

Women of CoreNet hosted its first Zoom webinar on Thursday, April 30th with a highly relevant panel entitled Return-to-Office: CRE Leaders Sharing Experiences From Around the Globe. Moderated by Nancy Morse, Senior Managing Director, Newmark Knight Frank and Women of CoreNet Co-Chair, the program featured leading corporate real estate experts sharing insights from the front lines of planning and implementation. It also included real time polls and a chat-based Q & A that created lively audience engagement!

Speakers included:

Sandy Heistand, Senior Director GWS & Real Estate, Dolby Laboratories
Barbara Donaldson, Vice President Real Estate & Facilities, Synopsys
LindaMarie Santiago, Senior Director, Real Estate & Workplace, VMware
Roy Abernathy, Executive VP, Global Workplace Strategy & Human Experience

Each panelist shared generously about what they have learned so far from their early experiences to how their organizations are approaching this monumental and unprecedented task. Below is a summary of the key topics discussed:

GLOBAL RETURN TO WORK FOCUSED ON ASIA – Barbara Donaldson and Sandy Heistand

1. How is the role of the government and landlords different? What impact do their directives have on planning and implementation?

Heistand

- Countries will be at varying states, think about how you will manage and report on them
- How will you track, and align with company internal incident management teams and local leadership?
 - What each city/state/country guidelines or requirements are
 - ✓ Compliance requirements can vary by city
 - ✓ Landlords will add what they require for building occupancy
- Expect changes in some cases with little notice
- Sharpen your protocol writing skills

Donaldson

- More directed by the government
- Has office in Wuhan
- Came back in different stages
- Employees were already out for their New Year's holiday
- Employees typically leave laptops at the office and were unable to get them
- Realized they needed laptop protocols as part of business continuity plan
- Talking with Business Continuity team weekly
- Sending resources such as PPE over

1. What did your company do to prepare for the return to office in Asia?

Donaldson

- Fortunate to have strong decentralized local team
- Business continuity already had sub teams created in regions
- Much was driven by the government and enforced
- Deferred to local teams to interpret local ordinances
- Landlords take heavy hand and have onsite staff enforcing protocols
- People in the region much more attuned to wearing masks
- Some office are in high rises – required elevator protocols

Heistand

- Underscored that support of local teams was paramount / activated existing cross functional incident management team
- Local leadership teams will likely develop, be sure to have connecting points between IMT's and Local Leadership teams
- Worked with landlords on operations protocols
- One of heaviest lifts is writing protocols (varies by country) including:
 - Entry requirements including symptom checking
 - Incident reporting and response
 - Workplace planning - workstation, conference room, amenity space utilization
 - Health & Safety training, signage, wayfinding
 - Social distancing requirements for employee's
 - Supplies & distribution of PPE/supplies procurement, cleaning & disinfecting, could be difficult to get protocols/procedures for workplace changes
 - Training employee's and leaders on expectations of site access / working in a new environment
 - Health and Safety training / employees, anyone in our buildings
 - Awareness of other government requirements (i.e. tracking of personal rating, scans)

Heistand also referenced Gensler's article A Day in the Life: Going Back to Work in China
<https://www.gensler.com/research-insight/blog/a-day-in-the-life-going-back-to-work-in-china>

2. What are you seeing in terms of percentage of population coming back?

Heistand

- Companies have started with 20% and be optional for EE's. Typically prioritized by key business initiatives that cannot be done remotely
- Be aware how employee's feel - coming into the office, taking public transit
- Some cities/landlords may have up front limits
- Have a plan to dial back and respond should you have a case on your premise
- Communities in China promoting return to work
- Evaluating what critical functions actually need to take place in the office

3. Now that offices have begun to open up, what are you seeing? What advice do you have?

Donaldson

- Employees feeling more comfortable
- Learning new procedures in office
- Quickly resuming habits such as going out to lunch
- Remember people are on edge
- Be patient, keep things light with a sense of humor
- Keep in mind people are working more hours than ever / juggling home responsibilities

Heistand

- Health and Safety first - Employees, anyone in your buildings
- Be prepared for flare ups (Example - Beijing had a red zone is your office in it? If employee's go into that zone, they have to self-quarantine for 14 days)
- Has found connections with internal, external and within CoreNet supportive and an important part of the planning and benchmarking
- Be prepared to have many cross functional meetings to support the reopening process and support

CRISIS MANAGEMENT APPROACH – LindaMarie Santiago

1. How does a crisis management team approach return to office?

VMware's Global Crisis Management Team (CMT)

- Asked to join it in January, Pre-COVID
- Consists of ~35 people, cross-functional with most Company departments represented
- Has Chief Medical Officer on extended staff (consultant)

VMware planning three-stage program (with possible fourth stage)

- Triage - get everyone working at home (had already done advanced planning) – Phase 1
- Return to Office (RTO) – Phase 2
- A new normal (not sure of timing) – Phase 3
- Plan B should be developed to possibly have to return to work from home if health conditions/spread of virus resumes or resurfaces

2. What lessons have you learned along the way?

Value of open and frequent communication

- People are scared/fearful because they don't know what to expect
- Crafting messages in partnership with Communications and PR group to help employees understand what to expect

RTO planning

- ~160 sites globally – 35k people
- Many levels of planning for various audiences being addressed
- Consistent global messaging is key with regional, local and business-unit specific nuances, where appropriate

Creating play books for larger sites

- Deep dive so employees know what to expect / set expectations
- Signage
- Paths of travel
- Health checklist
- Wellness self-assessment
- Temperature checks – not sure (may be regionally required) - still evaluating
- Social distancing protocols

Voluntary RTO

- Voluntary choice to RTO; not a requirement
- Some will have extenuating circumstances
 - Caring for children or parents
 - Personal health
 - Individual circumstances are all different

Staggered openings with phases

- Planning for start assuming ~ 30% of workforce may return
- Gradually increasing over time as confidence builds (weeks/months)
- Flexibility key to address what's happening in a particular week or month
- Many plan iterations

Final thoughts - professional and personal

- What we do to matters
- What makes employees want to return is a feeling of psychological, emotional and physical safety
- How we communicate is really important to help people feel safe
- Uncertainty is the new certainty – get used to it, adapt, innovate!
- We've got this!
- Hopefully we will be changed from the extended practice of making behavioral choices for the greater good. And, maybe we will discover miraculous changes in our outer lives when we nourish the inner one

REBOARDING – Roy Abernathy

Observations

- Seeing 20% on boarding in Asia
- Predicts things will look more like before COVID than we think
- Polls are showing we are getting good at it work from home
- First 90 days will be rough
- Mass Transit is number one issue especially in Europe, Asia and US
 - China back to 40% ridership

How are clients thinking through the process?

First step – Develop internal strategy

- Evaluating who needs to come in
- Revising density
- Creating protocols
- Procuring PPE - masks and wipes
 - Hindered supply chain – taking up to 6 weeks
 - Make sure to get the right products

Second step – Conversations with landlord

- China and parts of Asia – very directed
- U.S. and parts of Europe having to determine and policies and procedures
- Biggest debate is elevators

Third step – Communication, change management, empathy, understanding

- Employees or relatives may have been exposed
- Childcare needs
- Client quote - “We are having to learn how to live at work”

Q & A

Will testing become a corporate practice?

Donaldson

- Not planning for testing right now – tests unavailable
- Will create educational health tool and self-screening
- May take temperatures

Abernathy

- Will begin to see testing capacity begin to ramp up significantly next week

How will you handle food and coffee service?

Santiago

- Cafés open
 - But, limited to box lunches ordered online
 - Remove seating
- Breakrooms open
 - May have attendant
 - Limited services
 - Issuing gloves to people for high touch surfaces (coffee pots, beverage coolers, etc.)
 - Limited beverages and snacks (individually wrapped)

What result will working from home have on reducing real estate portfolios?

Heistand

- Companies are looking at the impact to their portfolio / Doesn't see many rushing to make decisions right now
- Depends the company its location and type
- Sees a reimagining of general office space
 - Predicts service providers will be needed in the coming months in re-imagining the workplace

Abernathy

- See reductions long term
- Lease language to include more options to expand and contract

How are you handling shuttles to and around the campus?

Santiago

- Short term will forgo shuttles
- Possibly look at reimbursing commute via alternative methods

Donaldson

- Only place they have shuttles is in India
- Yet to decide if they will run them short term
- Will need cleaning protocols once they start running

Are you having your staff from other regions participating in the U.S. strategy planning?

Heistand

- Absolutely!

- Meeting as global team twice a week and share best practices

Are you using density trackers? What other technologies do you see being implemented?

Santiago

- Focused on people and flow rather than density trackers
- Will be using badge info gathering and data review

Heistand

- Using Serraview space allocation tool to:
 - First stage - identify capacity for each site
 - Second stage – desk reservations – can see impact on social distancing
- Tracking - privacy laws will dictate what can be done by country

Donaldson

- No tool that does it all
- First phase will get list approved people and plot on map

Abernathy

- Will see technologies explode over next few months
- Testing an AI tool that rides on a thermal camera
 - Screens up to 30k per day and can do crowds
 - Measures bio metrics

What are you doing with MEP systems?

Donaldson

- Has MERV 13 systems in buildings they control
- Will increase replacement cycle and cleaning process
- Increase amount of fresh air intake
- Will be challenging as temps increase during Summer months

Heistand

- What Barbara said!

What are you doing with conference room usage / occupancy numbers?

Donaldson

- Limiting occupancy
- Sectioning off section of tables
- Limiting number of chairs

Heistand

- Reducing access to collaboration spaces
- Reducing/Removing seating in cafes

Given the supply chain disruption – are you considering made in U.S.?

Donaldson

- Trying to get them wherever we can
- Monitoring quality

Heistand

- With many companies, goal to purchase from local/in country partners
- Keeping a sustainability mindset when making decisions

How much will protocols deter some from returning?

Donaldson

- Letting people opt into coming to office
- Asking them to come in only if unproductive at home
- Will probably have face masks for use mostly in common areas
- Expects to see will be limited number returning in the beginning

Heistand

- Thinks it will be different by city
- Managing by exception – what critical business functions can't be done at home
- Companies who are in urban cities, will be thinking about public transit –

What is your opening date prediction?

Donaldson

- Americas and South Asia – June 1st
- Europe - May 8th