full-time position in the company. Companies such as B. Deutsche Bahn or Beiersdorf have already introduced the job-sharing model. Read interviews with people who are already trying out job sharing here.
The following variants of job sharing are available:

- **Job splitting**: Here two or more employees share a full-time position. Accordingly, they have very similar areas of responsibility, but work on different days and are independent of each other. The two job splitting partners take care of the organization of the tasks and the division of working time.

- **Job pairing**: Two employees work a little closer together in job pairing. They also share a full-time position, but work together. The sharing partners are equally responsible for joint projects, coordinate continuously and make important decisions together. Well-functioning teamwork is particularly important in this flexible working model.

Job sharing offers many advantages for employees:

- A satisfactory work–life balance.
- It facilitates e.g. B. the possibility of further education—in part-time studies or with online courses to deepen certain topics.
- Less stress, as upcoming tasks are taken over by the job-sharing partner in the absence.
- Learning effect through complementary knowledge and skills of the partner.
- More time for social engagement or personal interests.
- Important skills such as organizational and communication skills as well as time management are promoted.
- It can also be advantageous for employers to offer employees a job-sharing model.
- Addressing individual needs strengthens employee loyalty and the company’s attractiveness.
- In the event of illness or termination, hardly any knowledge is lost and the work to be done is better dealt with.
- Double input and problem-solving approaches per full-time position.
- Work with greater care due to the four-eyes principle.
- Unpopular tasks can be split up or the sharing partner is happy to take over them.

### 7.6 4-Days Working Week

The usual working time for full-time jobs is 40 hours with 5 working days. There are now many proponents of the 4-day week, including in Sweden, France and the USA. Companies such as Amazon, Treehouse or Basecamp have already established this flexible working model. The focus there is already on giving employees the right freedom to do their work. Employees are more motivated, productivity increases and companies can counteract illness, dissatisfaction and high fluctuation due to overload.

### 7.7 Trust-Based Working Time

The flexible working model of trust-based working time (functioning time) follows a similar concept to the 4-day week. Goals and tasks are set beforehand and no fixed working hours are defined. The focus is on the productivity and the results of the
employee—not the office time present. Since people work differently and need more time for some tasks than others, it makes sense to take this approach. Because one thing is clear: time has never inevitably reflected productivity. This model is therefore suitable for anyone who does their job to achieve results and not to mainly spend time in the office.

**Advantages of trust-based working hours:**

- The focus is on the work and the tasks to be done, not the time spent in the office.
- The organization of the team is very important.
- One hundred percent independent work with a lot of trust.
- The employee shows with satisfactory results that he is doing his job well.
- This flexibility is also an advantage for companies, as it reinforces exactly what is decisive: the output that drives the company forward.

### Sabbatical

The flexible working model sabbatical, also known in German as the sabbatical year or long-term leave, is a way of having long periods of time off. You could use the time to travel, for example—with an additional salary and the prospect of continuing to work for the company afterwards. The time-out from the job can last several months or up to a year, depending on the arrangement. The idea of the sabbatical comes from the United States, but the term is inspired by the Jewish Sabbath—the seventh day of the week on which, according to the Torah, one should rest and not work. Sabbaticals are particularly suitable for people who need a longer break, either because the work was very stressful or to gain new impressions and come back from the sabbatical in a positive mood. A sabbatical can also be an opportunity to see and solve problems from a new perspective. In order to continue to receive your salary on the sabbatical, you can agree that only half of your salary will be paid to you in the preceding months, so you will then receive the remainder of your salary every month on the sabbatical. The insurance also continues to run through the employer.

### Unlimited Vacation

The final flexible working model of unlimited vacation gives the employee the freedom to decide for himself how much vacation he needs. Companies such as Netflix, LinkedIn or Virgin Group offer their employees unlimited vacation. Mutual respect and trust are the basis for this model. It is particularly suitable for companies where productivity can be easily measured and employees can structure their time themselves. The probability that the offer could be used is rather low.
7.10 Case Study: Elenium Device for Secure Office Place

As a building’s first point of contact—and first line of defense—entrances and lobbies are poised for a revamp in policies and procedures when it comes to fighting the spread of Covid-19. The criteria for authorized occupants could include pandemic-specific considerations like employee schedules, health indicators, and contact tracing. Many companies that have already returned to work are using apps and daily health surveys to screen employees before arrival. This ensures that employees experiencing symptoms or who have been exposed to a positive case of Covid-19 do not come in. In China, QR code-based immunity passports embedded within super apps like WeChat and Alipay have become ubiquitous, already rolled out in at least 200 cities. Individuals using Alipay’s Health Code fill out a form in the app and the software uses big data to generate a QR code depending on a user’s contagion risk. Those who are designated green are able to travel freely, while yellow or red indicate suggested 1- or 2-week quarantines, respectively. Elsewhere, UK-based Onfido and Germany-based IDnow have each actively engaged with the UK government to discuss the use of immunity passports, which would tie official Covid-19 test results to a user’s digital identity. Similarly, New York-based biometric start-up CLEAR, whose kiosks are seen in airports and stadiums around the country, has developed Health Pass, which links biometric identifiers to Covid-19 health information that users upload through approved test providers (Fig. 7.3).

https://www.cbinsights.com/research/report/reopening-office-tech-work-post-covid/

Fig. 7.3 Health Checks When Entering the Office. (Source: Elenium)
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