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STUDIO

A GUIDE TO YOUR FUTURE OFFICE

HOW TO RETROFIT YOUR OFFICE TO MAKE IT A SAFE & COMPLIANT

As we plan to return to work, we need to make choices carefully and responsibly. Employee safety and wellbeing must be paramount – people need to feel safe.

In this guide we explore the changes you can make to your office space in the immediate future, based on a common-sense approach that adheres to governmental and global health guidelines, including physical distancing, adding barriers, cleaning and safety measures.

BY NUSHKE KLOPPER

CORPORATE SPACE PLANNING & PROCUREMENT SPECIALIST

nushke@alignstudio.co.za | 082 417 6682 | www.alignstudio.co.za

INCORPORATE COCOON SCREENS & PARTITIONS:

TYPICAL CONFIGURATION (PRIOR TO LOCKDOWN)



RETROFIT



RECONFIGURE



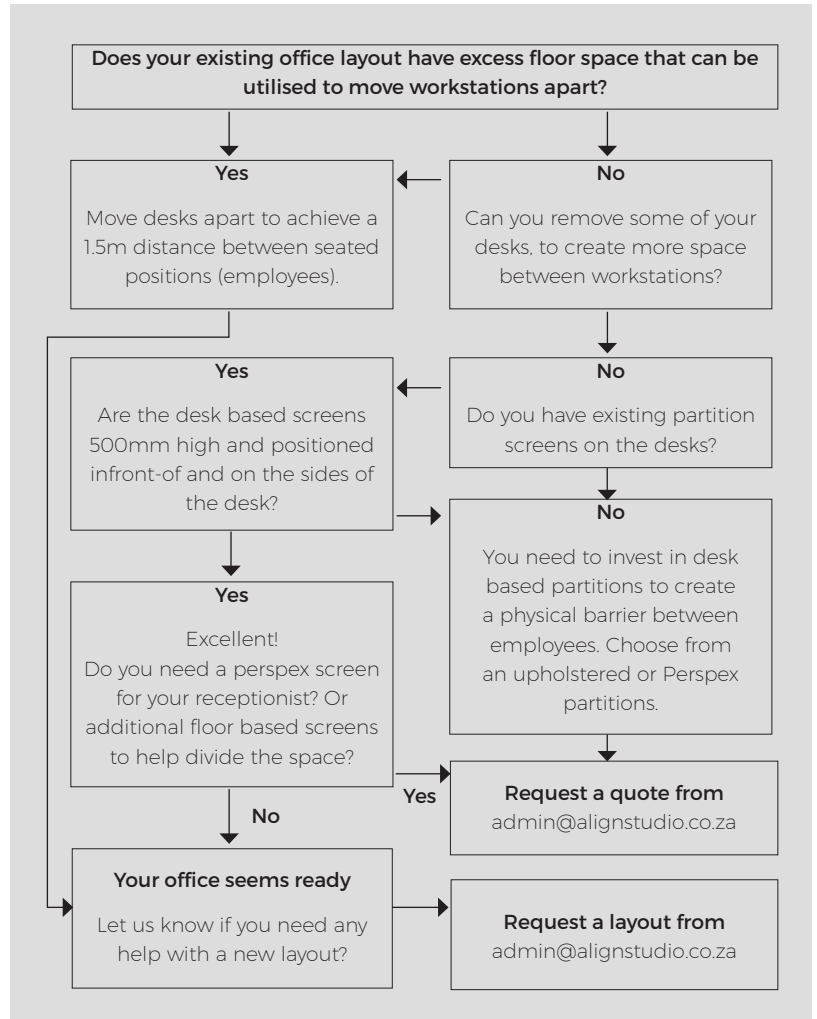
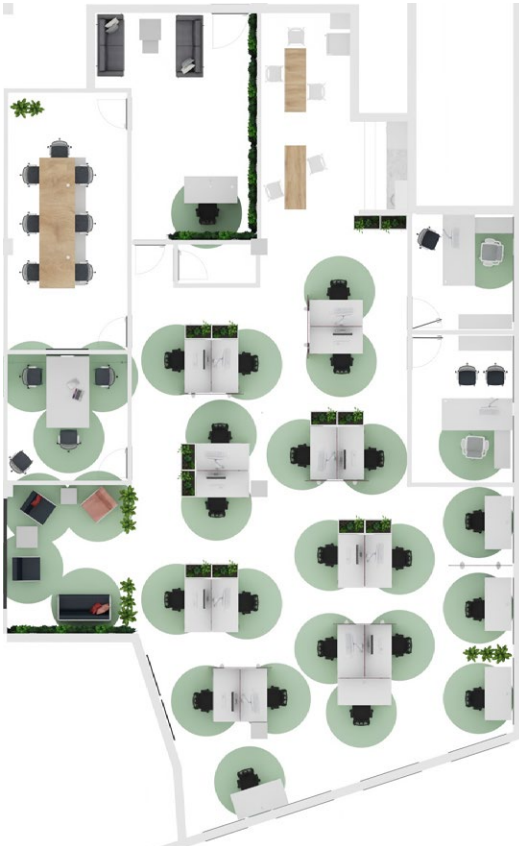
RETROFIT & RE-CONFIGURE THE OFFICE

THE KEY TO PREPARING THE OFFICE FOR THE RETURN OF PEOPLE REQUIRES CHANGING THE DENSITY, GEOMETRY & LAYOUT OF THE SPACE.

1. **De-densify workstations** to create distance between employees. Typically open-plan offices have side-by-side or "benched" workstations. If these desks are free-standing (not connected in a system) you can remove one or two and create a (minimum 800mm) space between the remaining desks. In the case of system desking (all workstations are connected/linked) only have an employee seated at every 2nd desk.
2. **Add dividers** if you are unable to create distance. You could increase the quantity and size of partition screens (barriers) between existing workstations. You could also reposition existing storage elements or plants to create these barriers.
 - **Upholstered partitions** should be covered in a soil-and-water resistant fabric treated with antimicrobial coating. Opt for 500mm high Desk based partitions and movable floor based partitions that can be re-orientated as needed.
 - **Perspex partitions** are an option, they are transparent, and allows light through, but they are not as hard-wearing as upholstered screens. You could use perspex partitions to extend the height of your existing screens. They are also useful for client facing workstations, such as your reception area.
3. **Reconfigure the office layout** where possible to reduce face-to-face orientation. Turn workstations to 90-degree angles to prevent workers from working directly across or behind one another. You can see this demonstrated in the third image.
4. **Change the way your team meets:**
 - **Have smaller meetings** Establish protocols for the number of people who can occupy an enclosed space. Remove some of the chairs from meeting and boardrooms to ensure that meetings cannot exceed your prescribed number of attendees.
 - **Use open spaces for meetings** of more than five people, leveraging flexible furniture with movable whiteboards and screens to create boundaries.
5. **Ensure that your office adheres to national guidelines** regarding the numbers of people allowed in a gatherings and that the room allows for physical distancing (1.5m between people).
6. **VC-Booths** can be installed so that people may take semi-private virtual meetings or calls while not disrupting other staff. Once again ensure that the walls of the booth are upholstered in soil-and-water resistant fabric treated with antimicrobial coating and cleaned with disinfectant spray regularly. (See VC-booth image on page 5).

AN EXAMPLE:

A layout for an existing office that has been reconfigured & Partitions added:



NEW OFFICE PROTOCOLS

REDUCE TRAFFIC & INCREASE CLEANING

- 1. Stagger people's return to the office:** To help maintain social distance all employees should not return to work at once. Employees whose work requires more collaboration or involves direct interaction with the public should return first. Others can continue to work remotely. Older employees and those with underlying medical conditions should return last.
 - **Stagger Arrival and Lunch times** to reduce crowding in lobbies and elevators. Assign staggered arrival times and lunch times.
 - **Staff rotation arrangement:** Divide returning employees into alternate day cohorts to maintain a low human density at the office.
- 2. Provide health screening at the entrance:** Temperature scans and sanitiser station at the entrance, with relevant signage and proper sign-in protocols for "any of the observable symptoms associated with Covid-19 (for fever, cough, sore throat, redness of eyes, difficulty breathing) will help to safe-guard the office environment and comply with government regulations.
- 3. Make Masks the Norm :** Provide at least 2 masks per employee (employers are also responsible for the cleaning and ironing of these masks). Masks should be worn at arrival and departure time and during times when people need to interact in meetings, conversations or moving around the office.
- 4. Clean Desk Policy :** Encourage all employees to maintain an uncluttered desk, and to clear desks at the end of the work day to make the cleaner's job more effective.
- 5. Clean and sanitize more frequently:** cleaning should occur daily and more frequently in common areas on surfaces that are frequently touched, including tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc. Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or disinfecting wipes with at least 60% alcohol for use at employee workstations and pantries.



SIGNAGE & CLEANING TIPS

INCORPORATE KIND & CLEAR COMMUNICATION REGARDING NEW HYGIENE POLICIES:

- Signage that prompts employees and visitors to sanitize will effectively improve overall hygiene.
- Signage that notifies visitors that your office has a no-contact greeting policy will help to negate any awkwardness and make people feel safe.
- Let employees and visitors know about your efforts to improve their environment, either as a note in your next mailer, on social media or as a discussion point in your next staff meeting.
- Purple Spirits has a high alcohol content and thus a high disinfectant quality. It is also safe to use on melamine, high-pressure laminate surfaces and plastic.
- Spray disinfectant (available at your local grocery store) on upholstered items such as desktop partitions/screens, soft seating or office chairs.
- Install touch-less soap dispensers in restrooms.
- No-touch trashcans or bins (especially in the kitchen/canteen)
- Remove any cookies or rusk jars near coffee stations, as these are tempting touch points in an office.
- Consider installing foot-operated-doorhandles to avoid the touching of hand high door handles.
- Install paper towel dispenser in the bathrooms and kitchen as no fabric towels are permitted.
- Educate cleaning staff on the ways in which the corona virus can spread and how they can help to combat the spread of the virus.
- Provide cleaning staff with adequate gear and disinfectants to effectively and safely clean and sanitize the work environment.
- Have a plan in place on how regularly workstations, kitchen/canteen, restrooms and other areas in your office are scheduled to be cleaned.

RECOMMENDED READ:

WORKPLACE COVID-19 SAFETY MEASURES FOR SA BUSINESSES GOING BACK TO WORK. SOURCE: BUSINESS INSIDER, 19 APRIL 2020

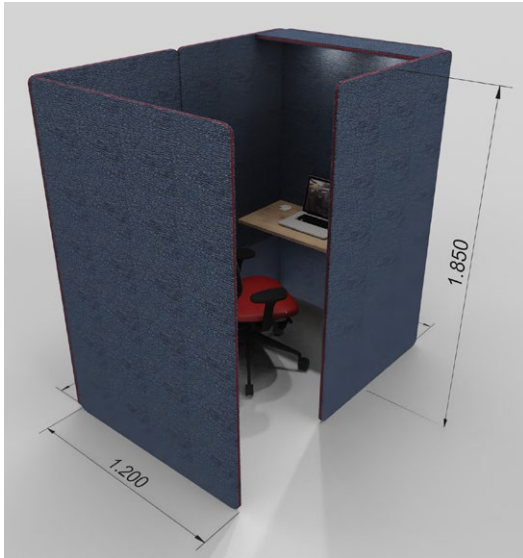
<https://www.businessinsider.co.za/workplace-covid-19-safety-measures-for-sa-businesses-going-back-to-work-2020-4>

“Companies are now obliged to report to both the department of health and the department of employment and labour if an employee is diagnosed with Covid-19. They must then investigate the cause of infection, “including any control failure” in the workplace.

If an employee shows symptoms while at work, it is now the duty of the employer to provide a FFPI surgical mask and transport “in a manner that does not place other workers or members of the public at risk”.

The company is also responsible for ensuring the worker is then tested.”

VC-BOOTH:



LONG TERM VIEW

INVEST IN ANTIMICROBIAL MATERIALS AND SURFACES:

- Applying antimicrobial coatings to faucets, window shades, paint, and door hardware to keep them cleaner and from multiplying bacteria.
- Consider investing in Antibacterial finishes for desktop or table surfaces such as Fenix NTM, which is also anti-fingerprint, low-glare and has a silky "soft-touch" finish.
- Select upholstery fabric that is not only soil-and-water resistant but is treated with an antimicrobial coating. Ideal for screens/partitions.
- In the long-term you might Invest and upgrade air-conditioning. The air we breathe is also a shared resource, so invest in air-cleaning systems to protect collaborative environments. Consider installing state-of-the-art air purification and sanitation systems. Some systems even display real-time air quality measurements on digital screens to keep employees informed, and it will serve as a continuous disinfectant, improving air quality by reducing airborne and surface contaminants like viruses, bacteria, germs, VOCs, smoke, and other allergens.

STAY OPEN TO NEW WAYS OF WORKING

A NEW BALANCE NEEDS TO BE ESTABLISHED BETWEEN YOUR COMPANY AND ITS PEOPLE.

- Offer employees who can work remotely the option to do so.
- Do not alienate team members by making them feel guilty about working from home, and check-in with those who do, make sure that they still feel part of the team.
- Embrace virtual meetings.
- Make sure your workplace is a positive one. Your efforts will help employees, who have to be physically present at work to do their jobs, feel safe, cared for and welcome.
- You could offer your products and brand experience online.

You may find that when the workplace transitions from a place that you HAVE TO go to, to an environment that maximises the convenience, ergonomics, productivity tools and a safe place to connect with your company and colleagues that people will naturally gravitate back to the "mother-ship".

HOME OFFICE SOLUTIONS

CONSIDER SETTING EMPLOYEES UP AT HOME, OR SUBSIDISING HOME OFFICE WORKSTATIONS.

- An Internet connection and sufficient data, as well as a device to connect and communicate with the team are obviously essential.
- Desking available in various sizes to suit different spaces and budgets.
- Lockable storage options (also in various sizes).
- Chairs that support posture and wellbeing.
- Desktop Power for convenience.

I hope that you have found this Guide useful and can implement some of the ideas shared in your business. Please feel free to direct any questions or requests to myself, Nushke, at nushke@alignstudio.co.za or call me on **082 417 6682**.