FLEX WHERE
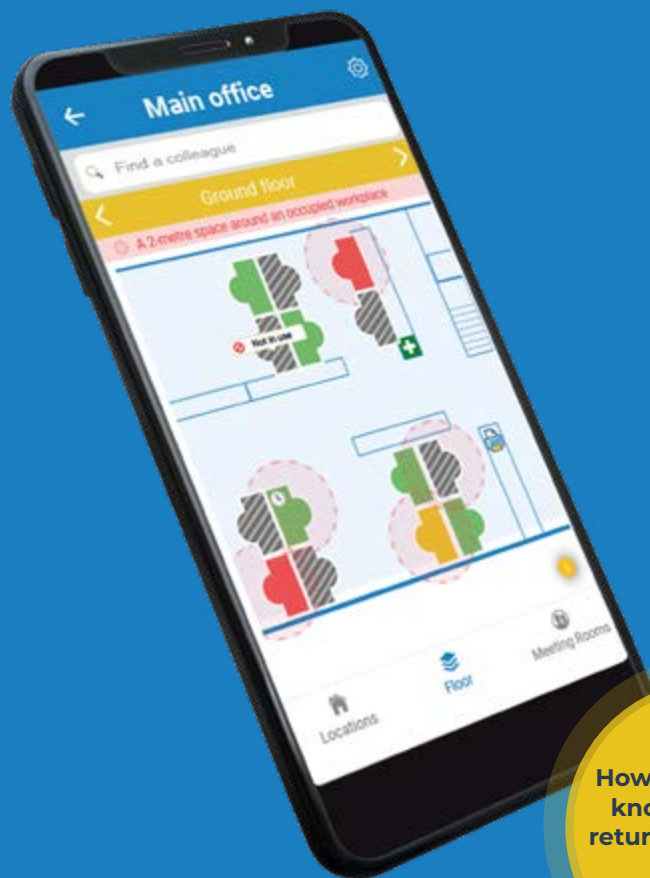
The office in the 'new normal'

How the office can provide a safe working environment in Corona times

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Dutchview
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Content

How do employees know if they can return to the office?

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Introduction

When it's time to return to the office, the requirement to keep a distance of 2 metres will still be in force. Property Advisor Colliers International * has investigated the potential consequences of this. It turns out that potentially half, if not six out of ten workstations, will be rendered unusable.

Returning to the office is not only about the available workstations. Much more will have to be done to provide a safe working environment for returning employees. Every organisation will have to make choices from a multitude of potential solutions.

This e-book offers some ideas for the office in the 'new normal'. Some require large investments, while others are quick and inexpensive. Use software that can be implemented quickly and with limited costs to facilitate a workplace concept in these unusual times.

* https://www2.colliers.com/en-NL/Research/202004Anderhalvemeterkantoor

What is FlexWhere

FlexWhere is a handy software application for organisations working in a flexible way. Employees of these organisations usually have no fixed workplace. With FlexWhere, they can quickly and easily see on a floor plan of their office which flexplaces and meeting rooms are free and where their colleagues are located. They can view the information on a smartphone, tablet, PC or screen and can reserve a workplace or meeting room at the same time.

Chapter 1
Vision and organisation

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Vision and organisation

Organisations have to make their own choices about the conditions for returning to the office. First and foremost, it starts with a clear vision. Not only for the short term, but, if possible, also focused on the post-crisis situation.

In many organisations, one person has already been appointed to prepare the return to the office. However, assembling a core team is even better. This should probably include employees from, for instance, Facility Management, HRM and ICT. In view of its critical importance, it is advisable to include a representative from the management structure or the executive board in the core team. Don't forget about receptionists, porters, or employees from the company canteen. They often have unique insight into a company's culture.

Before the team thinks about practical solutions, it is important to formulate a vision for the future. Consider questions like: Is this a temporary situation or are adjustments permanent? Do we want the same office we had at the beginning of this year or do we want to fundamentally operate in a different way? Do we want to continue encouraging employees to work from home? Do we want to work in a more project-oriented and task-oriented way? And: How do we prepare the office for this?

Such a vision, no matter how simple, helps to decide on solutions and measures for the short term.

Tips

- *Study the office of the future. There are many articles available with information on innovative office design concepts. Which concept suits your office?*

- *Has a protocol already been created for your industry? Check that on coronaprotocollen.nl*

Chapter 2
Physical adjustments

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Physical adjustments

Physical adjustments are needed in almost every office so that employees can keep a sufficient distance from each other and avoid risk of infection through surface contact. Fortunately, many solutions are already available. From fittings on door handles, to completely redesigned offices. The most important ideas about physical adjustments concern hygiene, routing, and workplaces.

To prevent surface contamination, frequent cleaning is of course important. Also think about how to prevent unnecessary touching. For example, fittings on door handles allowing employees to open doors and cabinets with their elbows. Paper pads at workstations, meeting rooms and in the company restaurant are also a solution. Don't forget to adjust airconditioning and air circulation systems.

Make sure there is clear routing through the building. Keeping an acceptable distance is not always possible in every hallway or staircase. In that case, one-way traffic may be the solution. If that's not possible, establish priority rules. In larger office buildings, lifts can be designated for ascending traffic and others for descending traffic. In busy waiting areas, such as lifts and around the coffee machine, mark out 2 metres on the floor.

If there is sufficient space, workplaces can be spaced further apart. Separations of, for instance, plexiglass are also a quick solution. There is even a company that uses floor covering to make the 2-metres radius visible around all workplaces. Especially in larger offices, shifting desks and putting up screens requires a lot of effort and possibly a significant investment.

Tips

- *Provide personal wireless keyboards and mice. Is that not possible? Use plastic foil instead. An employee starts by packing the equipment in plastic foil and does not leave until the foil has been removed.*

- *Use natural dividers. Use plants and/or furniture to make people aware of the distance they need to keep from each other.*

- *Use software to block a desk virtually.*

- *Have employees reserve a workplace 24 hours in advance. The app shows which workplace is reserved.*

- *Make it clear how much one and a half metres is, for instance, on a virtual floor plan.*

Chapter 3
The new meeting format
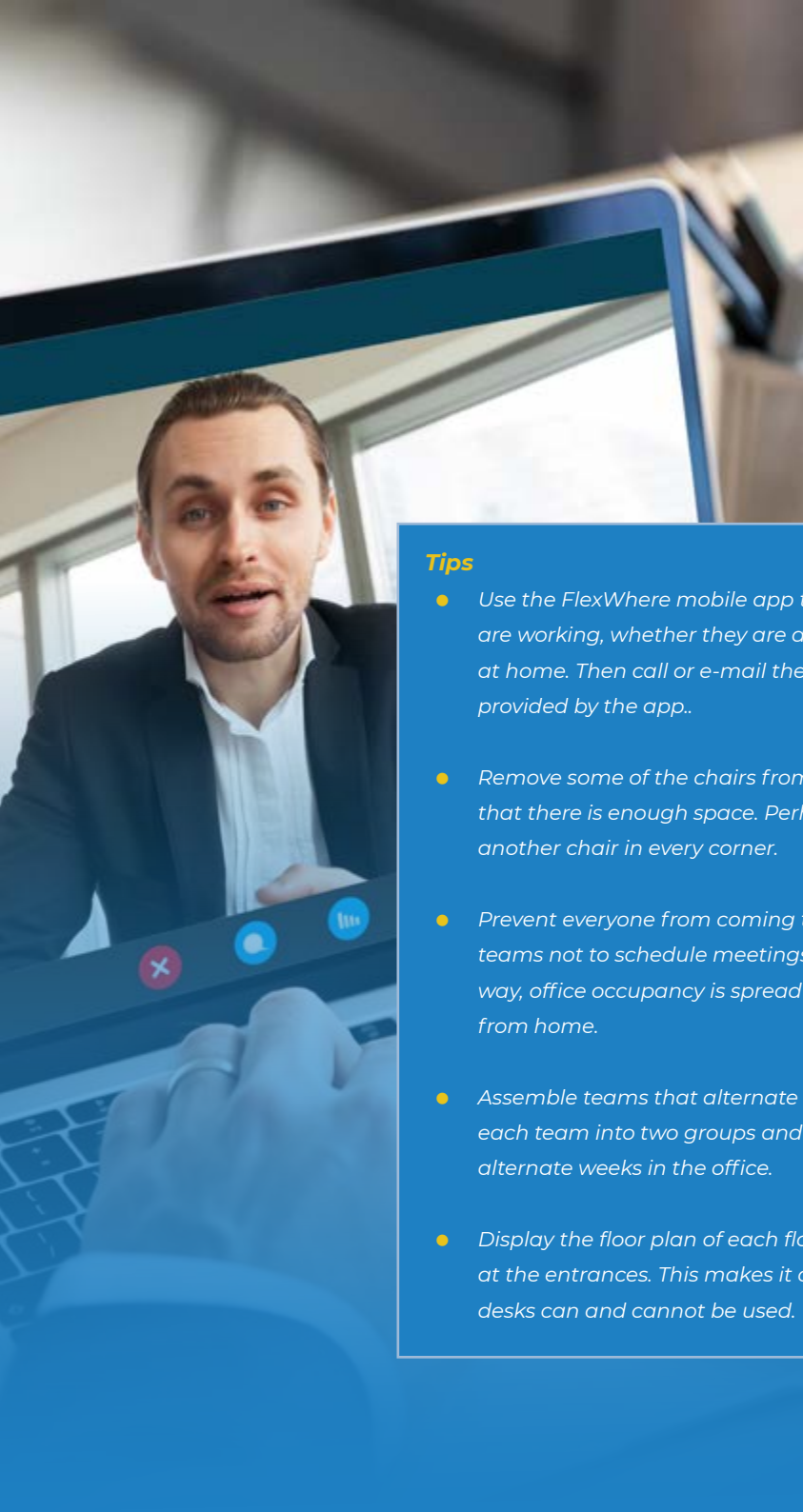
Chapter 3
The new meeting format

By and large, most organisations have made their peace with the reality of video conferencing. For some, this was already a familiar occurrence, but for many organisations or departments, this was new. And that invariably involves some trial and error.

Tips

- *Use the FlexWhere mobile app to see which colleagues are working, whether they are available at the office or at home. Then call or e-mail them, using the information provided by the app..*

- *Remove some of the chairs from the meeting room so that there is enough space. Perhaps it's possible to place another chair in every corner.*

- *Prevent everyone from coming to the office at once. Ask teams not to schedule meetings on certain days. In this way, office occupancy is spread out and more people work from home.*

- *Assemble teams that alternate office workdays. Divide each team into two groups and have each group alternate weeks in the office.*

- *Display the floor plan of each floor on overview screens at the entrances. This makes it clear to employees which desks can and cannot be used.*

Video conferencing will continue being an important tool in the coming period. After all, there is not always a space available for everyone in the office or meeting rooms, thus it is important to reserve a spot in the relevant online platform or platforms.

Due to the proliferation of platforms, this often involves a continual search for the right software and settings. It wastes valuable time and energy. In addition, issues such as privacy and security also play a critical role. All these issues call for policy-making. Moreover, such a choice must be combined with the right tools for video conferencing for all participants.

When employees return to the office, meetings will also be held *in person*. First of all, it is important to see which meetings can be held online and which are best held in the office.

The meeting rooms in the office should preferably have two entrances. If that is the case, one can be used for entry and the other for exit, with one-way traffic. This also applies if the meeting room only has one access. During the meeting, we will of course do our best to keep a distance of 2 metres.

Communication and behaviour

Chapter 4
Communication and behaviour

The UK has obediently adhered to the government-imposed lockdown. As the crisis has persisted, more and more people are struggling to comply with the measures. Returning to the office in the 'new normal' also means being confronted with rules and agreements. Are we gonna be able to stick to that?

Once the physical measures have been implemented, the next step is to create a protocol. It must encapsulate all rules and provisions regarding access to the office, the use of lifts, the use of the company restaurant, etc. All agreements about hygiene are also part of such a protocol. This includes the use of hand sanitiser, cleaning of the toilets and the workplace after use.

Protocols only work with a solid rationale and clear communication. Create a video explaining the rationale behind the measures that employees can watch at home. Hang up posters, banners, and signposts at the office to keep the rules in mind. A key challenge is ensuring employees follow the rules over a longer period of time. Drawing attention in a positive way can help.

Tips

- *Give employees a personal mug. That's a pretty safe solution. If needed, have them bring their own mug from home.*

- *Finally, there's a good excuse not to have to get coffee for everyone. Press the button with your own pen.*

- *Is it getting too crowded in the kitchenette? Have coffee served. No longer will you have hundreds of fingers on the coffee machine, but one person taking care of it with clean hands or gloves.*

- *Remind employees of the protocols with a hygienic treat. For example, buy cupcakes from a local baker. This also prevents people from touching the same knife when serving cake.*

- *Have the company restaurant take orders. The employee will be informed at what time the order can be picked up. This prevents queues and surface contamination.*

- *Don't just show the routing with stickers on the floor. You can also use a digital floor plan. Employees can see what the walking route is even before they enter the office.*

Chapter 5
Who should come to the office and who shouldn't

Request a meeting or demo:

flexwhere.co.uk/ contact

The office in the 'ne

Chapter 5
Who should come to the office and who shouldn't

If only 30 to 50 percent of the workplaces are available, who may come to the office and who may not? Which meetings are necessary and how do you organise them?

From the perspective of the organisation, it is important that some employees are present in the office. Perhaps every department and team should have a representative in the office. It is sometimes necessary for all members of a team to be present in the office. There will also be employees who would like to see colleagues again in person.

So decisions need to be made. A possible solution involves *people counters*, a solution in which camera sensors are installed in the entrances and exits of the office. A tablet or screen in the entrance area then shows how many people are in the building and when the maximum has been reached.

The disadvantage of this system is that employees may make the trip to the office in vain. By using smart software, employees can reserve a workplace up to 24 hours in advance. This way, nobody comes to the office in vain.

> **Tip**
> ● *Increase the number of available workplaces by setting up work zones. That's possible with FlexWhere. Work zones are places that are not used all day long, such as the company restaurant or a large (meeting) room. For each zone, indicate how many employees are allowed. In the app or web interface, employees can see how many colleagues are working in a particular work zone.*

Summary

FlexWhere does the following and more

With FlexWhere, physical adjustments are unnecessary. It can be simple and cheaper. There are three options available in FlexWhere.

Blocking

In FlexWhere, it is possible block a desk virtually. Employees can then see on their app that a workplace may not be used. Organisations themselves indicate which workstations are blocked and which are not.

⊘ Do not use

Keep your distance

In FlexWhere, employees can see how much 2 metres is. FlexWhere projects a radius of 2 metres around the desk. This is the quickest solution that takes facility managers the least amount of time.
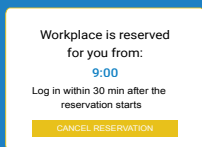
Booking

Employees can book a workplace 24 hours in advance. Both the app and the web interface show which workstations have been reserved and from what time.

Workplace is reserved
for you from:
9:00
Log in within 30 min after the
reservation starts

CANCEL RESERVATION

Summary

The return to office in the 'new normal' requires good preparation. Preferably based on a vision for the future, with a solid organisational concept and clear communication.

FlexWhere is a simple, relatively inexpensive tool that makes it immediately clear how many workplaces are available and let's employees book a sport in advance. Thus, employees don't make the trip to the office in vain.

ALSO READ:

**FlexWhere
adapted for the
'new normal'**