HOW TO NAVIGATE
THE NEW FRONTIER
for Commercial Real Estate

brivo.

The New Landscape

Staff members are eager to return to work—they crave interaction, relationships with clients, collaboration with colleagues, a renewed sense of routine, face time with bosses or mentors that doesn't take place over zoom, and access to their superior office workstation setup.

Other workers, however, have enjoyed the experience of working at home and are reluctant to return on a full-time basis. Companies are looking to balance these competing wishes with both compassion and business savvy. This ebook serves as a guide for companies looking to recalibrate their staffing and facility requirements in the post-COVID environment.

Preparing Your Property

Commercial buildings house industry, the ideas that spur innovation, and the employees that keep our economy humming along. During the pandemic, these buildings were largely empty as businesses shifted completely to remote work. Now, businesses are ready to welcome their employees back to the office. Whether employees are coming back full-time or a hybrid model has been adopted, businesses need to be ready. How do you ensure your commercial property is buzzing with business again? The key is to equip your tenants with the right technology to bring employees back safely and with confidence.

There is some hesitancy among employees preparing to resume work in the office. Relieving this anxiety is critical. Lessons learned from businesses that never shifted to remote work, like those in transportation, distribution, manufacturing, and utilities, or that reopened relatively quickly, reveal several best practices and the technologies that help achieve them.

Facility Safety Features

You and your tenants can start with the easy stuff. Start with enhanced and more frequent cleaning protocols, especially for frequently touched surfaces like elevators, bathrooms, and lobby and common areas for better building hygiene. You may also consider installing plexiglass screens or barriers where interactions take place such as the front lobby desk. It is important to identify and communicate clear policies on the use of masks, and the provision of free masks to employees and visitors. Reengineer workspaces to create additional distancing. Temperature screening at entrances is one of the staff's most requested measures, though little evidence exists that it is more than a cosmetic or feel-good solution. These efforts are easily noticed and appreciated by hesitant employees.

Invest in technologies that promote safety and health within your property. These upgrades will attract new tenants and help you retain current ones. The importance of air quality and ventilation has skyrocketed as a result of COVID. Upgrade your HVAC systems and install new filters to promote safe airflow. Access control technology can provide social distance monitoring, occupancy tracking, contact reporting, and digital proof of vaccination.

Frictionless Visitor Management Systems

The visitors coming in and out of your commercial property need as much protection as the regular employees and staff. On the flip side, regular employees need to be sure that visitors don't pose a health risk. Visitor management technology can help create a safe and efficient process to check guests in and out. Visitor management software allows for pre-registration via an app, including photos, health affirmations, dates, times, and employee(s) to be visited. Guest credentials are printed and the host is notified at check-in. A comprehensive visitor management solution also includes video intercom entry upon arrival and a contactless log-in/log-out kiosk.
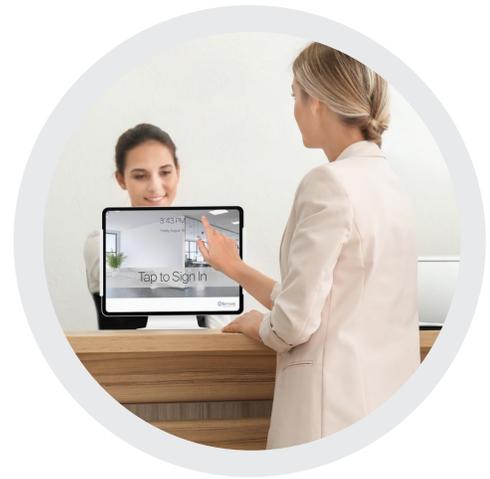
Fluid Access For Employees

The touchless trend came in hot and heavy at the beginning of the pandemic. It has waned for two reasons:

As scientists have learned more about COVID it has been discovered that transmission through surfaces and touch is not as much of a danger as initially thought.

Truly touchless experiences are very expensive and require complete overhauls of entry points including replacing doors and door technology.

To create a truly touchless experience the doors themselves need to open without someone touching them to push them open. That means installing automatic doors and the technology that powers them. The bottom line is: you don't need a truly touchless access experience to keep employees healthy and safe.

There are access options that limit touches to common surfaces and that make the access experience more fluid and easier for your tenants and employees. Those upgrades are easier to make and can make a big impact on tenant satisfaction.

The technologies available for less-contact access include mobile credentials, facial recognition, and no-contact fingerprint options. To protect people from the germs on the doors themselves, popular and easy options include antimicrobial "keys" for turning door handles, foot pedals, and, most easily, hand sanitizer on either side of the door. Interior doors that aren't critical to security can be left propped open as well.

The Hybrid Era

Companies now are deciding how to continue working. Some are planning to bring all staff back to the office. Some have said that they are abandoning offices and adopting a work-at-home model. Most organizations are in the middle.

For those "in the middle" companies, that means hybrid work environments. Those businesses will be deciding how to move forward with their office space. The good news is that Proptech helps make buildings much more flexible which opens up opportunities to keep offices and buildings in use safely.

Commercial property best practices for flexible buildings:

Flexible office space. With the right technology, open office space can be available to the public. Empty space can be converted into flex office spaces within your property.

Occupancy limits. These are enforced through access control technology. The credentials that are used to access the office also tell the system how many people are on site, who they are, and where they are. Occupancy limits can be set within the system to lock doors once a certain number is reached.

Office best practices for hybrid work environments:

Staggered work shifts and reclaimed meeting space. To encourage lower occupancy and more opportunity for social distance.

Equitable enforcement. Policies for hybrid work should be consistent across departments and up and down the hierarchy.

Communication. With the workforce dispersed, management must communicate clearly, consistently, and universally to convey policies, information, strategy, staffing changes, and other information.

Flexibility. As workers adapt to this changing model, management should allow flexibility in processes and workflows that might need to be adjusted.

brivo.

Modernizing Your Property

Although throughout the pandemic there were major concerns that the office would become a thing of the past, that fear hasn't come to fruition. Offices remain, they are just changing. Many organizations are reducing their footprint by shrinking their space use and putting the excess on the rental market. A modern, upgraded property goes a long way toward attracting hesitant staff back to the office and new leasing or flex working opportunities.

Current CRE Building Use Trends:

More use of flexible office space

Alternative uses of office space

Smart amenities will move from "nice-to-have" to the "need-to-have"

The comfort of home... at work

According to a recent Forbes article, "the adoption of technology will drive smart amenities from the "nice-to-have" column to the "need-to-have" column as restrictions are put in place by local, regional and state governments."

Download the Property Upgrade Checklist to use as you consider the Proptech to invest in to make your property as profitable as possible

brivo.

Leveraging Proptech

Property technology or Proptech enhances the real estate market. It includes everything from virtual tours of available space to sensor-based humidity controls. Because of its ability to drive value, create efficiencies, and attract and retain tenants, Proptech has exploded in both the commercial and residential sectors. Proptech compiles data from features such as building access, occupancy, traffic patterns, and energy and water use and delivers insights that can trim cost, increase efficiency, or add revenue.

The Property Upgrade Checklist is a good place to start to understand the Proptech solutions available to implement.

Home Away From Home

While some employees are anxious to get back to the office, there are those that are hesitant to leave home. People are used to working from home now and enjoying the creature comforts that come along with that. To get people excited about coming back to the office, properties need to make changes to offer what a home office cannot.

A recent Forbes article explains, "If companies want employees back in the office, everything will need to be reimagined. And employees will expect a workplace that they can't achieve remotely," said Gabe Marans, executive managing director for Savills, a major real estate leasing company. Marans says that means more services like child care, in-office health providers and even "nap spaces." Individual workspaces will get bigger again, reversing a trend that had seen them decline over the past decade and there will be more collaborative "huddle spaces."

Businesses that are embracing the hybrid workforce should work to maximize the advantages of remote working in their new work model. Moreover, employers retain a duty of care to their at-home staff, so they have a legal, moral, and ethical obligation to see to the well-being of their remote workers.

Ergonomics. Organizations should offer guidelines and best practices for home ergonomics, including desk height, chair type, eye level, neck angle, monitor/screen angle and brightness, helpful stretches, break periods, etc.

Security protocols. Organizations should make sure to provide training on information security (including phishing, social engineering, social media threats, device-sharing risks, and industrial espionage) and implement security awareness drills. Anti-virus and anti-malware signatures should be regularly updated, and VPNs regularly patched.

Mental health. Supervisors should check in with staff at least weekly, preferably face to face (including video), to gauge mental well-being, stress levels, etc.

Safety. Consider inspecting home offices for ventilation issues, electric hazards, trip-and-fall dangers, and other safety issues.

The Change Ahead

Commercial offices aren't going away, but they are changing. To be frank, this has been a long time coming. Physical spaces have taken on a new role as IoT technology has continued to evolve and people have become more digitally connected. Perhaps the global lockdowns have forced these changes to happen more rapidly, but they were the logical next step in a decades-long progression towards more flexible and connected spaces.

Commercial properties that adapt quickly will win. It's clear what tenants and their employees are looking for. Proptech that creates flexible and safe spaces is no longer a bonus, it is a must. The right Proptech turns your property into an interactive asset.

Why Brivo?

Brivo is the global leader in mobile, cloud-based access control for commercial real estate, multifamily residential, and large distributed enterprises. Our comprehensive product ecosystem and open API provide businesses with powerful digital tools to increase security automation, elevate employee and tenant experience, and improve the safety of all people and assets in the built environment. Having created the category over twenty years ago, our building access platform is now the digital foundation for the largest collection of customer facilities in the world, trusted by more than 23 million users occupying over 300M square feet of secured space in 42 countries.

Our dedication to simply better security means providing the best technology and support to property owners, managers, and tenants as they look for more from buildings where they live, work, and play. Our comprehensive product suite includes access control, smart readers, touchless mobile credentials, visitor management, occupancy monitoring, health and safety features, and integrated video surveillance, smart locks, and intercoms. Valued for its simple installation, high-reliability backbone, and rich API partner network, Brivo also has the longest track record of cybersecurity audits and privacy protections in the industry.

Don't wait. Get started now.

talk to a Brivo expert

brivo.