BACK TO THE OFFICE

THE NEW REALITY
WITHOUT AN EXPIRY DATE

hushoffice

mikomax smart office.

BACK TO THE OFFICE.
A NEW NORMAL

It doesn't matter whether we are taking our first steps in business, or we have been sharks in our market for years. We all have many questions, most without clear answers. And neither business intuition, nor years of experience, nor the best analysis can give us the conviction of infallibility; they can't provide us with the certainty we're looking for.

So, are we helpless? Recent weeks have shown us that although we have all entered a period of great uncertainty, most of us have demonstrated greater decisiveness and speed than we knew possible. In just days, we have automated processes, switched to remote working, implemented new technologies, and, perhaps most impressively, adjusted to a new reality. Achieving all of these things has illuminated one thing of certainty: **we will succeed**

CHAPTER 1.
HOW DO WE PREPARE?

We don't know when our "new normal" will come. Authorities decide this. We can only make predictions at when we will get the green light, and how much time that will give us to prepare. Preparations will be necessary, of course, because the office we left at the beginning of March doesn't support the needs we face today. So, at once, we know that we have to make some changes and that we don't know when we'll get that green light to implement them. The uncertainty of tomorrow seems to force us to delay big investment decisions, narrowing our scale to a shorter term.

Who are "we"? We are all those who will drive these changes in the office. We are both employees and employers. We are office managers and HR managers. We are customers, guests, and future teammates. We all feel different emotions, and we all see different challenges, problems, and opportunities.

Employees alone have conflicting attitudes concerning what to do next. Some want to return to the office as soon as possible. Others feel anxious about returning, considering all the changes we're faced with. Some are totally open to possibilities. But all of us will have to transition when we make our return. Working from home has allowed us to develop new habits, becoming accustomed to silence or, perhaps, the opposite of silence, in cases where spouses and children are home, too. All of us have adjusted to a new routine free of commute and filled with more family or personal time. Our work culture, philosophy, and habits have all shifted. According to a report from Colliers International, Real-Time Data to Navigate the Post-COVID-19 Workplace, as many as 70% of those who did not work from home before COVID-19 declare a new interest in doing so at least one day a week.

Workforce Expectation / Desire

How do you feel about working remotely in the future after the COVID-19 situation?

Working from home after COVID-19
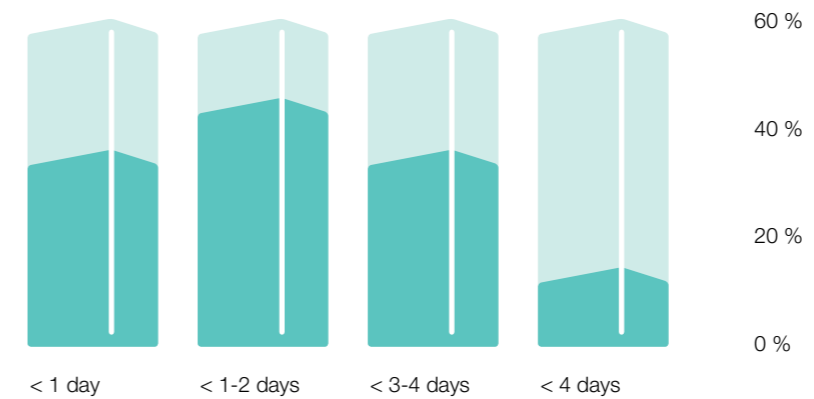
Coliers International, real-time data to Navigate the post-COVID-19 Workplace

What does that mean?
Well, today's employee has different, new expectations of the workplace than they did at the beginning of March. Their needs and concerns have all adjusted. Therefore, the challenges of employers and managers should change, as should the shape and operation of the office. So today, as we think about our return, we are asking ourselves, what changes do we need to make to support the needs and address the concerns of everyone? How do we reconcile different attitudes, so everyone feels heard, happy, and, above all else, safe?

Return or retreat?
The whole world is talking loudly about going back to work, to the office, to afternoon meetings in restaurants, concerts, and trips. Many of us want things to return to the way they were before. But they won't.

We must bid farewell to our everyday lives of yesterday
— both our social lives and our work lives — to envision new ones. We already know that we'll have to introduce new security procedures, standards, and codes of conduct within the office building. And the way that we collaborate and work independently will change. Remote and mixed modes of work will become the norm. And each of these changes creates more change downstream. Although all of it may seem stressful, it represents an opportunity to evolve — an opportunity which came, perhaps, more abruptly than ideal. But an opportunity, no less, to make functional changes grounded in a better understanding of our businesses and ourselves.

DIFFERENT GROUPS, DIFFERENT CONCERNS, ONE GOAL

Virus

(Latin for virus "poison, venom"): small, invisible-to-the-eye molecules, infecting all life forms

The coronavirus has taught us an interesting lesson in humility. In the wisdom of not holding too tight to achievements, successes, and plans. In staying flexible. This molecule, invisible to humans, has changed life for each and every one of us, creating new concerns, no matter what role we play in the world. To face these concerns, we have to first identify them.

FACILITY MANAGER, OFFICE MANAGER

Our office was perfect for us three months ago. Is it still perfect for us now?

I don't know how to arrange an office for social distancing.

Will I fit all my employees in our current office if I have to de-densify?

Will the furniture and equipment in my office provide security for my employees?

How do I adapt the office to work for dispersed teams? How do I control this variable mode of work and manage my teams effectively?

Do I have space to create dedicated rooms for videoconferences?

Do my employees working from home feel connected to and supervised by our leaders?

I have to change my office space, but I don't know if I should invest in long-term solutions or focus short-term, implementing temporary fixes.

How do I create an office that adheres to rigid rules and security needs but maintains the flexibility I need? How much will it cost me?

HR MANAGER

What is the key to delegating employees to the home office? Who should work in the office, and who should work remotely?

Well-being and employee benefits — how do I think about them nowadays?

The moods among employees are very different. Some will ignore the safety rules, while others will over-regulate. How do I strike and maintain the right balance?

Emailing new rules is one thing, but how do I implement and enforce them?

How do I strengthen my relationship with each employee at a time when we all have to keep the distance?

How will this situation affect the recruitment process?

How do I train new and existing employees? Will non-organizational courses and workshops still be possible?

I don't know when business trips will be possible again, so how do I go about scheduling them?

Do my employees feel connected to and supervised by our leaders when working from home?

I have to equip the office with health and safety gear such as masks, anti-bacterial gels, and gloves. How do I teach my employees how to use them, developing new habits?

EMPLOYEE

Will my office be a safe place? I don't really know what the disinfection of common areas looks like. It's also out of my control, which makes me nervous.

How do I know if my colleagues are healthy? I don't know how careful they're being after work.

Will working with a mask and gloves be comfortable?

Remote working is new to our organization, so I don't know my rights.

Am I insured against accidents while working from home?

I don't know how I will reconcile childcare with mixed work — partly from home, partly from the office.

How far out can I plan my family's schedule? When, if ever, will we return to the old model of work?

What will it be like to use common areas in the office, such as the kitchen? Will shared meals still be allowed?

LANDLORD

What changes must I make to the properties I manage? Will I be facing new regulations?

How do I ensure security in common areas such as the reception desk, office building lobby, elevator, or stairwells?

How do I manage the flow of people entering the building? Do I need new personnel to screen the health of each visitor?

What can I do to improve the HVAC system and overall ventilation in my buildings?

The list of questions and concerns goes on. And they can be overwhelming to review. But this material will ease any overwhelm, empowering you to find the calm in the eye of the storm. The office space — both its design and its etiquette — has been our work and our passion at Mikomax Smart Office for almost 30 years. On your behalf, we've followed reports and trends, digesting the latest research and statistics to offer the sharpest advice at this time of uncertainty. Remember that, though we have different concerns, we share one goal: to make our return to the office a safe, healthy, and happy one.

CHAPTER 3.

WHAT DOES THE OFFICE LOOK LIKE IN THIS "NEW NORMAL"?

The pandemic has introduced a new aim and made it primary: prevent the spread of germs in the office. Unfortunately, many offices — opened up through the removal of partitions — seem to work directly at odds with this aim. Maybe yours seems to. It's easy to panic, thinking nothing of the old design can be saved. But you might be surprised what you can repurpose with a little inventiveness. The following four steps will give you a place to start: 1. Designate your "external" office 2. Designate your "internal" office 3. Secure entryways for both 4. Stay calm — acting and thinking flexibly.

Pre-COVID-19

- Office Design & Etiquette
- Space optimization, use of each square meter
- Required passageways
- Benching workstations (~8 people per bench desks)
- One large, shared kitchenette
- Dedicated zones for collaboration and teamwork
- Multiple areas to socialize
- Conference room positioned far away from the building's entrance so visitors travelled through office space to reach their meeting
- Large conference rooms dedicated to large groups
- Shared meals
- Offices open to visitors
- Rounded out by a lax attitude concerning such group-based customs as sharing an employee's birthday cake after blowing out the candles or meeting at the water cooler — an attitude we've had to adjust

Some of these design elements and customs can be easily fixed. But some, such as conference rooms, are not such easy fixes. But the need to 'fix' the office, rearranging it, makes us appreciate flexible interior solutions — ones that make 'fixes' and 'rearrangements' easier. Meeting booths that can serve as modular, mobile meeting rooms, for instance. And although we can't relocate a structural room, we can adjust its function in light of current times.
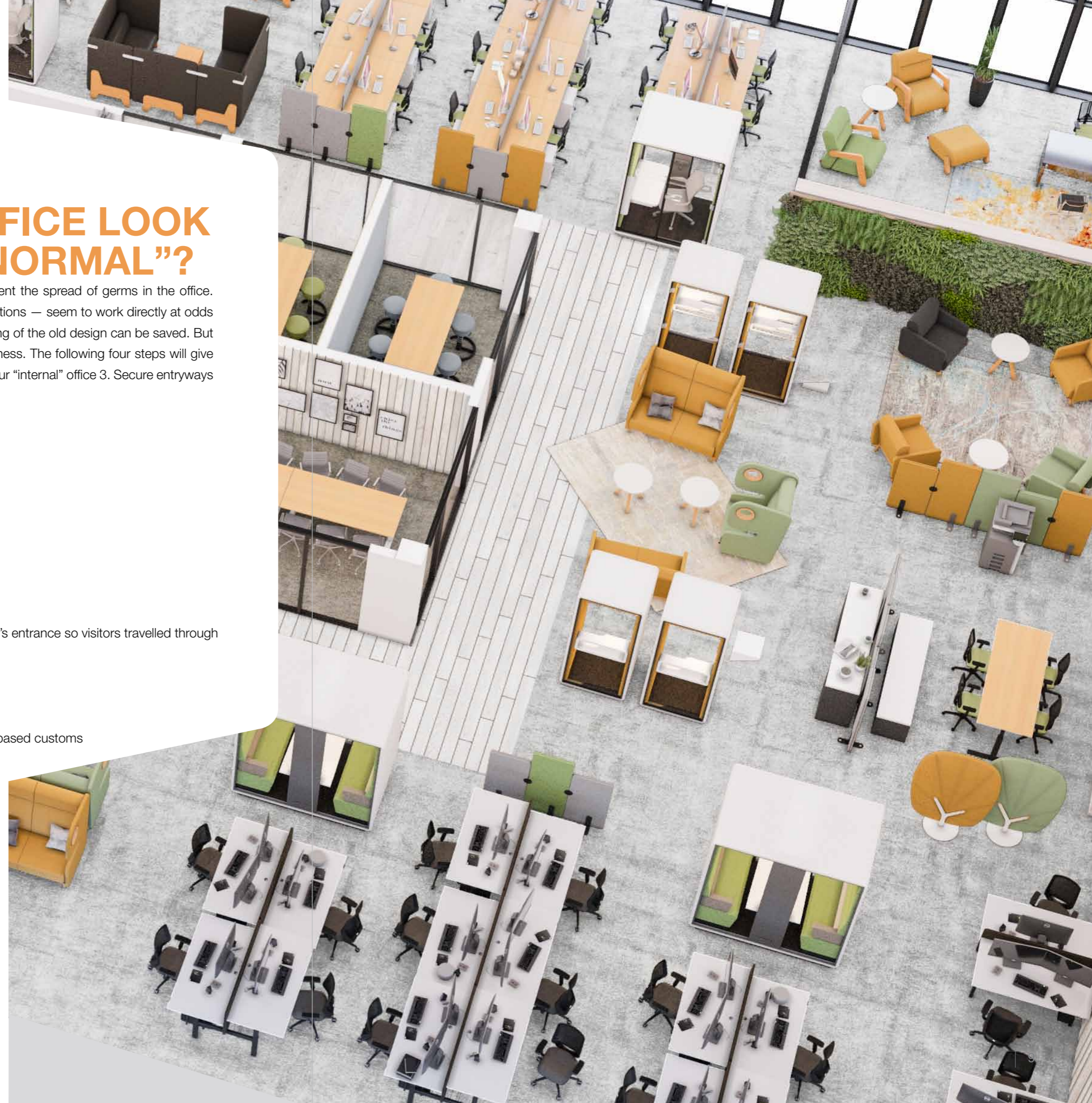
BACK TO THE OFFICE
SPACE PLANNING

recommended solutions

YOUR **NEW** OFFICE SPACE

A safer office space doesn't mean a complete revolution, so don't panic. We will show you how to use the old equipment in new, safer ways. And how to pick the right new equipment that will make for smart investments.

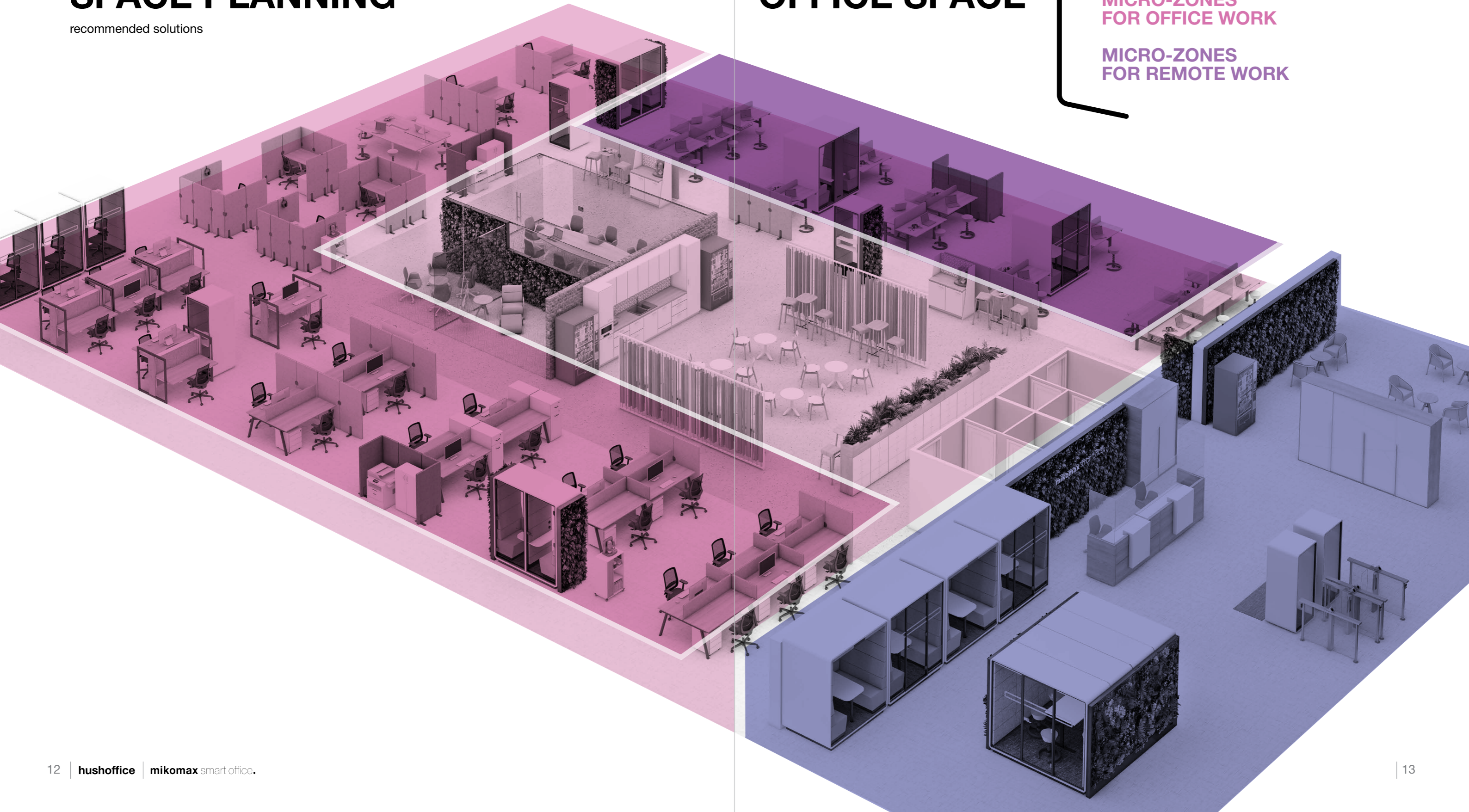# BACK TO THE OFFICE
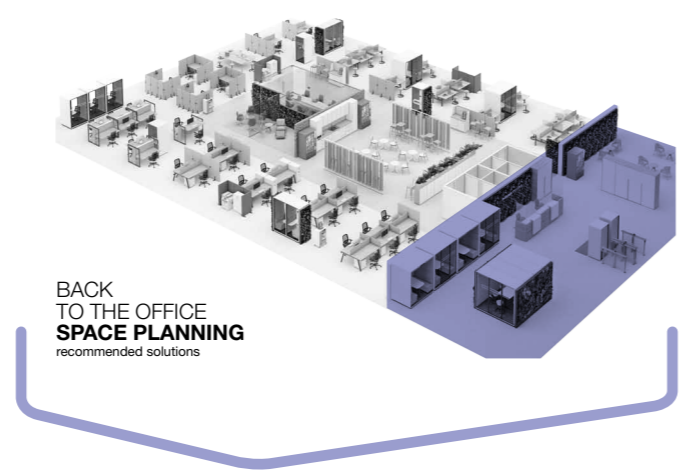## SPACE PLANNING
recommended solutions

YOUR **NEW**
OFFICE SPACE

EXTERNAL
OFFICE

INTERNAL
OFFICE

MICRO-ZONES
FOR OFFICE WORK

MICRO-ZONES
FOR REMOTE WORK

Step

1

DESIGNATE YOUR
"EXTERNAL OFFICE"

Because our primary aim is to prevent the spread of germs, we must manage traffic into and out of our office tightly. Before the pandemic, we were accustomed to inviting clients, contractors, couriers, and other people beyond our core team into the office every day. But just as shaking hands to say hello is now considered unwise, inviting visitors into enclosed, sanitized environments is now considered inconsiderate, especially to employees.

The reality is, though, not all meetings can be held via videoconference. Some need that face-to-face aspect. So how do we reconcile the needs for both a secure office and the ability to hold face-to-face meetings? We recommend designating an "external office." An external office is not a separate office located in a different spot than the main office, nor is it a waiting room. Rather, it's simply a containable part of the existing office space complete with comfortable places to work, both collaboratively and independently. An "external office" is perfect for recruitment interviews or meetings with guests from abroad. It should have the same conveniences as the main office — a coffee machine, cozy seating, cloakroom, etc.…

If your office is located in a building rented by other teams, you will want to work with the building's manager to designate your own "external office." If you're the only team in the building, you'll be able to work solely with your company's leadership to create such a space by adapting a current one available to meet recommendations and regulations.
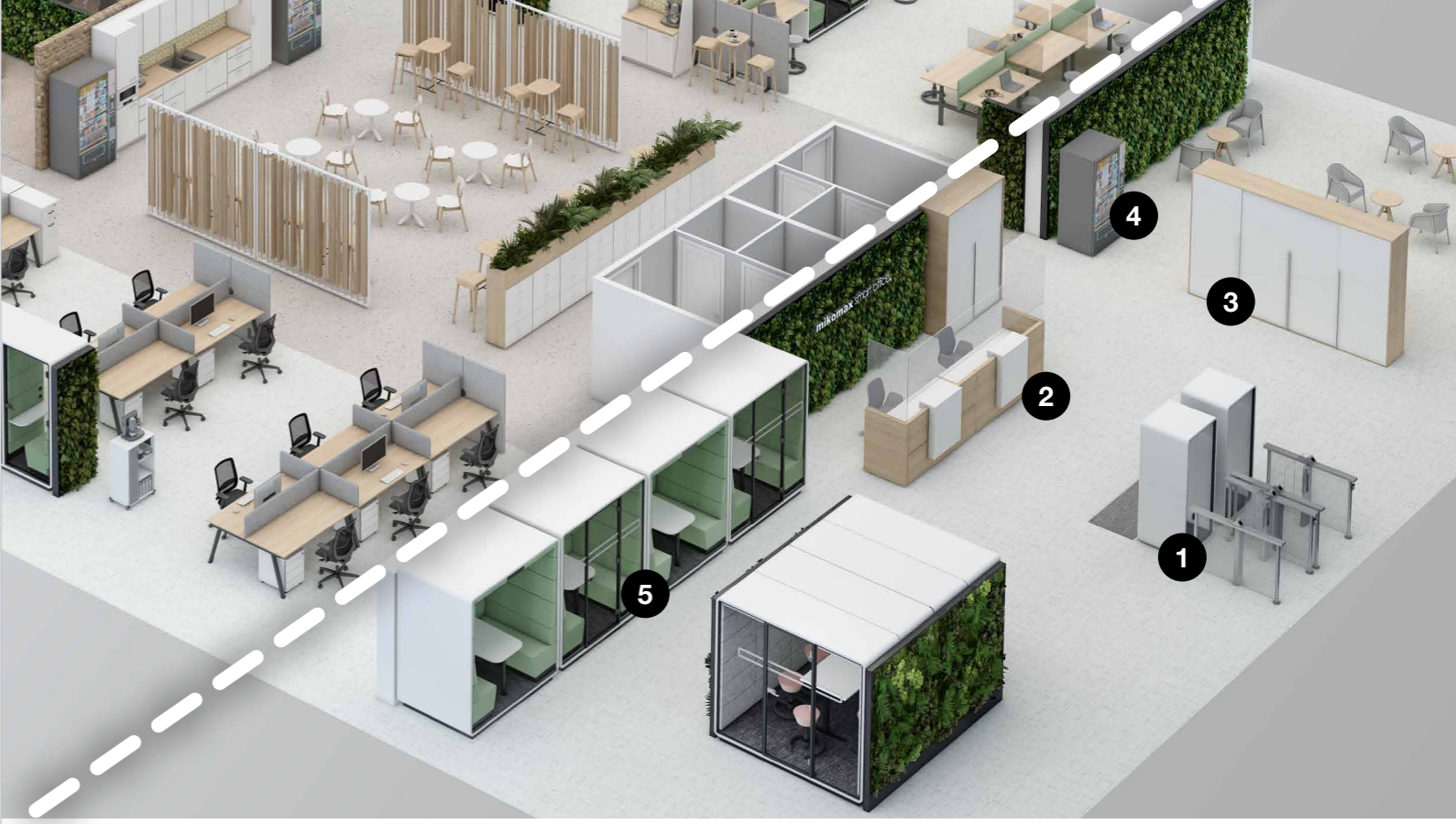
GUIDELINES:

ENTRANCE SLUICE

Think of it as the point at which every employee or visitor disinfects their hands and gets their body temperature measured. The entrance can be operated by full-time personnel, or it can be a self-service operation. There are already products made for this — contactless body temperature measurement, with light and sound signaling, triggered when the measurement detects a higher-than-normal body temperature. The floor should also be also properly secured, finished with hygienic disinfecting mats.

Additional health and safety equipment experts recommend includes protective gloves, shoe covers, and paper overlays for the desk.

CLOAKROOM

Jackets and coats can be stored in a separate area on assigned hangers, each with their own cover, or in a locker. We suggest investing in traditional locker room-sized lockers — in a tall height to hang coats. Some teams are also looking into UV lamps for their lockers to disinfect the outerwear that comes in from the outside.
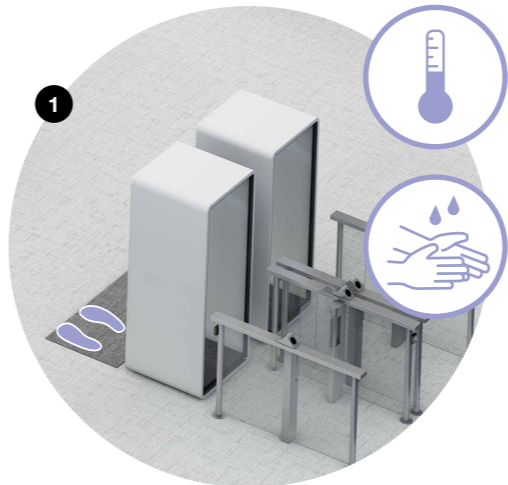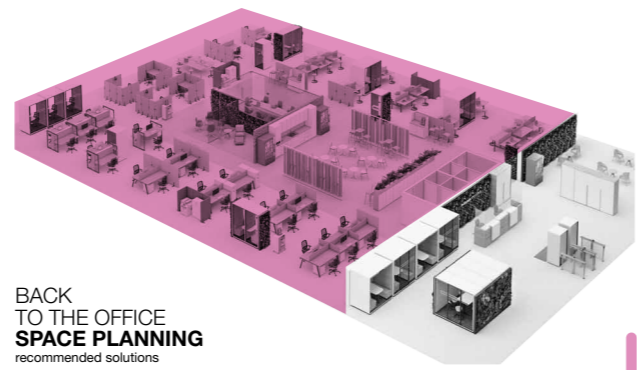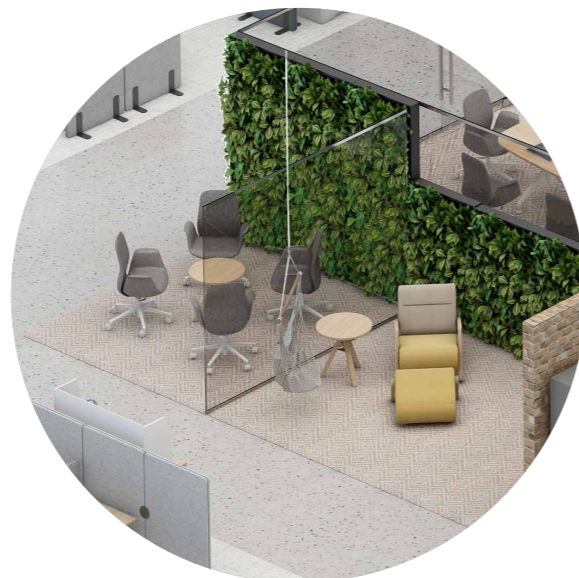
Step 2

DESIGNATE YOUR
"INTERNAL OFFICE"

The "internal" office is reserved for core people who have been acquainted with the new etiquette, security rules, and office layout (division into smaller zones). To get to the "internal" office, one has to go through a security check in the locker room, entryway, or other dedicated checkpoint. It is an office with a strong sense of trust and safety — here we meet with the same people every day. We all know the protocol to take care of our own and others' safety. This office is not like the office of "yesterday," with shared breakfasts, afternoon coffee in crowded common areas, and gatherings of all kinds throughout the week, as you'll see within our guidelines.

Open space - divide space into smaller zones, each assigned to one team — use colorful, mobile equipment such as acoustic walls and panels

Kitchen - create small kitchenettes equipped with tables seating up to 2 people

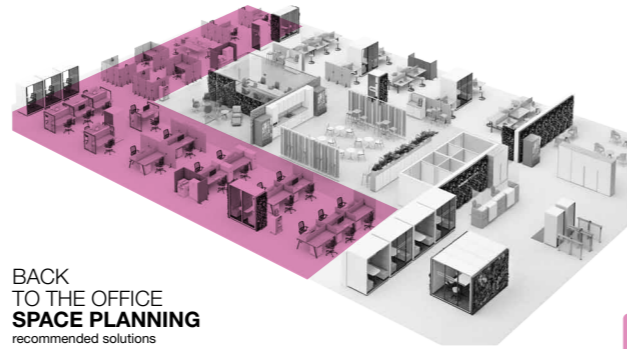**Chillout room -** use at intervals, sanitizing between uses

Printing station - create multiple printing stations to prevent congestion

Meeting rooms - replace meeting rooms with mobile meeting booths, reducing group sizes to 8 or less at once
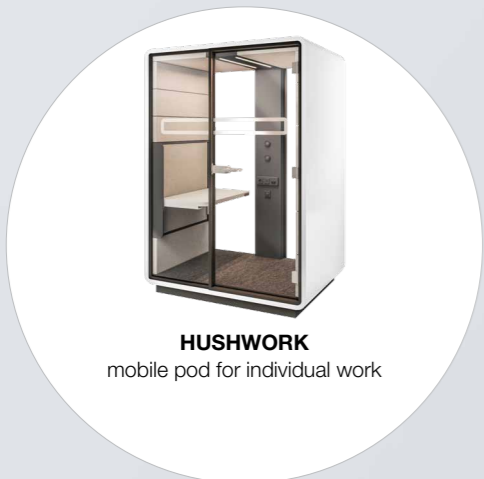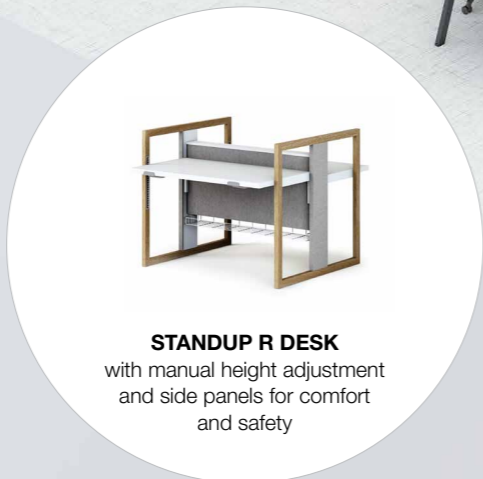
INTERNAL OFFICE
MICRO-ZONES
FOR OFFICE WORK

1 Desks - maintain safe social distance between employees by upgrading smaller desks to larger ones or reconfiguring the office to create more space around each small desk

2 Benching spacing - reconfigure large benching stations to maintain personal space and social distance — i.e., turn eight connected desks into four sets of double desks

3 Small meetings - use curtains or walls to create zones and micro-zones for small assemblies

4 Materials with hygienic properties - when possible, use products with hygienic properties such as laser-finished worktops and medical veneers

5 Seating - opt for swivel seats with a mesh seat and backrest, for instance, which are easy to keep clean
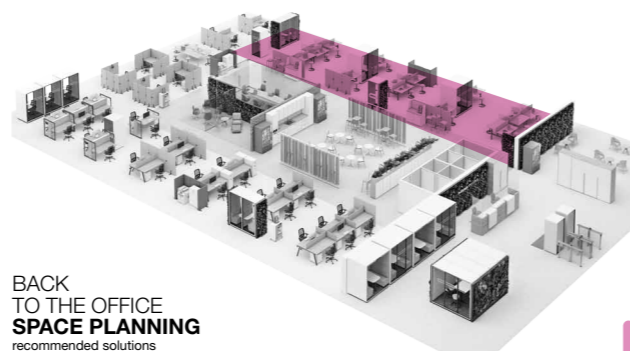
6 Individual work space

HUSHWORK
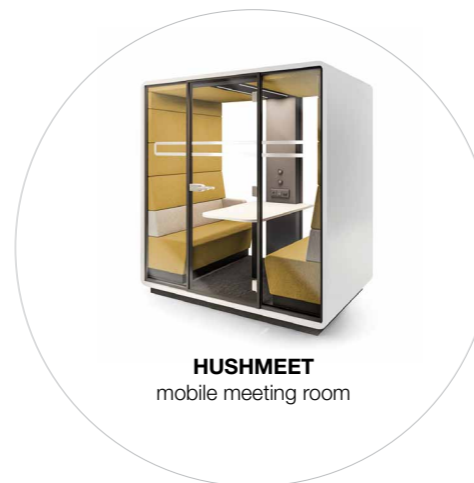mobile pod for individual work

STANDUP R DESK
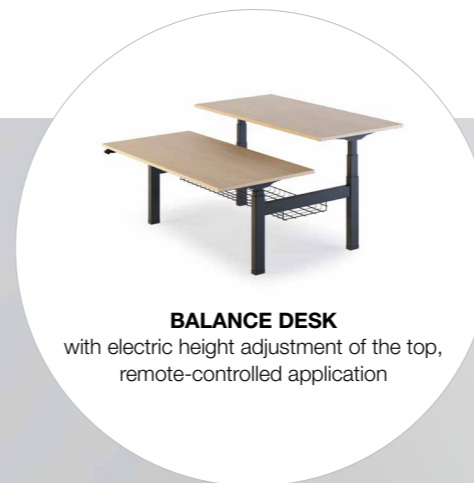with manual height adjustment and side panels for comfort and safety

INTERNAL OFFICE
MICRO-ZONES
FOR OFFICE WORK

HUSHMEET
mobile meeting room

BALANCE DESK
with electric height adjustment of the top,
remote-controlled application

SONIQ
a system of mobile walls that keeps up
with work dynamics and continuously
emerging requirements

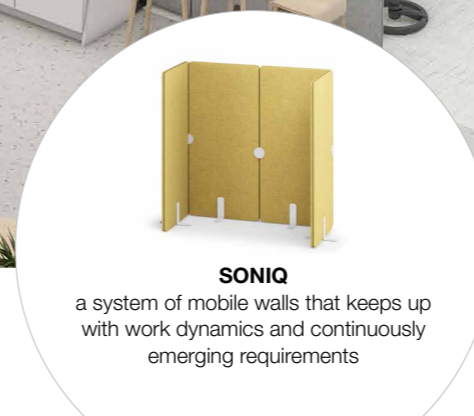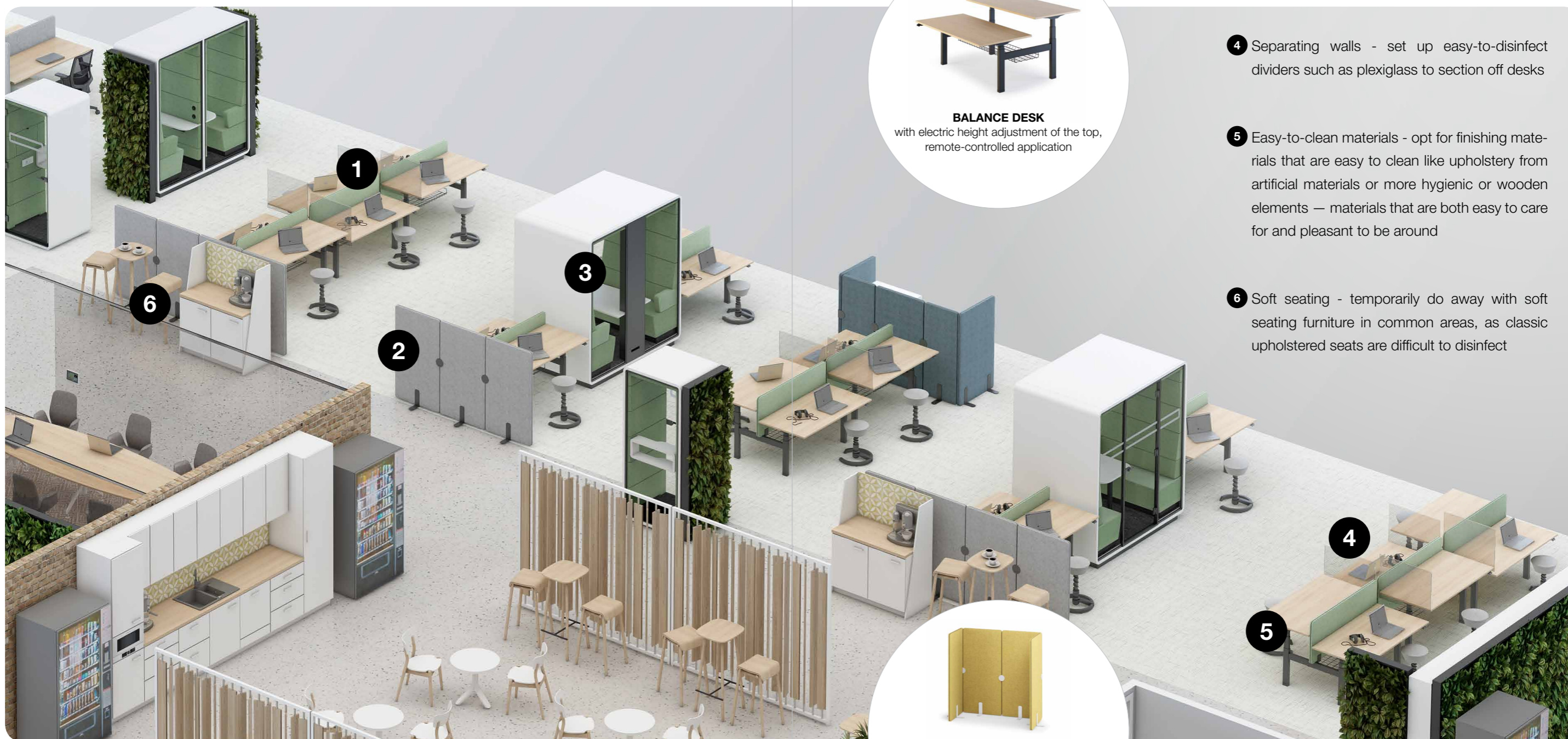**1** Electric desks - implement touchless programming

2 Further desk division - set up partitions on each desk

3 Zones assigned to individual teams

**4** Separating walls - set up easy-to-disinfect dividers such as plexiglass to section off desks

5 Easy-to-clean materials - opt for finishing materials that are easy to clean like upholstery from artificial materials or more hygienic or wooden elements — materials that are both easy to care for and pleasant to be around

6 Soft seating - temporarily do away with soft seating furniture in common areas, as classic upholstered seats are difficult to disinfect
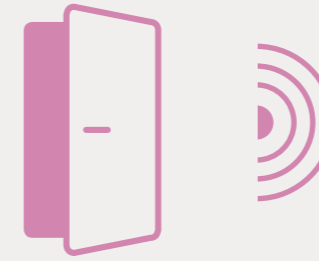
INTERNAL OFFICE
ACCESSORIES
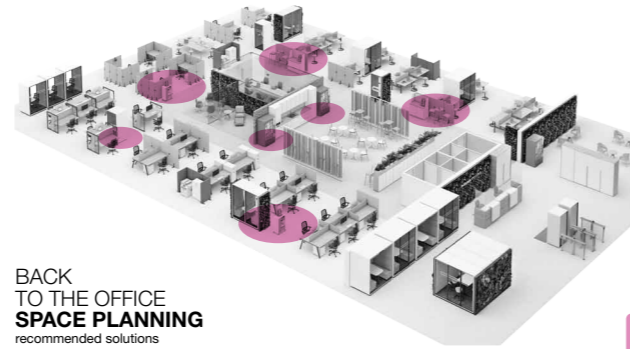
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recommended solutions

Coffee machines - create zones or "coffee points" assigned to specific, permanent teams who can program the coffee machine using an app

Masks and gloves - make safety equipment available at a station or machine

Door entry/exit - implement touchless or contactless entry so employees can enter and exit without touching handles — popular solutions include motion sensing doors or doors opened by a foot-operated button on the floor

Touchless light switches - replace manual light switches with presence detectors

Touchless faucets - use non-contact faucets in sanitary areas
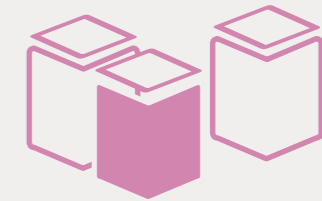
Baskets for waste segregation - set up in multiple small wastebaskets conveniently throughout the office

Sanitization at desks - use paper overlays on desks or other disposable solutions

Small, mobile organizers - bring in compact organizers for employees to store their sanitized tools and devices

Step 3
STAY CALM
- ACTING AND THINKING FLEXIBLY

Recommendations, orders, restrictions, safeguards... Change is required. But will the changes we make be ones we sustain forever? How can we be sure no one will advise us to „go back to our old ways" in a few months? What about the solutions we invested in back then? What if any short-term, temporary investments we make now actually turn out to be a waste of resources?

The questions are manifold and overwhelming. But the wisdom is simple. No matter what, we choose what is flexible. Permanent solutions do not work in an era of dynamic change, as they can't adapt to instability. Instead of building fixed partition walls, bring in mobile walls on wheels. Instead of building small, permanent meeting rooms, set up mobile, modular booths.

On the plan, we've presented micro-offices — zones assigned to individual teams. The zones are not only comfortable and colorful but also fully furnished — each employee has desks for solo work as well as an acoustic cabin to hold a meeting or videoconference in privacy and quiet. The cabin is a mobile, modular solution that shines in its flexibility.
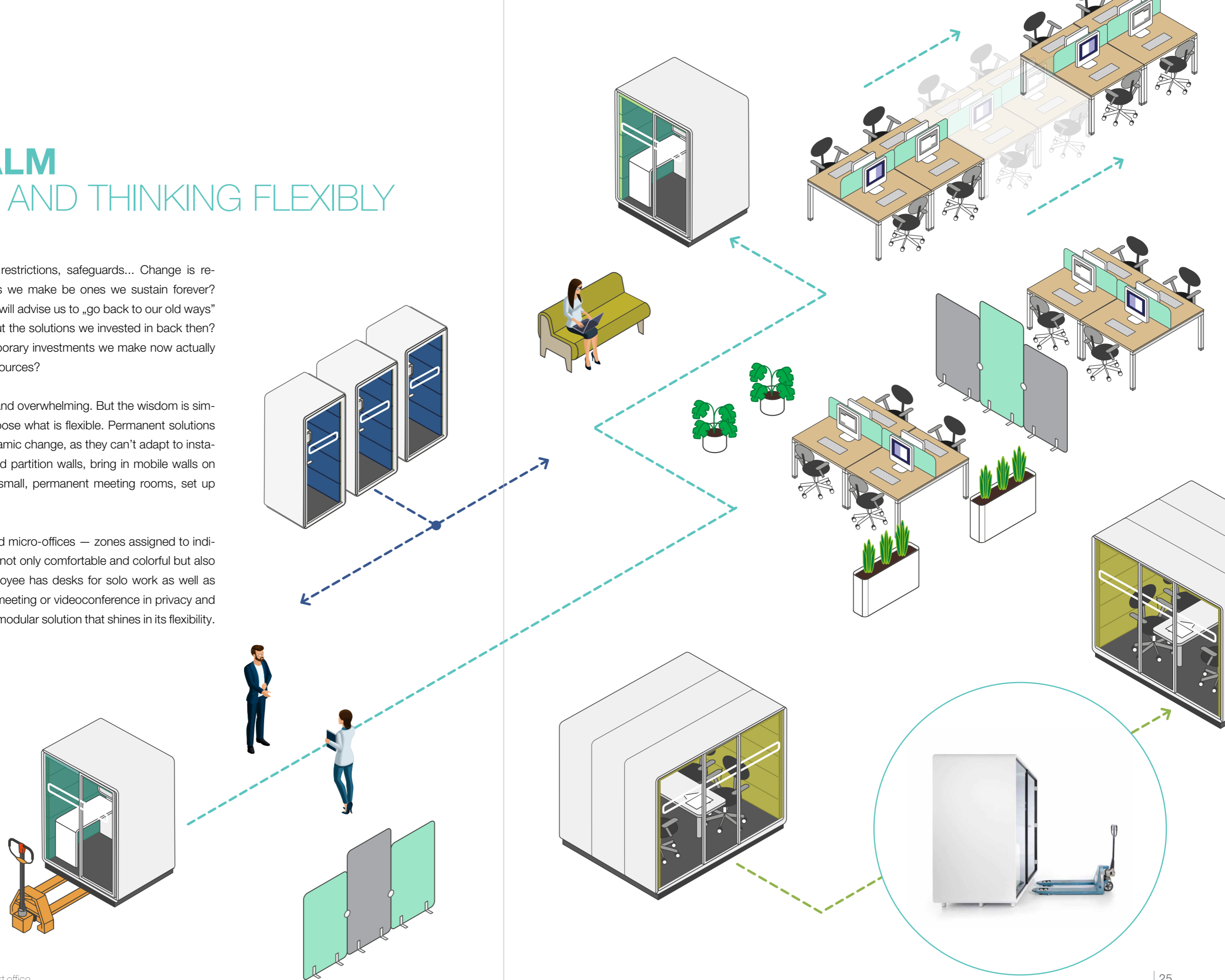
CHAPTER 4.
PRIORITIZING VIDEO
CONFERENCE SPACES

In both professional and private life, videoconferencing has helped us through this period of isolation. It's allowed us to move projects forward, connect with our team, conduct recruitment interviews, negotiate the terms of contracts, but also enjoy meals, moments, and celebrations with our family.

70%
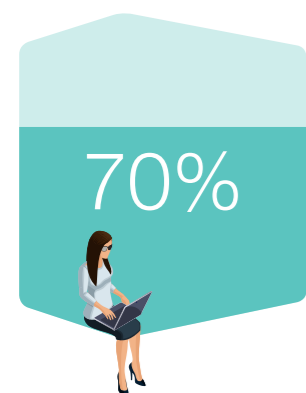
According to Logitech, as many as 70% of employees were already working from home at least once a week before the pandemic. The work-from-home trend is likely to grow, making a new way of working. It is estimated that 15-20% of work will be done remotely.

What does all this mean in practice?

It means we need to prioritize videoconferencing technology and spaces, ensuring each meeting faces no technical or practical hurdles. The first few weeks of the pandemic showed us that connectivity problems can be incredibly frustrating. They weaken meeting agendas. So it is crucial to create a space for this vital kind of meeting, where household appliances and bickering children can't be heard. With this, our new way of working — done more remotely — is primed for success.
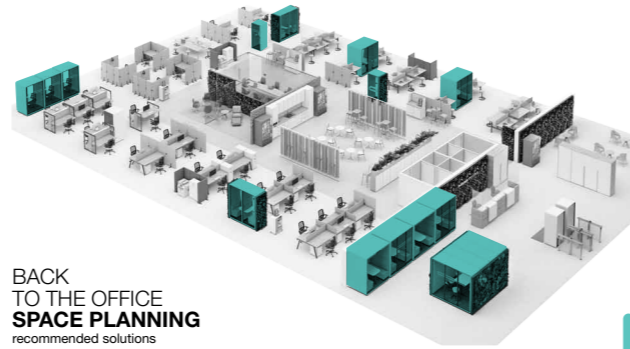
10 TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL VIDEOCONFERENCES

1. Test equipment - test the technology in advance — nothing kills a meeting like a 15-minute delay from technical problems

2. Show your face - body language and facial expressions are key aspects of communication (namely, reading one's emotions)

3. Stick to a strong agenda - create a meeting plan with clear goals and short breaks to ensure the effectiveness of each virtual meeting, just as you would for a face-to-face meeting

4. Avoid monologues - meetings should be somewhat free-flowing to allow collaboration. However, if you need to present long material, use the screen sharing feature so that you and your team stay on track with the help of both visuals and audio

5. Connect with your team - remember that there is a person on the receiving end, so take some time at the beginning of each meeting to ask how others are doing, nurturing trust

6. Appoint a moderator - multiple voices speaking at once leads to confusion

7. Take notes - every meeting benefits from being debriefed — we risk missing crucial details when we rely on memory alone, so consider even recording important meetings to debrief key topics in detail

8. Don't shy away from difficult conversations - you will be surprised how much more effective your meetings become once you and your team get comfortable talking about anything*

9. Stay engaged - don't answer emails, check the weather, or start scrolling — though it's tempting, reserve your focus for the meeting alone

10. Make your environment comfortable - mute the phone, close the window, and buffer your focus from all other distractions. It helps to use a separate room in the home or ask your housemates for a half-hour of total silence. When we return to the office, acoustic cabins will be ideal for this need

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**SPACE PLANNING**
recommended solutions

WORK PODS:
THE ULTIMATE
ALLY FOR SUCCESSFUL
VIDEOCONFERENCES

As the number of virtual meetings increases, the number of office spaces dedicated to supporting them must increase. For security reasons, small, quiet, enclosed spaces are best — spaces for employees to conduct meetings alone or with a small team. Such spaces were already growing in popularity and demand pre-pandemic because of the eminent need for silence in the open office.

How do we create these small, quiet, enclosed spaces? Permanent conference rooms, both small and large, are expensive and inconvenient because they require construction, renovation, and disorganization of the office space. Additionally, meeting rooms are inflexible solutions — you can't adjust their size, relocate them within the office, or bring them to a new building.

They simply aren't flexible. Work pods, or acoustic cabins, are the flexible alternative to permanent conference rooms. You can adjust their size (with modular designs), relocate them within the office space, and bring them through each office move. Well-designed work pods also offer special functionality: awesome soundproofing, power module plus USB ports, and adjustability of lighting and ventilation. Their customizability and features allow you to use them for any work function from meetings to independent work and phone calls to videoconferencing.
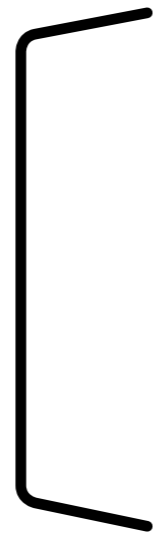
👤 One person in reality

👥+ Many people virtually
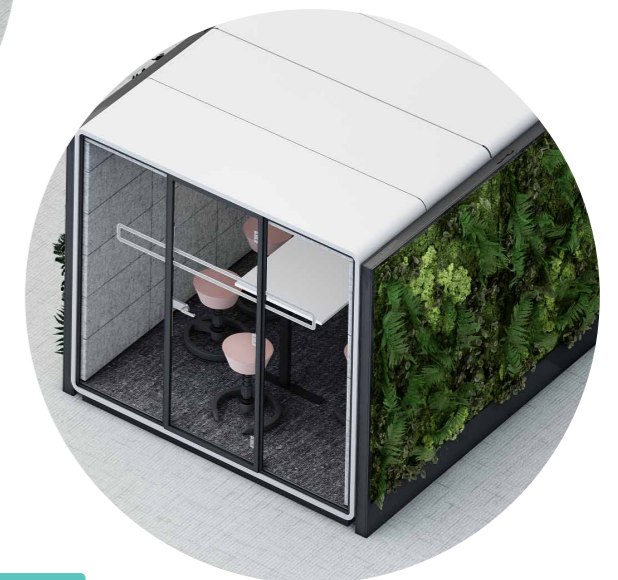
👥+ Many people virtually

👤 One person virtually

CHAPTER 5.
COSTS AND SAVINGS

Reading all these steps, guidelines, and tips, one can conclude that preparation will be a major cost. We've all faced a unique difficulty over these past few months. Many of us are looking for saving rather than investments. What makes the difficulty of the pandemic unique is that we can only estimate how far out we should be projecting to make any decision.

Simultaneously, our teams have adapted and are hard at work at home, keeping our business's engine going — many of them getting accustomed to the home office. All these moving parts highlight that we should invest in flexible equipment that can accommodate a fluctuating number of people in the office. Flexible equipment — think multifunctional, mobile, modular furniture — takes the stress out of office layout rearrangement. Which is of value at a time when regulations are rolling out every week that influence our plans.

Where to find savings?

The aftermarket comes to our aid. To start, we can sell current equipment that is not suitable for current times, giving soft office seating a second life in hotel lobbies and upholstered office chairs a forever home in private apartments.

It's helpful to note areas we are currently saving money by working from home like the electric bill, office snacks, printing paper, and cleaning maintenance. Reviewing current unexpected cost savings can ease the mind, making you more comfortable and confident as you make necessary investments to adjust the office's design.

One question to ask yourself when considering a purchase

Would this product, accessory, or piece of furniture be just as functional in "normal" times?

If the answer is yes, then you're looking at a good investment. If the answer is no, look for alternative, more flexible solutions with similar functionality.

When you create new coffee stations, for instance, instead of investing in special coffee machines, get a run-of-the-mill machine and focus on finding a multifunctional cabinet which can be used as a document locker in the future.

Divide the space not with permanent walls but with mobile ones. After the pandemic, teams can relocate the walls to reintegrate and reconfigure as they please. The flexibility within mobile walls makes them valuable at all times.

Choose independent desks that can be joined to make a benching style workstation down the line. When we don't need social distance between us, teams can re-create the more collaborative layout, adding and removing desks as needed.

When choosing acoustic booths, consider more than just those for solo work or phone calls. A practical solution is to bring in larger acoustic booths for you to comfortably outfit yourself. Today, you can furnish it with a large table and chairs safely spaced. Once the pandemic passes, you can redesign it into any space the office lacks, such as a chillout room.

CHAPTER 6.
TAKING CARE OF BOTH OUR
PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Regardless of how the virus plays out — how quickly we defeat it — we must take care of two things: the health of our spaces (physical) and the health of our minds (emotional). Clean hands mean little in the face of crippling stress. So before we return to the office, we must not only adapt its design and etiquette to meet the needs of current times, a physical need, but we must do so with the goal of building trust, an emotional one. Humans need a strong sense of trust, whether in "normal" times or "not-so-normal" times. Trust in their colleagues, teams, and employers as well as trust in the procedures and customs protecting them. It is impossible to make progress without it. Trust is the key ingredient that allows us to find that calm in the eye of the storm we talked about — and to find it together.

A two-pronged approach

MODIFYING THE OFFICE'S DESIGN (PHYSICAL)

All the changes made in the office space as we've laid out in the previous chapters

SUPPORTING BEHAVIORAL CHANGE (EMOTIONAL)

All the changes in behavior, supported by trusted-based communication

More attention is often paid to the former — modifying the office's design. And rightly so, because renovating a space and implementing brand new stringent procedures within it it is quite the undertaking. However, we must remember that it is easier to change the position of a desk than the behavior of an adult. So how do we support the latter — behavioral change? To help, we can think of it in two stages: before returning to the office, and after returning to the office.

1

Before returning to the office, it will be helpful to:

- Conduct virtual training
- Inform teams of the current situation
- Share the forecasts for returning to the office
- Build relationships despite insulation
- Make a psychologist available to all employees
- Create a working action plan and share it with everyone

The second stage is best taken in the form of a set of rules, which will be complemented by educating employees. Here too, proper communication — responding to changing requirements — and mental support will be necessary.

It's important to recognize that when employees return to the office, they will enter a brand new rhythm. A new reality will become their "new normal." And the preparation we do now will form this "new normal" to a great extent. So what should we keep in mind, with every decision we make toward the future?

2
FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR A STRONG "NEW NORMAL," BOTH PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY

EDUCATE EVERYWHERE Whenever implementing a new procedure or strengthening an important habit (like handwashing), over-communicate, both virtually — via email — and in the office, hanging informational posters throughout the building.

MASTER HAND HYGIENE Place disinfectants generously throughout the office as visual cues to wash and sanitize regularly and correctly.

SANITIZE, SANITIZE, SANITIZE Provide disposable disinfecting wipes for employees to disinfect their work area before and after use.

FORM SNEEZING/COUGHING ETIQUETTE When sneezing or coughing, cover the mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue — dispose of the tissue in a closed wastebasket immediately, washing hands with soap or disinfecting them with alcohol-based agents (min. 60% alcohol).

LEAD BY EXAMPLE Instead of hyper-supervising others, lead by example, demonstrating proper handwashing, sneezing, coughing, and sanitizing etiquette out of respect for yourself and others.

STAY HOME Encourage your employees to work from home when they feel under the weather. Ensure that each teammate knows they are doing the right thing by staying home when unwell, for themselves and for their team.

MEET VIRTUALLY Replace in-person meetings with virtual ones whenever possible. Focus your efforts on mastering the art of effective videoconferencing.

KICK THE "HOME SHOPPING HABIT Our era of package deliveries to the office for private purchases must end, to limit outside visitors.

IMPLEMENT SCHEDULE ROTATION If your office space is too small to accommodate the recommended spacing (to maintain social distance), implement a schedule that rotates employees between working from home and in the office, maintaining this space between desks.

PREVENT CONGESTION Coordinate meal breaks to prevent congestion in common areas (kitchens, cafes, social spaces, changing rooms, and the bathroom).

WORK CLOSELY WITH YOUR CLEANING CREW Office space cleaning crews have become another hero of everyday life. Their work will be crucial now, so we need to work closely with them, sharing recommendations to maintain the office's cleanliness. As we move back into the office, while we all develop new habits, we should all monitor cleanliness, reporting any concerns — for the safety of everyone.

INVEST IN AIR QUALITY In current times, our HVAC system must be in the best shape of its life, filtering out pollutants and germs. Even prior to the pandemic, "sick building syndrome," or poor indoor air quality, was a health hazard. So today truly is prime time to invest in air quality by cleaning the HVAC system, bringing in desktop air purifiers, and inviting a few houseplants into the office space. There is also a strong link between low air humidity and the spread of viruses, too; houseplants humidify the air, preventing the spread of viruses.

LET'S MAKE THE "NEW NORMAL" BEAUTIFUL, TOO.

Masks, gels, and sluices… Gloves, overlays, and floor mats... Social distancing and UV disinfection... All of these things are important. Very important. Each one will help protect our health and safety while putting an end to the pandemic. But let's not forget what it is we're protecting in the first place: life.

Our offices aren't laboratories. They are dynamic spaces. We spend hours of our lives working conceptually and concretely, putting our creative energy to use as individuals and teams. A desk is not just a desk — it's our station where we put this creative energy to use. So as we bring in health and safety equipment and implement new procedures, let's remember, every day, the purpose in doing so. To protect life — out of joy for it. Out of joy for creation. So, in addition to using new equipment and procedures, let's also ensure our atmosphere inspires this joy for life. At a time when upholstered sofas, soft cushions, and lush curtains aren't recommended — elements which we often use to give warmth and softness to home and work spaces — we have to rely on other elements. Our advice is to bring nature inside — life itself.

Biophilic design has conquered the hearts of the whole world within the past few years. And it is no wonder because plants give us this joy for life. They vitalize the atmosphere, bringing greenery to our decor, calming us while simultaneously purifying the air we breathe. For their air-purifying powers, indoor plants not only bring joy but sheer utility. Consider our Green Wall system — rather than bringing in standard mobile walls, why not bring in a mobile wall of green plants. Not only will a mobile wall of plants divide space with the same ease, but it will give us this connection to life at a time when we need it most. Our Green Walls can even be attached to Hush work pods — at once, you can create safe, healthy workspaces and strengthen the biophilic link. Instead of looking out into dividing walls, your employees will be looking out into life-giving garden walls. At a time when we face pandemic and crisis, nature can remind us that life is a beautiful thing, worth protecting.

Let's be good to ourselves!

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