



ROSSLYN READY

Rosslyn Ready Business Webinar Questions and Answers

The answers below were provided by industry experts from Gensler, Bean, Kinney & Korman and Hillmann Consulting during the May 21 Rosslyn Ready Business Webinar. The answers have been adapted from the webinar's transcript.

1. Do I need to consider remodeling my workspace for permanent solutions before my employees return?

Don't think that you have to immediately remodel your space. First, just look at your existing space—either look at the floor plan or just mentally walk around your space and try to recognize where the problem areas might potentially be. Consider, do you have too many people that may be congregating in a certain area. Where are heavy trafficked areas? Like the pantries and restrooms, for example. How can you start to mitigate risk in those areas? You know where the tight areas are, so think about that physical distancing not just where people are sitting, but also where people may be sitting in reception areas, as they pass each other in the corridor, as you walk from space to space? How do you start to navigate the whole office and as you start thinking about that, think about what spaces might you be able to repurpose for temperature taking areas or a place to quarantine somebody before they leave the office are a couple examples?

There's certainly a lot of unknowns for people thinking about their work environment—this doesn't mean that you have to call in all the hard construction trades to rework your office space, it's actually thinking about the usage of the space. Is your set up more of a closed private office environment or is it more of an open office environment? There are adjustments that can be made that don't involve breaking down walls and reconfiguring space, there's so much that can be done through a reconfiguration of furniture or removal of chairs within a room and signage that will give people direction of how to safely use the space.

Bottom line, identify the areas of the highest risk and that's where you really want to focus your effort so if you're going to do any type of remodel, whether it's adding some partitions, removing something in order to get more space that's where you really want to spend any budget dollars in terms of remodel before people come back to the office.

2. How will tenants commute to work while practicing safe social distancing? Many no longer see metro rail, slugging or metro bus as a safe option. Will buildings be able to handle the potential parking surge?

Something to really consider when planning your reentry is a phasing strategy. This strategy could mean phasing schedules from day to day or even within the same day. From a parking

perspective, if you are an office in an urban center the spots available in your parking garage are probably finite, and even more, your office has a limited number of those parking spots. So, let's just say that 25 people are coming into the office during phase one. Well, the first phase may be such that half of those people are working the first half of the day and then the second half of the day another shift will come in. This timing should create a gap in time where parking spaces are then emptied and then filled by another group coming in.

Think about it, can you implement this phasing of office hours? If you can, that takes a lot of the pressure off people coming in at the same time and even trying to get in through the lobby to the tenant space. Not only does it make it easier for people to navigate the office building and space, but it also relieves some pressure on public transportation and parking garage during peak hours.

Another option to consider is staggering the work week. For example, maybe one employee works in the office on Tuesday and Thursday and another employee works in the office on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. It might be challenging, but employees should not be surprised if their work hours are not the same time as they were pre-pandemic. Having these varied schedules will make it easier on commuting and minimizing avoiding rush hour. Adjusting hours to help avoid peak commute times, can help to alleviate any concerns about commuting on public transportation.

3. If my office is implementing a phased or staggered schedule approach, how do I decide who should come back to the office first?

First, ask yourself, what are employees doing when they come into the office? This may start to dictate how often employees are there, the timeframe they're there, who else is there with them. By doing this, you can start to even out or stagger times.

Thinking through who is essential to be in the office environment. Is that IT, HR or the people who oversee and manage the critical services that your business may be providing to clients? Whoever those essential employees are can be known as tier one and they will return to the office first. Then tier two could be the people who are benefiting from social interactions whether that's for mentoring, learning or for work and services that demand interaction. Finally, the third tier. Given what we've learned and what your business may have learned through this pandemic is where may it be appropriate for the office and workplace to actually be a second place. Maybe there are employees on your staff that don't necessarily need to be in the office, they could come in periodically, but work primarily from home. This can even open up a previously designated space for someone else or for another purpose.

4. How should you think about community spaces and gatherings in your office post-COVID-19?

You know how during the holiday season there's all this great food put out in your office kitchen for people to share? That's the exact opposite of what we want to be doing right now, so when we think about food and beverage within the workplace it's important to have clear protocol that's proactively established and shared before returning to work. It's definitely time to reestablish protocols for break rooms, kitchens and pantries at the office.

For example, those trendy office pantries and markets don't have to go away, but the protocol around them must change. Make sure that there's signage stating new health and safety policies and put out hand sanitizer and wipes. And for catered lunches there is now a need for

the food to be individually prepackaged before it arrives on-site or a need to use a service to serve each person to minimize touch points. All of these small changes and adjustments will not only keep your office and staff safe but will feed into your entire healthy and safety policy.

5. How do I manage deliveries?

Reach out to your property management company and ask if they have policies in place for deliveries whether it be for the loading dock, couriers or delivery drivers. Some buildings are finding an area in a common space where these items are dropped off and there's cleaning supplies provided there for people to clean their hands or wipe down their packages.

6. Is there a difference in the way we disinfect if it's a suspected versus a known case?

It's not a huge difference, but the major difference is the PPE that's worn by the people doing the disinfection. When you have a known case, you obviously want someone in full PPE. They'll be wearing tie bags, gloves, face coverings and all that. Suspected cases you want to treat the same—cleaning and disinfecting the non-porous touch surfaces as well as the high touch points in the office. Ultimately, the differences are mostly in the actual cleaning methods.

7. Regarding disinfectants, what do you do when the third-party supply is limited or non-existent?

This is a real problem. People are switching products up left and right, because what they normally use is unavailable or out of stock. In the toolkit there's actually a link to the Environmental Protection Agency list of cleaners to use. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) also has guidance on their website about mixing your own products so that you don't mix the wrong chemicals together. If you are having a really hard time finding products, I would lean on your janitorial service or remediation contractors and try to source it from them rather than making your own products, but there is guidance from the CDC if need be.

8. Are there cleaning chemicals that are not recommended to clean your office space?

There are absolutely cleaning chemicals that shouldn't be used in in a workspace. There are chemicals designed to be used outdoors that should not be used indoors, whatsoever. You want to make sure you're using an approved chemical and obviously there are risks with having your employees bring in their own chemicals. If an employee brings in cleaning products from home, you don't know what they're bringing in. If someone brings in something that's a little noxious and they're spraying it every five minutes, it could create odor issues or irritate their coworkers. To avoid any of these issues, it's recommended that you provide cleaning products that don't give off volatile organic compounds (VOC).

In terms of things that you can buy over the counter like the disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizers, those are generally safe to people to purchase and bring in on their own.

9. Are there risks in providing my employees with PPE or personal cleaning supplies vs. them having them buy their own?

Any time you're making a recommendation to your employees as far as something that may somehow end up being dangerous to one or more of them, you do have some measured risk. It probably is not great in this situation, because most of the things that you're going to be making recommendations about are things that you sort of have an understanding of and probably don't

pose great risks, like wipes and hand sanitizers. To the extent that you get outside of that group of products, there is some risk in doing that unless you really know what you're getting into there. So I would probably tend to either not make those recommendations or provide the products that you think your employees need and that are safe, and then if you have any questions about that you may want to check in with professional.

10. Should employers require employees to wear masks in the office or only when they're travelling to and from or leaving the office?*

This is kind of one of those discretionary things. I think by all measures, masks do make some difference in terms of reducing the spread of COVID-19. They also, I think, have the effect of reminding your workers that we're in a changed environment right now and the fact that you're wearing a mask is a reminder of both the need to be careful and the other new health and safety policies your office has put in place. Masks are relatively low-cost items and if you can obtain them it's probably worth considering. It would be one of those choices that you might be subject to second-guessing if you decided you didn't want to provide masks and something happened.

Alternatively, you could require your employees to bring their own masks, but again you run the risk of employees bringing masks of all varieties and shapes and sizes some of which might not be appropriate for what you want to try to accomplish.

*The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends employees should wear a cloth face covering to cover their nose and mouth in all areas of the business. Access more information from the CDC on [COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings](#).

11. Can you require an employee to get tested if they are showing COVID-19 symptoms?

The short answer to the testing is, yes. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) will allow you to do certain kinds of employee testing as a means of determining whether your employees are symptomatic of COVID-19, in particular the EEOC has signed off on body temperature testing in part because it is deemed to be fairly accurate of a COVID-19 related symptom and it is also not particularly invasive of your employees privacy. So, you've got the combination of those two things.

The EEOC has said sure for right now we're going to allow you to do that because the COVID-19 condition is that serious as far as other employee testing is concerned that is a little bit more up in the air. The EEOC was a little bit guarded on that with it was a big depends it depends on the accuracy of the particular test and also the invasiveness to your employee's privacy.

If temperature testing fits your business model, you should give it some serious consideration.

12. As an employer, if I chose not to temperature test my employees, are there additional liability concerns? Are temperature checks considered reasonable workplace safety procedures?

You must do everything that's reasonable to reduce significant risks. In this context of what you might think about doing as far as controlling your risks including testing is to think about what your risks are, how significant the harm is and for you what is the sort of inconvenience and expense of engaging in the particular kind of testing that you want to do. For those things that you can do to increase your workplace safety that are not unduly expensive, you probably should consider doing them because we don't really know where the floor is at this point, which

is a little bit of a problem we don't know whether there's ever going to be a floor so do what you can in the way of testing and stay tuned for additional guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

13. Can I tell my employees the name of a colleague who was confirmed for COVID?

The short answer is, no. There are a couple ways to handle this. This has come up for a few clients already, and for the most part I'll tell you so far it has been the case that other employees already know the identity of the individual infected. While it might not be a secret, from an employer's standpoint you never want to associate an individual's name with COVID-19, unless you have asked them directly and have their permission to share that information. In a situation like this, I typically recommend having a short authorization form for that purpose.

Really think about, whether you need to put out the employee's name or not or whether it is enough to put out a notice about contact tracing to let other individuals, who may have been exposed to the infected individual, that they may need to take special precautions.