



Northern  
California  
Chapter



*Connect.*

*Learn.*

*Grow.*

*Lead.*

## **Navigating COVID-19: Return to Office CoreNet NorCal Special Interest Group Session #3 – May 8, 2020**

In response to the impact COVID-19 is having on our members and member-companies, the CoreNet Northern California leadership has ‘stood up’ the COVID-19 Special Interest Group (SIG). The intent of this SIG is to convene (virtually) members from member-companies to share challenges and emerging best practices related to COVID-19 and crisis management generally. This SIG will continue to meet to support and create a body of resources/best practices for our members and member-companies.

Session #3 of the COVID-19 SIG was held on May 8, 2020, bringing together 12 CRE leaders representing 10 member companies.

The following lists of 7 practices emerged from Session #3:

- 1. Returning to the Office/Workplace will Take Time.** Many companies are closely following re-entry plans used by offices and companies in Asia and Europe as they determine re-opening timelines for their domestic offices. When returning, most companies will operate between 5-30% occupancy and that is mostly for those who cannot fully execute their job at home (i.e. working with hardware, building a product, etc.) Companies will modify and adjust accordingly based on their office type and needs. Overall there isn't a rush to get back into the office; no one wants to be the leading edge or the trailing edge.
- 2. Company Executives Make the Final Return to Workplace Decision.** Companies have created cross-functional teams that meet daily to discuss developments and reentry and often report to or coordinate with company executives (i.e. CEO, Board Members, Chief People Officer, Coronavirus Committee, Chief Medical Officer, etc.) Companies are closely monitoring direction from state and local governments.
- 3. Prepare the office for when employees return.** Companies are ready and have a playbook in place for when offices re-open. Each playbook is different based on company size and needs. Offices and buildings will have appropriate signage and required PPE materials to enter a space (if applicable.) Most amenities will be restricted or significantly modified during the initial phase of re-opening. For example, gyms and common areas will be closed; the cafeteria's offerings might be modified or now providing boxed lunches, transportation services will be limited or shut down.
- 4. Return to Work in Phases.** Only the most critical employees will be let in during the first phase. Some essential employees are already in office but no more than 10%. There will be low movement to get offices ready and no visitors will be allowed for a few months.

Companies will be testing things out that are coming out of Asia and mapping out floor plan needs.

5. **Identify a Trusted Source.** Companies are using various sources to determine their return to work plan, including: local government guidelines, International SOS, State Department Intelligence, health surveys collected by employers, or security team members who have connections within the government. *Additionally, many companies have* medical officers who can share what other companies are doing.
6. **Carefully Communicate Your Plan.** Companies have created manual which include basic principles for reentry which include health safety standards and include employee input. Serviced offices will be the last on the list of return because of the lack of control over cleanliness standards. Companies have created a corporate communication plan but are being careful not to inundate employees with information as its changing frequently. Employees appreciate knowing what decisions are being made about returning to office.
7. **Prioritize Health and Safety for All.** Most End Users agreed their biggest concern is about opening too early and if another surge occurs. Companies are trying to prepare for the unknown, and if another surge occurs, by ensuring workplaces can adapt; for example provide adequate spacing and ventilation. Mental health is another big concern across industries. Many companies have begun regular check-ins with their teams to talk about non work-related items. Companies recognize that location, workspace, and other stressors (i.e. childcare) can affect employee's mood and productivity.