

# How to achieve a safe and seamless **return** **to work**

4 ways to rethink your transition back to  
physical workplaces and minimize the risk  
to your employees

WORKPLACE  
**WX**  
EXPERIENCE



# Survive then thrive in a new world of work

Returning to work demands much more than simply reverting to life as we knew it prior to the pandemic.

Transitioning back to office, factory or other front-line environments involves overcoming a range of hurdles like how to maintain social distancing and manage building capacity. But there are also employee experience and well-being challenges. Nearly half of workers are afraid to go back to work. And only 55% of workers in the U.S. believe their company will put their health first.

The return to work won't be a linear journey. And it's likely this won't be the last global disruption we face – high-impact events are increasing in frequency.

Overcoming these challenges to ensure a safe return to work (and build a more resilient business for the future) requires you to adopt a robust and holistic approach. Our Workplace Experience (WX) framework can help you do this, by embracing the entire organization to unlock sustainable value.

WX combines modernized technology platforms, a reimagined culture and employee experience, and transformed business operations. When HR, IT, operations and line-of-business leaders come together, they can use this holistic approach to overcome the employee experience and business continuity roadblocks presented by the transition back to physical workspaces.

**This guide outlines four ways you can harness this holistic approach to achieve a smooth return to work.**

# #1. Use **workplace analytics** to uncover insights that inform your return to work

## The steps you can take

- **Understand whether your productivity has been impacted positively or negatively during the pandemic.** Aggregate insights on how your company works, identifying employee groups that are thriving and staying productive, as well as those populations who need more support in the new world of work.
- **Use data-driven insights to develop change programs** for unique groups, tailored to specific business needs.
- **Implement changes to your culture** and reconfigure how work gets done. Use behavioral science and nudge theory to positively influence habits, then measure the collective impact of change over time.
- **Show how collaboration impacts business outcomes.** Understand the time spent on meetings, email and other recurring collaboration tasks. Identify connections between co-workers, including their strongest relationships and those that are falling out of touch.
- **Embrace the potential of data platforms** like Microsoft Graph, which can be the nexus of knowledge and expertise for your employees and teams. Tap into that information to find patterns for successful approaches that can be replicated across the organization.



## #2. **Manage** employee uncertainty in the short and long term

### The steps you can take

- **Find the right global and local mix of leadership**, delegating where appropriate but also providing central guidance and coordination. Take into account cultural differences and local office reopening policies.
- **Deepen your understanding of people's circumstances and feelings** to tailor work environments and experiences to their needs. This may require improved confidentiality, privacy and security.
- **Turn furloughed workers into flexible workers**, retraining them to gain the skills that will focus on areas of business need. Offer learning programs and career pathways to impacted workers.
- **Offer life coaches, mental health support and well-being programs** to help grieving employees or those managing stress, including carers of elderly relatives and partners of key workers.
- **Ensure leaders share their own experiences**. Communicate early, often and with compassion. Put in place inclusive processes to proactively seek feedback from employees – which is crucial to maintaining morale.



## #3. Reshape the way front-line work gets done

### The steps you can take

- **Identify the key workers who must be physically present** on the front line and those who can work remotely. Limit physical contact and enable more flexible use of space (e.g., via shift patterns or redesigning physical layouts).
- **Redesign work** so that it can be completed effectively and securely from any location – even for front-line employees. Consider how to introduce remote working for employees who are responsible for customer service or field service – ensuring CX levels are maintained (or improved). Modern integrated remote working solutions enable front-line workers to operate virtually and collaborate to solve service or equipment challenges from almost any location.
- **Embed security in everything** so it becomes invisible to your employees – empowering them to work more productively and securely anywhere. Provide a seamless experience and a universally engaging, collaborative and secure environment that drives productivity.
- **Train managers on how to manage hybrid virtual and physical teams effectively.** Coach staff on new processes and protocols, as well as how to use personal protective equipment properly.
- **Embrace employee-focused technology** to plan your return to the physical workspace. Monitor whether (and which) desks or spaces are occupied to simplify workplace capacity management. Find a facility management and monitoring system that can help you to accommodate alternating shift patterns.
- **Consider the role of chief medical officer to manage health protocols** for the organization and its interaction with the wider ecosystem.



## #4. **Minimize** the risk presented by physical work environments

The steps you can take

- **Reassure your employees by implementing contact tracing tools and protocols.** Embrace solutions for employees in office or close-quarter environments to anonymously trace and notify those near a co-worker who tests positive. User-friendly applications and dashboards can improve adoption and promote reassurance.
- **Model building capacity and monitor the number of employees on site.** Prevent building overcrowding with live occupancy counts as employees check in and out, including occupancy by floor and zone. Identify whether your building is above or below its occupancy limit. Embrace a scalable solution without hardware installation requirements.
- **Manage workplace congestion** by identifying bottlenecks at specific periods of the day with real-time heatmaps. Adapt workplace layouts based on insight from heatmaps showing congestion hotspots and review how staggering employee arrival and departure times could impact congestion.
- **Reinforce cleaning routines** by understanding cleaning patterns and how long a cleaner visited a specific area. Identify which parts of the office get busiest and need more frequent cleaning.
- **Embrace a data visualization platform to support the reopening of locations** and facilities in phases. Ensure you're able to visualize reopening readiness based on key metrics and factors, with the capability to drill down into country, city, campus and facility levels. Monitor locations daily to manage risk and safety.



How to achieve a safe and seamless return to work



# Rethink your return to the workplace

Discover how you can reduce the risk to your employees and your organization as you transition back to physical workplaces.

As part of a holistic Workplace Experience approach, Microsoft Teams, Microsoft 365 Security, Power Platform, Workplace Analytics, and dedicated WorkSafe™ solutions from Pointr can provide reassurance to employees and help you get back to serving your customers quicker. Our analytics-powered Workplace Experience strategy also helps you to build a more resilient business for the challenges of today and whatever comes next.

Learn more about our range of return-to-work solutions:  
[Speak to our workplace team now.](#)



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