

# PANDEMIC MANUAL

Planning and Responding to a  
Global Health Crisis for Facility  
Management Professionals

## Excerpt—Telework Chapter

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Planning and Responding to a Global Health Crisis  
for Facility Management Professionals

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# APPENDIX 3 – OPTIMIZING REMOTE WORK PROGRAMS

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By Kate Lister, President, [Global Workplace Analytics](#)

## Introduction

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), nearly 70 percent of companies say they offer remote work.<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data however show only 7 percent offer it to all or most of their people.<sup>2</sup> In many organizations, remote work has just sort of happened, rather than been made to happen.

Remote work – often called Work from Home (WFH) – is frequently adopted as a tactical solution to an immediate problem. Human Resources launches it as a tactic to address labor or talent shortages. Real estate/FM launches it to reduce office space. Sustainability launches it as a way to reduce the organization’s carbon footprint. The problem with these bottom-up initiatives is that they rarely get the support of the C-suite. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the flaws in this approach.

A month into the sudden work-from-home experiment, over half of global CFOs said their organization didn’t have the remote work capabilities they needed to maintain productivity.<sup>3</sup> Their people didn’t have the tools, technology, or training they needed to be effective. Managers weren’t comfortable managing people they couldn’t see. Policies and practices were not in place to answer the many questions that arose.

The global pandemic has made remote work a C-suite imperative. This will galvanize HR, IT, CRE, FM, Sustainability, Risk Management, and other functional areas in a common resolve to be better prepared for the next crisis.

The following insights into the role each functional area plays in remote work are intended to open minds, foster collaboration, and build alliances that will vastly improve people and profit results. An added benefit is that it is good for our planet.

<sup>1</sup> Leave and Flexible Working – SHRM Employee Benefits 2019, June 2019

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/library/covid-19/pwc-covid-19-cfo-pulse-survey-global.html>

## Human Resources

Human Resources (HR) should provide workforce insights, guide the creation of remote work policies and practices, ensure employees and managers have the tools and training they need to do their best work, address organizational culture issues, coordinate change management, protect employee privacy, and monitor compliance.

### Workforce Insights

HR can provide insights to inform other functional areas about:

- ▶ How and where people are working
- ▶ Workforce growth/retraction plans
- ▶ What people need to be successful
- ▶ How people are evaluated
- ▶ Workspace assignments
- ▶ Manager and employee readiness
- ▶ Pre- and post-change trends in:
  - ✓ Employee engagement
  - ✓ Attraction and retention
  - ✓ Absenteeism/presenteeism
  - ✓ Health and wellness
  - ✓ Productivity

### Remote Work Policies and Practices

Remote work rules and standards are important because they specify, on the record, what is and is not acceptable. HR should formalize remote work policies and remote worker agreements to address:

- ▶ Working hours
- ▶ Remote work frequency
- ▶ Expectations for employee availability, response time, check-ins
- ▶ Employer rights to require, deny, or terminate remote work arrangements
- ▶ A manager's right to deny or terminate remote work
- ▶ Criteria for decision making about who can and cannot work remotely
- ▶ Employee rights to request, refuse, or discontinue remote work
- ▶ Remote work locations allowed (i.e. home, co-working, public spaces, while traveling)
- ▶ Minimum internet speed

- ▶ Dependent care requirements
- ▶ Ergonomic and safety standards
- ▶ Meeting protocols:
  - ✓ Noise (i.e. pets, children)
  - ✓ Use of video
  - ✓ Recorded meetings
  - ✓ Video/audio hygiene (i.e. chewing, attire)
- ▶ Whether employees are required to have a dedicated home office
- ▶ Who pays for home office equipment, services, and supplies
- ▶ If a lockable storage area is needed
- ▶ The extent to which home office incidents are covered by Workers Compensation
- ▶ Whether home office insurance is required (and who pays for it)
- ▶ Accommodations for disabilities
- ▶ Security and safety requirements

#### HR SHOULD CONSIDER:

- ▶ How to help remote (and onsite) workers with the mental health impact of the crisis
- ▶ What metrics you will use for success of your remote work program and for individual performance? Where will the data come from? Who will have access to it?
- ▶ How you will ensure salary, compensation, and promotability are not affected by remote work
- ▶ What employees are expected to do to remain productive in the event of a home emergency (i.e. fire, loss of power)
- ▶ Whether you will feature remote work options in your talent attraction strategy
- ▶ How remote work can impact diversity and inclusion
- ▶ Special on-boarding needs for remote employees

## Training

HR is central to the development, delivery, and tracking of employee training. In the context of remote work, this should include training in:

- ▶ Managing remote workers
- ▶ Setting goals and measuring results
- ▶ Remote communications protocols, practices, and etiquette
- ▶ Remote collaboration
- ▶ Technology and security
- ▶ Remote work effectiveness and productivity
- ▶ Managing work-life and life-work conflict
- ▶ Remote work policies and practices
- ▶ Remote work safety
- ▶ Building trust in remote teams
- ▶ Dealing with loneliness
- ▶ Working with in-office colleagues

## Home/Mobile Office Provisioning

HR and IT must work together to ensure remote employees have the tools they need to be successful. They must also work collaboratively to standardize home or mobile office provisioning. Only about a quarter of employers pay for home office equipment or services though this trend has vacillated over the years. It is more common for the employer to pay when employees are required to work remotely rather than opting to do so or when the employer requires the use a particular kind of equipment. Home office expenses can include:

- ▶ Computer/tablet
- ▶ Docking station
- ▶ Monitor(s)
- ▶ Keyboard/mouse
- ▶ Desk
- ▶ Chair
- ▶ Webcam/headphones
- ▶ Routers

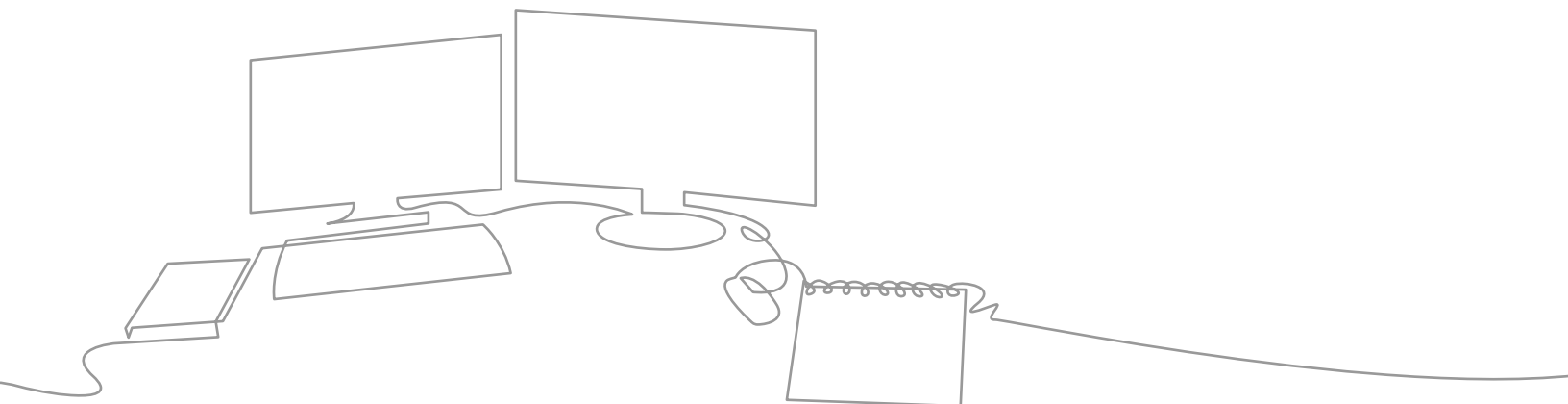
- ▶ Mobile technology
- ▶ Software
- ▶ Internet access
- ▶ Office supplies
- ▶ Home energy
- ▶ International phone calls

Methods of cost-sharing include:

- ▶ Stipend (typically \$500-\$1,500)
- ▶ Full or partial reimbursement
- ▶ Access to employer-buying discount
- ▶ Provisioning with on-site inventory
- ▶ Purchase by employer

### HR SHOULD CONSIDER:

- ▶ The trade-off between cost-savings and productivity. Often the potential for increased productivity from a faster laptop or dual monitors far outweighs their cost. Likewise, the cost of a good office chair is far less than a worker's compensation claim.
- ▶ What evidence will you require for reimbursement or use of your stipend?
- ▶ How you will track employer-owned items?
- ▶ What standards of care will you impose for them?
- ▶ Whether you will want employer-owned items brought back in the office? If so, what cleaning protocols will you use to ensure they are safe?
- ▶ Whether employees will be allowed to use employee-owned items for personal use?
- ▶ Whether you have the right to retrieve items from employee's home if you need to?



## Change Management

Effective change management is critical to the successful transition to remote work and related workspace changes. HR should be central to change management. Often, they will work in tandem with an external change management team during the initial transition but take a primary role as programs are expanded throughout the organization.

## Organizational Culture

One of the difficulties organizations have with remote work is maintaining a sense of culture as the program grows. Pre-emptively, HR can identify best practices for keeping the cultural connection with a remote workforce and work with IT, Communications, and others to deploy solutions and continually measure results.

## Employee Rights

HR is also responsible for protecting workers' rights including the right to privacy. This can sometimes lead to friction between themselves and CRE/FM who want people metrics to plan space changes and measure the effectiveness of workplace initiatives. IT and HR may find similar conflicts. It is important that functional areas work to understand one another's needs and responsibilities and cooperate in developing solutions. In particular, HR should be involved in any plans that could expose personally identifiable information including the growing trend in the use of:

- ▶ Sensor data
- ▶ Keystroke, video, or computer/online activity monitoring
- ▶ Social network analysis
- ▶ VPN tracking

## Legal and Taxation Issues

Many of the labor laws, workers compensation rules, tax laws, and a number of other regulatory requirements vary by country, state/province, or city/town. If employees are allowed to work-from-home or anywhere, HR needs to ensure compliance with local jurisdictions. A single employee spending even as little as one day in another area can:

- ▶ Require the employer to be registered in that region
- ▶ Subject the employer and employee to additional income taxes
- ▶ Require compliance with local labor laws and worker's compensation standards
- ▶ Constitute a nexus and expose the employer to sales tax from which they were formerly exempted
- ▶ Require employers to track the amount of time employees spend in other regions
- ▶ Subject employers to different rules for classifying employees as exempt, non-exempt, contractors, or employees

### HR SHOULD CONSIDER:

- ▶ If an employee is required to work from home by their employer or their home is designated as their primary place of work, it can render commuting and travel time compensable.
- ▶ Whether employees who are based at home or scheduled to be home during an emergency closure (i.e. snowstorm, hurricane) will be expected to work
- ▶ Whether you will monitor/enforce working hours: If for example a non-exempt employee works outside of normal hours, perhaps they just answer an email, it could trigger overtime compensation
- ▶ How to ensure working from home does not violate any local laws or housing regulations

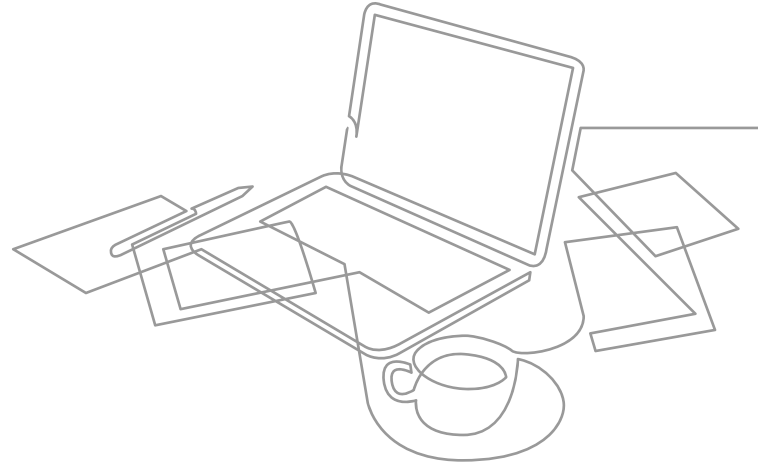
## Information Technology

Information Technology (IT) provides the technology infrastructure needed to support remote work, develops and implements data security protocols, and works with the business units to ensure they are equipped with tools and technologies they need to be effective wherever they work.

Remote work effectiveness requires a combination of onsite and offsite software and hardware. Requirements will vary between and within organizations but in general, remote employees will need a combination of hardware and software including:

### Hardware

- ▶ Laptop, desktop or tablet
- ▶ Keyboard
- ▶ Docking station
- ▶ Monitor(s)
- ▶ Mobile phone/softphone



### IT SHOULD CONSIDER:

- ▶ Whether to allow employees to use their own equipment or mandate a particular kind
- ▶ Where employees will go for technical support
- ▶ How will equipment repairs be handled



## Software/Access/Communications

- ▶ Application software
- ▶ Security software
- ▶ Remote access to files
- ▶ File sharing tools/platforms
- ▶ Cloud storage
- ▶ Video conference tools
- ▶ Teleconference tools
- ▶ Data/file back-up
- ▶ Removable media

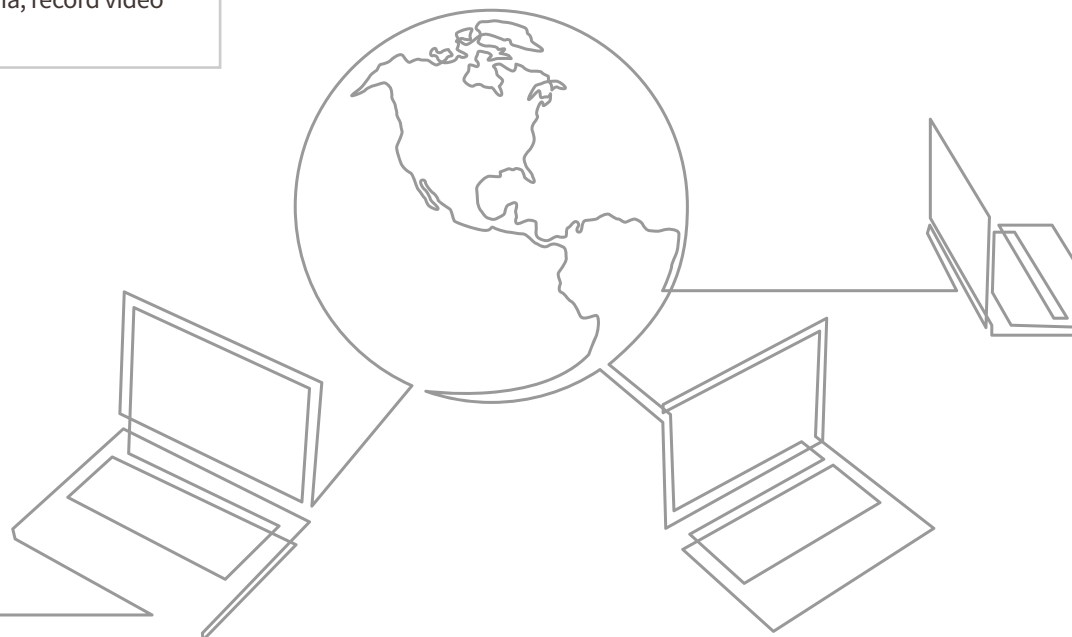
### IT SHOULD CONSIDER:

- ▶ How software updates will be performed
- ▶ How potentially harmful downloads will be prevented
- ▶ How remote workers will deal with technology problems
- ▶ Whether your VPN has the capacity to support a large number of people working remotely or is able to quickly scale up or down
- ▶ If your file permissions will need to change
- ▶ Whether your employees know their passwords and how to reset them
- ▶ If you need and have the authority/ability to remotely wipe hardware
- ▶ Whether you want/need and have the right to track employee activity, location, listen to conversations, monitor social media, record video

## Onsite Tools

The majority of organizations use a mix of remote and on-site work. In some cases, all-remote workers will regularly interact with on-site workers. To guarantee the effectiveness of these interactions, IT should ensure:

- ▶ Video-conference hardware and software is easy to use
- ▶ Conference and meeting rooms offer simple plug-and-play compatibility with a wide range of hardware and sharing platforms
- ▶ Video displays offer good fidelity and are positioned for maximum visibility
- ▶ Sound and video quality is excellent for both those in the room and remote
- ▶ Cables and power cords/outlets are accessible, but as out of sight and do not represent a trip-hazard
- ▶ High-speed broadband is available
- ▶ Technical support is available during meetings





## Corporate Real Estate/Facility Management

Corporate real estate (CRE) and facility managers (FM) are responsible for the integration and optimization of remote and onsite workplace strategies. This includes:

- ▶ Evaluating current and future space needs in light of remote work
- ▶ Evaluating opportunities for changes to existing leases
- ▶ Optimizing space usage
- ▶ Determining what space changes are needed to support a hybrid workforce
- ▶ Managing workplace change
- ▶ Informing the change management process
- ▶ Providing places and spaces for remote workers when they are onsite
- ▶ Providing effective spaces for onsite collaboration with remote workers
- ▶ Developing space standards, protocols, and practices
- ▶ Collecting and analyzing workplace data
- ▶ Tracking employer-owned assets assigned to remote workers
- ▶ Ensuring workplace safety and security

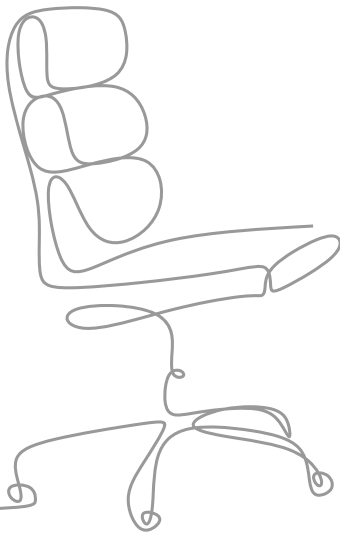
### CRE/FM SHOULD CONSIDER:

- ▶ Social distancing implications if a large number of remote workers are required onsite
- ▶ Ways to make remote workers feel welcome when they are onsite
- ▶ Making wayfinding easy
- ▶ Standards for assigned versus unassigned seating for hybrid remote workers
- ▶ Protocols for keyboard and space sharing
- ▶ The need to track where remote workers may have traveled from
- ▶ App, kiosk, or desktop space reservations
- ▶ Making remote workers aware of onsite space and social distancing etiquette



## Risk Management

COVID-19 showed just how much being unprepared for remote work can cost an organization in lost productivity and profits. Risk Management (RM) will be a strong ally in strategies that improve resilience in the future. In addition to their role in emergency preparedness, Risk Management plays a vital role in evaluating the implications of remote work on health and safety, information security, insurance needs, brand reputation, and more.



### RM SHOULD CONSIDER:

- ▶ How to ensure ergonomic and home-office safety:
  - ✓ The most common method is self-certification following training
  - ✓ Remote inspection via video is another option but doing so may shift the burden of responsibility from the employee to the employer
  - ✓ Physical inspection of a home office is not common as it can open employers up to a wide range of legal exposures
- ▶ Insurance implications due to reduced employee driving, travel, and fleet usage
- ▶ The cost/benefit of home ergonomic solutions versus medical claims
- ▶ Legal implications of another outbreak after employees return to the office
- ▶ How to deal with location-based licensing requirements in legal, medical, and other roles that require professional certification

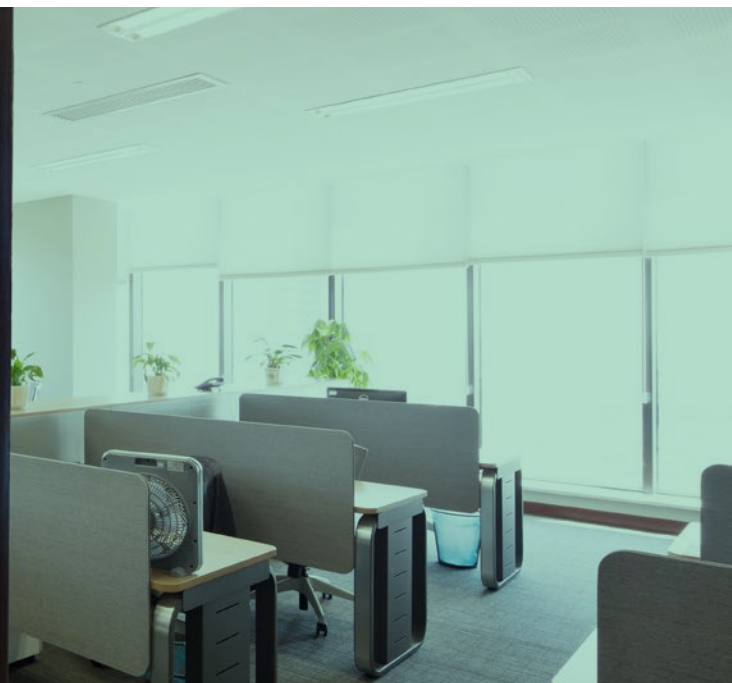


## Sustainability

Sustainability and Governance can help leadership understand the importance of the impact that reducing greenhouse gas emissions, preserving non-renewable resources, and adopting positive people practices can have on an organization's reputation, brand, and ability to attract capital.

### SUSTAINABILITY SHOULD CONSIDER:

- ▶ How to measure the impact of remote work on energy consumption, emissions, and resource utilization
- ▶ Using remote work to reduce Scope 3 emissions (which include commuter travel)
- ▶ Ways to improve onsite sustainability because of reduced space needs
- ▶ The extent to which video-conferencing will reduce business travel
- ▶ How to measure the increased use of home office energy and new driving for errands that used to be done during the commute
- ▶ A possible reduction in car/vanpool and public transportation usage due to fear of transmission



## Marketing and Communications

Proper communications can play a big role in the success of change management and in reducing fears about returning to work. Marketing and Communications are the pros at this. Bring them in early to help craft onsite and digital messaging.

### MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS SHOULD CONSIDER:

- ▶ When and how to begin back-to-work messaging
- ▶ Communications to address employee fears around social distancing, public transportation, cluster point around entrances, elevators, dining areas, etc.
- ▶ How to make the digital experience rich with culture and brand messaging

## Finance

Finance is responsible for the planning, management, and distribution of funds. As with any investment, they will expect a good business case for remote work, numbers to show the potential impact, and metrics by which investment in it will be evaluated. A wealth of research on remote work points to a return on investment from:

- ▶ A reduction in real estate and related costs
- ▶ Increased employee productivity
- ▶ Reduced employee turnover
- ▶ Reduced absenteeism and presenteeism
- ▶ Greater emergency preparedness

In total as a result of the factors above, a typical U.S. employer can expect to save about \$11,000 per half-time remote worker per year.<sup>4</sup> Additional financial impacts can be realized from:

- ▶ Increased employee engagement
- ▶ Reduced need for parking facilities or reimbursements
- ▶ Improved employee health due to lower stress, better diet, and increased exercise

Work together across business units to make a compelling case for the ROI of remote work and you will find a partner in Finance.

## External Advisors

You don't have to do this alone. Best practices honed from years of trial and error can make your journey to remote work easier. External advisors can be a valuable part of your team. These might include workplace strategists from architectural and design firms, real estate brokerage firms, management consulting firms, furniture manufacturers, and specialty remote work advisories.

The right team of professionals, working in tandem with internal stakeholders, will help create an integrated workplace strategy that will optimize results based on your unique culture, readiness, economic realities, goals, and more.

## Conclusion

For many, the COVID-19 crisis has forced them to work from home without the tools, technologies, training, and resources needed to be successful. Entire companies have had to do, practically overnight, what many organizations spend months and even years transitioning toward.

Just weeks into the pandemic, the Chief Human Resource Officer of Twitter said, "I don't think we'll go back to the same way we used to operate." The CEO of Goldman Sachs said, "When you go through something like this, it forces you to ask questions and think about things differently."<sup>5</sup> He went on to say he felt the experience would make his company more comfortable with workplace flexibility in the future.

This is a wake-up call for HR, CRE/FM, IT and many other organizational areas. Now is the time work together toward a better future for employers, employees, and the planet.

<sup>4</sup> Global Workplace Analytics, Remote Work Savings Calculator

<sup>5</sup> CNBC.com, April 3, 2020