

The Post-COVID Workplace

4 Strategies for Reopening Safely



Summary: As we continue to grapple with the challenging process of safely reopening American society, the future of the workplace remains uncertain. Companies are questioning the status-quo of high-density open-floorplan offices which have proven to be hotbeds for the spread of illnesses. The way things were in office layouts is certain to be a thing of the past. We must take deliberate action to make our workplaces safer places to be. Portable power and UV disinfection technology have emerged as keystones in the process of reimagining the post COVID workplace to better protect the health and safety of our workers and employees.

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4 Strategies for Reopening Safely

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What Will It Take to Return to Work?

As America continues to grapple with the challenging process of safely reopening society, the future of the workplace remains up in the air. After months of many jobs operating remotely, and the risk of infection still of great concern, it is uncertain how and when we will return to the office.

Many companies have already committed to work remotely indefinitely, due to the saving in cost that comes from ditching brick and mortar. In the coming years, we will witness a general transition toward more flexible working arrangements, with far less dependence on in-person working and high-density office buildings.

However, for many, working remotely is not an option, and for others still, in person collaboration is an essential aspect of company culture and productivity that cannot be abandoned so easily. So therefore, we must consider what changes must be made to the post COVID workplace to protect the health and safety of workers and employees.



A quarantine-friendly office featuring enclosed desks and protective masks | Property of the New York Times

Depending on the industry and business type, the post-COVID workplace may require rearranging office layouts, updating office infrastructure, allowing for greater flexibility for employees, increasing sanitary measures, and so on.

One thing is certain, however, companies are questioning the status-quo of high-density open-floorplan offices which have proven to be hotbeds for the spread of illnesses. The way things were in office layouts is certain to be a thing of the past.

History of the Open Floorplan:

The Coronavirus pandemic will [mark the conclusion](#) of a 30-year trend in office design toward higher and higher density workplaces with a focus on shared spaces and open-floorplans.

Over the last few decades, partitioned cubicles have been replaced with communal elbow-to-elbow workbenches, lounge areas, and in-house coffee bars. [This transition](#) to the communal workspace favored fun and collaboration for employees in the name of increasing creativity, productivity, and enjoyment of work.

The open floorplan model found its greatest proponents in the Silicon Valley tech giants. Companies such as Facebook and Google popularized this innovative model of working. At the headquarters of these two tech giants, along with most of their competitors, you would find thousands of employees working in close proximity to each other, theoretically allowing for greater collaboration and creativity.

The move toward high-density workspaces was also economically advantageous for employers. With rising property costs in metropolitan areas and a desire to shave costs, executives crammed more and more workers into less space, foregoing private offices and enclosed cubicles for shared desks and face-to-face workbenches.

Based on this new model pioneered by Silicon Valley, co-working businesses such as WeWork sought to commercialize the popularity of the high-density workplace by renting out individual desks in communal office spaces.

WeWork, which was incentivized to fit as many people into their offices as possible, sold their business model on the allure of a collaborative and energetic workplace.

WeWork's former creative director, Justin Capuco, [told Wired in 2018](#), "We'll create purposeful points of density...It sounds funny, but we want our members to have that sort of proximity."

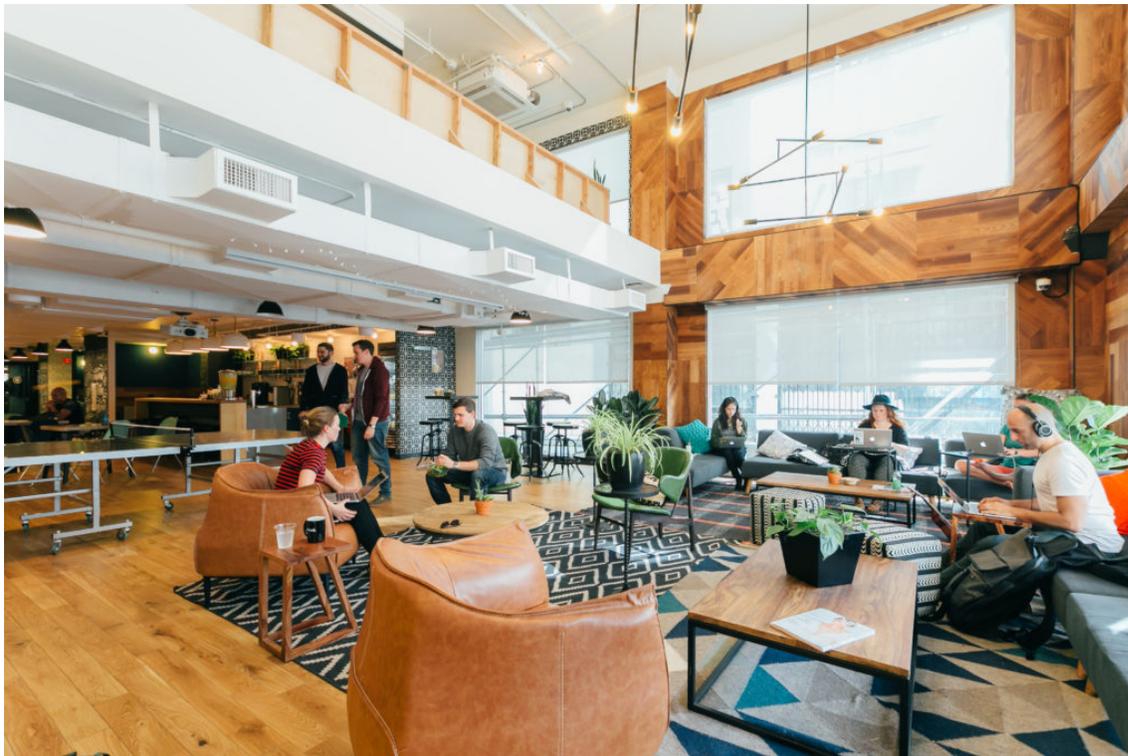
This proximity was realized across most sectors of the economy. According to JLL's 2020 Occupancy Benchmarking Report, the average office space per seat in North America declined by 14.3% to 195.6 square feet between 2018 and 2019 alone.

Regardless of the reasoning for these changes in office layout, the modern workplace has become a perfect storm for the spread of germs and bacteria. In confined spaces that lack physical barriers between employees, sneezes and coughs can travel uninterrupted, infecting possibly dozens of coworkers at once.

The high-density layout of modern offices along with the prevalence of shared amenities and regular contact with coworkers has made the workplace a highly susceptible location for contracting diseases such as COVID-19.

Bacteria have been found to spread quickly throughout offices particularly as it lingers on hard to clean surfaces such as keyboards and phone screens.

Many solutions are being considered as to how we might return to work safely and confidently. Some feel that this period will require trial and error, yet the fact remains, the status quo of how business was conducted will no longer cut it. The post COVID workplace will be fundamentally transformed.



A WeWork Space features fun collaborative shared workspaces which may be a thing of the past.

Post-COVID Workplace Strategies

1. Staggering Schedules:

The first step that companies are considering for the post-COVID workplace is simply to reduce the number of employees in an office at one time.

Businesses are considering staggering the schedules of employees so that each individual comes into the office two or three times per week. This would reduce the number of people in the office at least by half, resulting in far less crowding and contact with people.

This creates a scenario in which employees are operating in a transitional state between working from home and working in the office. While this allows employers to reduce the occupancy of their offices, it would require workers to be fluid and adaptable in their work habits.

ChargeTech [portable power](#) units such as the [40K unit](#) allow workers to navigate this transitional status with ease. With portable power technology, your power source is as mobile as you are, meaning that you could transition from your home office to your physical office without having to rearrange or reconstruct your setup.

It is certain that workers will need to be more self-reliant for power and technological needs since traditional power outlets are high-touch points of conjunction in public places where bacteria may be concentrated.

ChargeTech's [portable power](#) units allow people to access an adequate source of power without relying on shared spaces and traditional overcrowded work zones.

The post-COVID workplace will be defined by flexibility as we find solutions to the challenges which now face us. Portable power allows for such flexibility as we can access power and work from any place which is deemed safe.



Facebook's Silicon Valley Headquarters which pioneered the open-floorplan office.

2. Social Distancing in the Post-COVID Workplace:

Reducing the number of people in an office by staggering schedules and working partially from home will allow offices to spread out their workstations and desks to comply with social distancing guidelines.

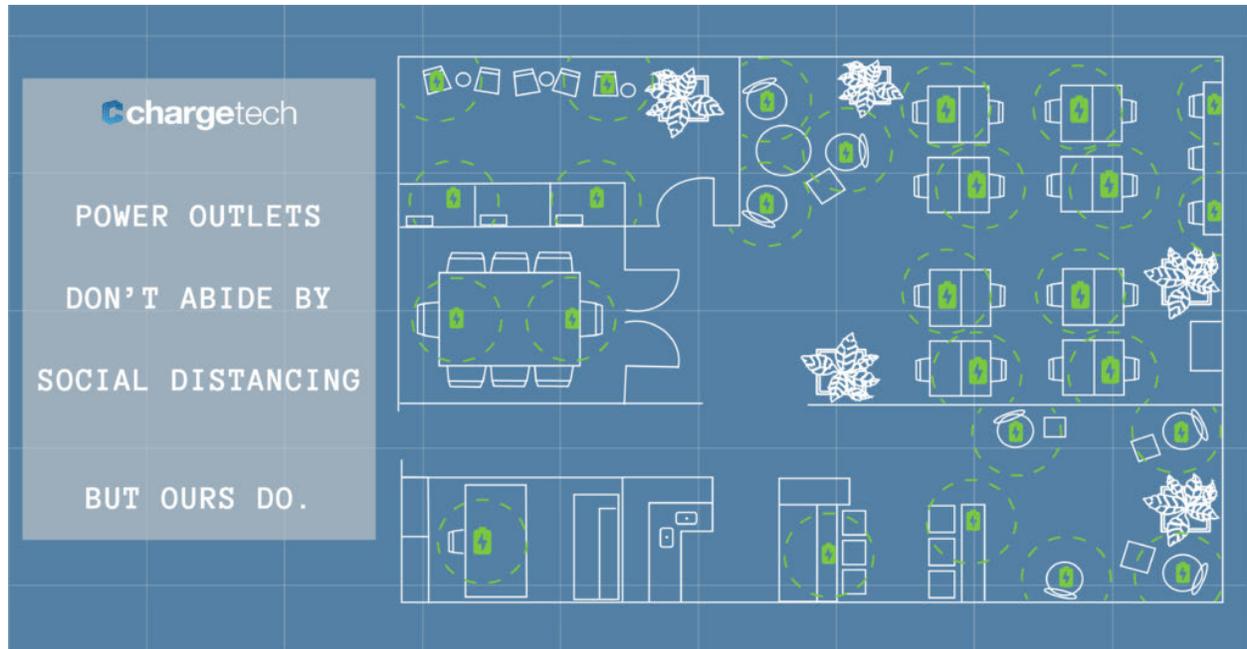
Offices which previously had several workers in one area will be required to spread out their workstations with adequate spacing and protective barriers between them.

In many cases, companies are taking this time to reorganize their office layouts by physically removing desks, constructing protective barriers, reverting to cubicle-style offices, or simply providing six feet of space in between desks which were formerly in closer proximity to each other.

Often, the existing power outlets and grids do not allow for this type of reconfiguration without substantial electrical work or cumbersome extension cords protruding into walkways and across surfaces.

ChargeTech [portable power units](#) allow employees to access up to [125mAh of battery power](#) in one compact unit to power their devices from a social distancing compliant location without relying on existing plugs and power outlets.

These personal power products allow for much greater flexibility on behalf of the employer to rearrange and reconfigure their office with ease and provide the employee peace of mind to work without interruption from wherever they please without exposing themselves to undue risk of exposure.



ChargeTech Portable Power Solutions for the Post-COVID Workplace

In some cases, making the workplace compliant with social distancing does not require rearranging or reconstructing the floorplan but simply designating communal spaces as personal work areas.

In such scenarios, employees could set up on counters or in conference rooms which were previously used for other purposes to work in isolation away from overcrowded shared desks. To transform a café or a lounge area into a private workspace, all that is required is a reliable and adequate source of power.

ChargeTech portable power units allow computers and personal electronic devices to operate all-day long in areas that were previously used for other purposes. The simple addition of power units can make an office compliant with social distancing as they allow employees to spread out with ease.

3. UV Light & Sanitation:

Perhaps the most obvious response to the coronavirus outbreak is considering how we improve sanitation practices and technology to reduce the spread of bacteria and viruses in public areas such as offices.

All public spaces are responding to this health crisis with increased regularity and intensity of cleaning and disinfecting practices.

For Example, [The New York Subway](#) and Stock Exchange have shut down in recent months for the first time in their entire histories to be professionally deep cleaned.

People are relying on anti-bacterial hand sanitizer more than ever and heightened attention has been placed on anti-bacterial materials such as copper and silver as potential solutions to mitigate the spread of diseases.

Significant interest has been placed on UV light technology which is already widely used to kill bacteria and microorganisms. UV light is distinguished as a particularly essential component of adapting workplaces of all kinds in response to the Coronavirus pandemic because of the efficiency and effectiveness with which it can clean surfaces.

ChargeTech offers four sizes of [UV light equipped charging carts](#). The 10 Bay, 20 bay, 30 bay, and 40 bay units provide AC and USB charging capacity to simultaneously clean and charge electronic devices of all kinds including laptops, cellphones, tablets, and scanners.

It is well known that electronic surfaces are often the most contaminated areas in a home or office due to the high-touch nature of their design and the difficulty of cleaning electronic units with soap, water, and liquid disinfectants. UV light has proven to be the preferred method for cleaning such surfaces.

Not only is UV light highly effective at cleaning any surface in less than five minutes, but it can safely clean sensitive technological surfaces that may be damaged by liquid cleaning products.

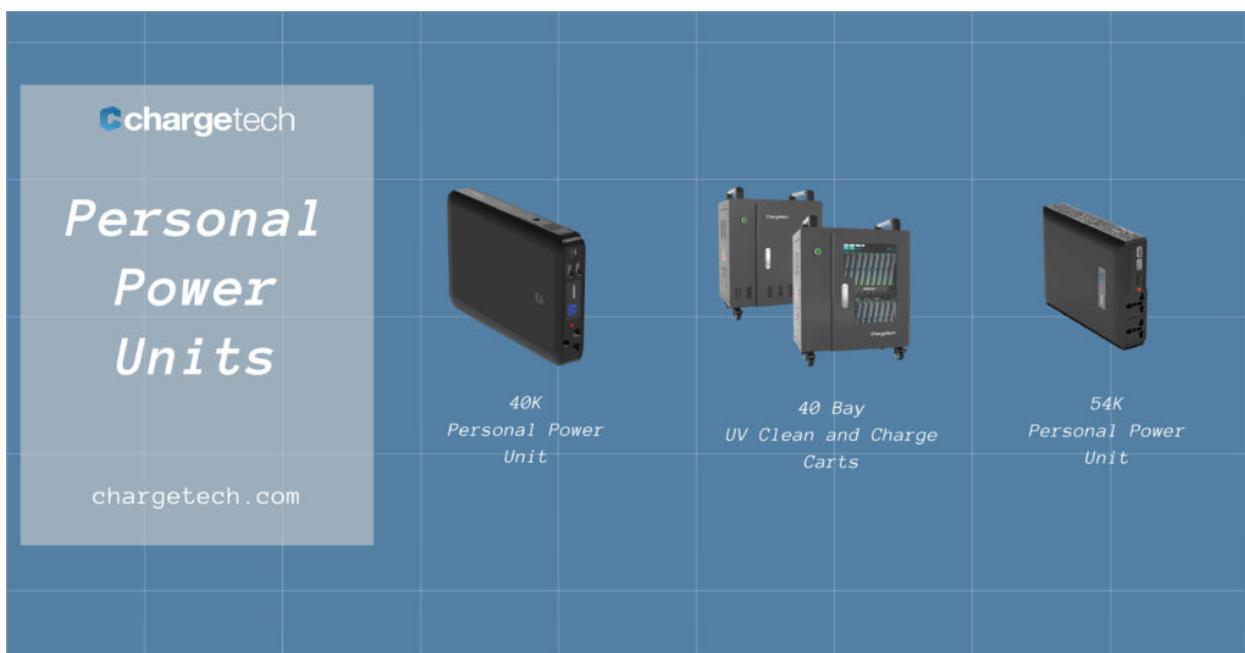
Now more than ever, ChargeTech customers are relying on our [UV Clean and Charge Carts](#) to keep their employees safe and their technology clean.

Our carts are currently utilized in grocery stores, hospitals, K-12 schools, universities, libraries, and businesses of all types and sizes.

The utility of UV carts goes beyond office workers. Many businesses in retail, hospitality, and service industries utilize electronic devices for scanning and processing materials. For example, nurses work extensively with tablets, and servers use electronic pinpads to take and record orders.

These electronic devices often go uncleaned and can be hotbeds for spreading germs and bacteria.

Our clients in the hospitality and retail sectors are already relying on ChargeTech UV light products to clean such devices. With ChargeTech's UV Clean and Charge Carts, any device can be cleaned and charged in secure portable locations.



ChargeTech's Suite of Portable Power and Sanitation Solutions for the Post-COVID Workplace

4. Infrastructure Changes:

The final class of changes to make the post-COVID workplace cleaner and safer from the spread of bacteria and viruses are infrastructural. This pertains to the design and implementation of automatic doors and appliances along with improved heating, cooling, and airflow.

When weather allows, businesses and offices are moving as much of their operations outside as possible. Many restaurants are allowing for only outdoor seating and other businesses are holding meetings outside.

This is because the risk of catching illnesses from others is much lower in open spaces. [It has been shown](#) that long-term confinement in enclosed areas with poor circulation greatly increases the risk of infection.

[Dr. Marty Makary](#), a surgeon and a professor of health policy at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, recommends that we move any personal or professional activities outside which can be conducted in fresh air to reduce the risk of transmitting diseases.

For companies that are able to [move part of their operation outside](#), [ChargeTech portable power](#) units allow for much greater flexibility and mobility to work and operate appliances outside for long durations of time.



Working outside reduces the risk of COVID transmission. ChargeTech 125K Portable Power Unit.

Our [40K](#), [54K](#), and [125K](#) units are perfectly suited for working outdoors and have been used by ChargeTech customers in this capacity for years. California-based IT professional [Mitch Garvis](#) has lauded the [ChargeTech 27K unit](#) for allowing him to work outside uninterrupted at home or on the road.

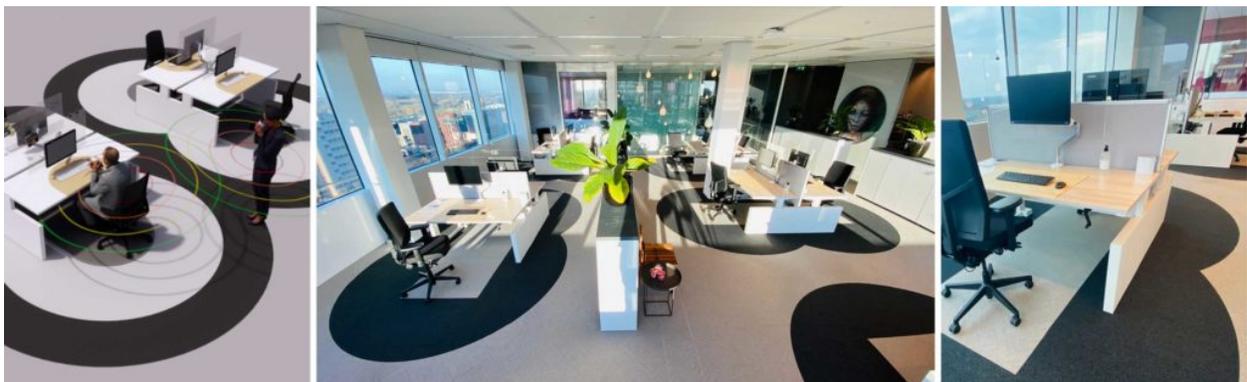
Stagnant air due to poor circulation has been shown to hold the virus airborne for up to 20 minutes at a time, greatly increasing the risk of transmission in crowded indoor

spaces. The post-COVID workplace must take these elements into consideration to ensure that there is constant movement of air in and out of the building.

Designers are inventing other solutions that allow workers to maintain social distancing guidelines even after they return to work.

Architecture design and real estate firm [Cushman & Wakefield](#) is experimenting with infrastructure adaptations such as six-foot circles on the floor around desks to denote social distance guidelines and other placards encouraging unidirectional foot traffic movement.

Cushman & Wakefield encourage that everyone walks around the office space in a clockwise direction to minimize close encounters and contact with other people. If adopted broadly, these practices could protect the health and wellbeing of employees as we return to work.



Cushman & Wakefield's 6 Feet Office Concept

The Road Ahead

Returning to normalcy in the post-COVID workplace will be a long and challenging path. The workplace of the future will look very different from the one we are used to.

However, there are steps that we can all take today to better prepare ourselves and protect our employees. ChargeTech is dedicated to helping our customers find solutions and innovations to meet these challenges.

We look forward to working with our clients, customers, and manufacturers to continue making life at home and at work a safer and easier endeavor.

View the ChargeTech [website](#) today to explore our solutions for the post-COVID workplace from portable power to UV light sanitation, or [speak directly](#) to a team

member today to explore solutions for yourself or your business to return to work quickly and safely.

Get in touch with a ChargeTech team member today
at chargetech.com/quote