

Meet the Smaller Post-COVID-19 Office Space



COVID-19 will end at some future date. Either a vaccine, effective treatment, herd immunity, or all three will relegate it to the historical dustbin of bad things that came and went. Its effects will last much longer, likely resulting in a generally smaller post-COVID-19 office space.

In the short-term, safety concerns will prevail. The need for space to keep employees further apart will likely balance out lower in-office counts resulting from [increased work from home](#) (WFH). Long-term forces could reveal a different picture. Offices might very well shrink due to permanent support for increased WFH and other factors, such as the elimination of server rooms.

Why Offices will be Smaller

Lending support to this scenario, a recent Gartner survey revealed that 74% of CFO's expect to increase *permanent WFH employees* to cut commercial real estate costs. Indeed, cost-cutting measures pursued in response to tougher economic conditions make a lot of sense. Consider these additional factors:

- Technology will make remote work as productive or more productive than in the office
- With improved work-life balance, a more content WFH employee is more productive, giving both workers and employers good reason to continue WFH policies
- Companies responding to competitive pressures to cut costs will permanently reduce office space, finding they can manage fine without it

- The overnight acceleration of cloud computing to accommodate WFH means that server rooms will be eliminated in favor of cloud data centers
- Companies that experimented with flexible scheduling to reduce in-office counts have financial incentives to make the rotations permanent

However, at least one caveat deserves our attention. In some cases, expanded spaces for collaboration, social interaction and video production may absorb the extra space vacated by WFH employees. That may happen in big companies that can afford it, like Apple and Facebook, but seems unlikely for SMBs.



What will the Smaller Post-COVID-19 Office Space Look Like?

Decreased Density

As companies reduce their office space and use more remote workers, densities are also likely to decrease. More health-conscious workers will demand it and employers will need to provide it to attract the talent they need.

With costs, health concerns, and other counter-balancing forces at play, we'll see a new long-term density normal settle in after COVID is gone.

Some office social distancing measures will persist due to popularity and long-term health or psychological benefits. Changes appearing now to control the spread, like plexiglass dividers, one-way foot traffic, and 6-foot floor circles around desks will not all disappear.

More Social and Collaboration Spaces

Apple CEO Tim Cook said that once the pandemic is over, offices will be more about interaction and community than pushing individual productivity. Organizations will want to optimize the times that talent is together in the office. Interactions to foster creativity and innovation will be appreciated and sought.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY



Healthier with Better Indoor Air Quality

Forced to improve quickly to battle the virus, indoor air quality will not be able to retreat once moved into the spotlight. Overall increased health-consciousness will continue to drive improved air filtration and circulation systems as well as other changes perceived to improve office health.

Over time, the current, "We want to be in a safe environment," mantra is likely to evolve into, "We want to be in a healthy environment."

Desk Sharing

With many offices running in rotational shifts to reduce the number of people in the same space and smaller overall offices, employees will be sharing desks. Redesigned schedules and floor plans implemented to cope with the crisis will not likely return completely to pre-COVID-19 patterns.

More Technology

The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed remote work technology to the forefront. WFH and [collaboration tools, like Microsoft 365](#) and Microsoft Teams, have been a Godsend to business leaders seeking to keep people working.

With rapidly accelerated adoption, collaboration and WFH technologies will enjoy continued popularity after the pandemic, if only because more employees have learned how to use them.

Technologies to facilitate employees coming and going, improve collaboration and health, and other [office productivity improvements](#) will transform post-pandemic office spaces.

Looking Ahead to After COVID-19

We all want to get past the COVID-19 crisis and return to normal. While that long-term normal reveals itself, you can boost your productivity to a whole new level with fast, reliable, and flexible [Cloud migrations](#) from Messaging Architects.

Cloud productivity apps like Microsoft 365 make it easy to securely access your data from anywhere, enabling you to work through the crisis and beyond. You'll save money on IT infrastructure, optimize your WFH employees while you become more agile than your competitors.