



Industry Insights

Reshaping modern workplaces to face the new normal

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



N E T I A



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Reshaping modern workplaces to face the new normal

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Intro

Welcome to the new normal.

As you redefine the workplace, your organisation will face new challenges. With the power of proptech at your disposal, you will be able to address safety, productivity, and employee wellbeing, in three highly-plausible post-pandemic scenarios.

1. **Return to offices** - the new normal
2. **Hybrid work models** - flexible setups
3. **Remote-only work** - digital-only

Whichever path you take, this guide will share insights on technology and policies to keep your company secure and prepared for the challenges ahead.



State of PropTech

Foreword

If you're one of millions of office workers across the world – you'll find that your workplace has changed. Many of us have brought our offices home back in March 2020, believing it to be a temporary measure. Remote work – once a pipedream – has since become the new normal. And as the saying goes, be careful what you wish for!



While statistics suggest most of us wish to stay home (according to a recent Gallup poll, 2 out of 3 office employees actually prefer the home office), many of us discovered that, yes, remote work is great, but as a choice. It's rewarding but demanding. Without the right amenities and mental strength, it can even be daunting.

Meanwhile, it's clear that the corporate world has noticed and started counting potential savings. Recent findings by Cushman & Wakefield estimate a drop of nearly 215 million m2 in office space across Europe and North America.

As a result, we're seeing a new trend: hybrid work, a blend of both office work and mobility made to suit individual preferences while optimising resources. This change has vast consequences: the 'heart' of our workplace moved from the physical to the online.

The real workplace is now digital, whereas offices are mere spaces, where one works.

The question is – what should your company do? The simple answer – adjust.

Just like people, no two organisations are the same, and your path will have to be your own. But one thing is certain: The New Normal is impossible without effective adoption of smart technologies.

Together with our great partners, we have gathered insights and inspirations to help get you ready for the much-awaited day when office spaces once again fill with chatter and laughter.

Welcome to a brand-new decade of Workplace as a Service.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Ratajczak", written in a cursive style.

Jacek Ratajczak
Chief Executive Officer

Market Assessment: 3 Scenarios

Return to Offices

Workers have indicated growing discontent with working from home, citing inadequate facilities, poor ergonomics, and limited connectivity to the workplace community.

Such difficulties have encouraged more than **1 out of 3 workers** to begin their return to the office, according to separate surveys carried out by Gallup and PwC. These realities are worsened by an apparent loss of the work-life balance, partly caused by interferences of home life within the workday. This return will nonetheless be gradual, with a full-capacity return to the office predicted **by 2025**.

A decrease in the number of pre-crisis employees entering the office has also prompted companies to rethink their office space's total size. Cushman & Wakefield estimate a reduction of **215 million square metres** of commercial real estate across Europe and North America during 2020 alone.



Market Assessment: 3 Scenarios

Hybrid Work

According to the NTT Intelligent Workplace Report, **87% of surveyed C-level managers** plan a similar return to the office, but with a different approach to pre-pandemic norms. Employees will also continue to take advantage of hybrid work modes.

JLL surveyed office employees, indicating a **73% preference** for flexible work, among workers within the same survey. A near-unanimous group of workers also highlighted the importance of hybrid work infrastructure. This points to the need for management to design and implement workplaces to support these evolving habits.



PwC findings indicate that employers and employees both enjoy higher levels of remote work productivity throughout 2020, suggesting a planned continuation of hybrid policies. These claims support Cushman & Wakefield's findings, which estimate higher percentages of hybrid worker activity within organisations. These discoveries show a rise from pre-pandemic levels of **34%, to at least 50% between 2020, and 2025.**

Market Assessment: 3 Scenarios

Remote Work

According to Cushman & Wakefield's estimates, the number of permanent remote employees surveyed grew **from 5% to 10%** and is expected to rise beyond 2025.

Forecasts carried out by the Urban Land Institute suggest the number of remote employees will continue to double when bearing in mind work from home. Other remote locations, such as co-working, or mobile workplaces, can expect a **rise of 67%**.

According to ULI, these forecasts indicate growing popularity of permanent working arrangements, as well as a shift in workplace priorities towards: managing extra-office supply chains, addressing travel demands, and maintaining a cohesive working culture throughout the virtual environment.



Scenario 1

Welcome Back to the Office



The world has changed, leaving companies to transform the way we work entirely. Workplaces face many challenges – but with many more new advantages. However, the main challenge for the new office is a logistical one. New supply chains and a host of safety measures have reduced the standard concepts of office work a thing of the past.

Office managers must now direct their attention to brand new procedures, sanitary guidelines, and evolving employee demands. Much of these can be credited to legal requirements – whereas some, such as holistic or lifestyle-based changes – are based on keeping up with workplace trends.

Fewer employees, more safety

The real estate market faces changes; however, offices will again replenish with workers. As this happens, companies will need to anticipate fewer employees. When this happens, your duty as a manager will be a safe distribution strategy. Proptech solutions can help users locate one another and ensure office populations remain in capacity and arrange safely.

- **What would this office look like?**
- **How many people can occupy a given space?**
- **Will people safely comply with distancing rules?**

A concept proposed by Cushman & Wakefield is the Six-Foot Office, with social distancing integrated throughout the facility. According to a related study by the Urban Land Institute, companies are expected to place greater emphasis on maintaining a high-quality, tailor-made workspace.



Thoughts behind redesigning a Safer Space

Physical contact is practically unavoidable in a typical workday. We engage with buttons, doorknobs, light switches, and other accessories. For that reason, a typical office floor can feature many utilities and services, which would require recalibration.



Social distancing is another essential measure and is the first line of defence in avoiding direct physical contact. Physical barriers are also one of the most basic, yet practical features.

Well-ventilated areas help prevent the spread of infection, whereas strategically positioned hygiene stations can keep employees safe. A proptech app can help your organisation to plan for increased periods of ventilation during peak capacity periods.

Hygiene, precaution, disinfection

Property management systems can carry out this function, informing admins of the vacated space. The application would then automatically notify a cleaner – to schedule disinfection within the next office cleaning cycle.

Air quality has been an increasingly important issue within large cities, with Covid-19 underlining the need for air filtration within shared spaces. Offices will be expected to maintain smart air conditioning within buildings, as is commonly used on aeroplanes.

Your workplace will need to adopt a comprehensive approach to sanitation. Once an employee clears a space, it will be management's responsibility to ensure an area is ready for safe use for the next employee.



Social Distancing

Management would also need to mind the spaces between office workers to ensure the satisfaction of guidelines. Achieving the necessary conditions will help businesses avoid monetary fines. When implementing social distancing measures, ensure your organisation remains legally compliant, by setting correct distances and limiting persons within spaces. Depending on your office and jurisdiction location, this can range **from 1 to up to 3 metres**.



Guidelines issued by the United Kingdom Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy emphasise the need to apply these measures to all aspects of office life. For example, in following these guidelines, BBC headquarters has imposed staff limits in transit areas such as lobbies and corridors.

Contactless Office Spaces

Employees and managers can expect a continuation of a contactless workplace to keep up with raised hygiene standards.

These changes were already gradually implemented, thanks to the productivity benefits of these technologies. What sped up the need for change were the pandemic's sudden effects and the uptick in demand for sanitary environments.

Removing unnecessary obstacles from movement and navigation are vital measures to ensure safe interactions. Automatic doors, pre-programmed lifts, and access points can work in-hand with proptech solutions to deliver tenants directly to their floors or building sectors.



Secure Office Checklist

As employees return to your office, your challenge will be to ensure an extensive, and far-reaching sanitary policy. A coordinated approach should remind employees to support and comply with your initiatives.

Consult the following checklist, which offers actionable initiatives and guiding questions for office managers to keep up-to-date with sanitary regimes.

STEP ONE

Preparing the Building

▶ Heating, Ventilation, and Air-Conditioning

- ▷ Are filtration systems in-place?
- ▷ Which personnel have access to equipment and control panels?

▶ Cleaning and Sanitation

- ▷ Which materials do you use to sanitise facilities?
- ▷ When do you approve maintenance crews?
- ▷ Who is responsible for ensuring compliance?

Landlords

Building Management

Tenants

▶ Compliance

- ▷ Who is responsible for carrying out facility inspections?
- ▷ Are maintenance and repairs carried out on schedule?
- ▷ Which **legal guidelines** are you required to follow?

Local Government Level

National Level

- ▷ Which suggested guidelines does your organisation follow?

World Health Organisation

▶ Communication

- ▶ Digital media: has your organisation adequately informed employees and partners?

Email Campaigns

SMS Notifications

Mobile Proptech Apps

- ▶ In-office media: has your organisation provided on-site information for personnel?

Clear signage

Floor markers

Direct instructions:

- *'No touching.'*
- *'Maintain X metres apart.'*

Indirect reminders:

- *'If feeling the following symptoms: ...'*
- *'Keep non-essential work home.'*

STEP TWO

Preparing the Workforce

▶ Personal Health and Safety

- ▶ Which employees are most at risk?
- ▶ Have staff identified for health risks?

▶ Employee readiness

- ▶ Is it possible to assign employees into categories?
 - Essential workers
 - Non-essential workers

▶ Employee Return Logistics

- ▶ How will you initiate employee returns?
 - Phased return - only certain groups may enter the space.
 - Complete return of employees - re-entry for the entire staff
 - *Permanent*
 - *Rotating basis*
- ▶ How will you communicate this information?
- ▶ Does car parking have available capacity?

STEP THREE

Hygiene and Access Controls

▶ Personnel Authorisation

- ▷ Which office areas can workers access?
Will you assign authorised access zones?
Are spaces prepared for authorised personnel?

▶ Restricted access zones

- ▷ Are spaces prepared for non-resident persons?
Deliveries
Visitors

▶ Safe Checkpoints

- ▷ Does your facility provide temperature screening?
Sanitiser & Clean Wipes
Hand-washing areas
Material disinfection

STEP FOUR

Social Distancing Measures

▶ Physical Barriers

- ▷ What kinds of barriers are in place?
Plexiglass
Dividers in hot-desking areas

▶ Employee Return Logistics

- ▷ Does your workplace contain marked standing areas?
Lift waiting areas
Meeting and ad-hoc assembly areas
- ▷ What measures do you apply to common areas?
Rotating schedules



STEP FIVE

Touch Point Removal

▶ Devices

- ▶ Which devices need to be deactivated?
 - Touch screens
 - Buttons
 - Panels
- ▶ Which devices will require new forms of input?
 - Installing voice controls
 - Motion activation
 - Gesture controls

▶ People and Materiel

- ▶ Which meetings are non-essential?
- ▶ Where are the waste disposal points?
 - Gloves, masks, wipes
 - Pens, paper, stationery



STEP SIX

Follow Up Communication

▶ Changing Circumstances

- ▶ When will you inform employees of:
 - Increased restrictions
 - Relaxed restrictions
- ▶ How will you communicate these changes?
- ▶ Updated work policies

Commuting

Many people will change the way they travel to and from the office. Some will change their mode of transport, whereas some will choose to travel the path of least resistance. As a result, employees may now also choose to walk or cycle to work.

Public transport was once an adequate substitute for personal vehicles, yet today, the sanitary risks will shift employees' preferences back to cars. These reasons will also mean drivers will likely resist carpooling their vehicle, resulting in more vehicles on the road. The consequences of this will be even greater uses of office parking facilities.



A proptech system can be instrumental in assisting transportation facilities.

Parking reservation systems help allocate space by allowing users to pre-reserve spaces. Select users may enjoy priority within the system, based for example, on their status.

This same system must also 'close the loop' when a user finishes using a space. As is common in high-traffic areas, a newly available place should re-enter the database as soon as possible. IoT integrations combining motion sensors and user input will share the most current parking information.

Walkability

Considering these changing modes of commuting, users have begun to assess the level of ease of walking to essential destinations, such as offices. But as cities begin to embrace pedestrian-friendly policies, real estate should be aware of the potential opportunities. Embracing new worker behaviours with digital solutions must focus on enterprises, as they champion the '15-minute' commute concept.



Proptech solutions already feature a range of communications and connectivity tools. Based on this, users can use navigation assistants to, from, and within office campuses. Such technologies should reflect on co-working or shared office spaces as well.

This navigation function used to better-assist employees and visitors. Using integrated sensors, an app user could find their way to the office or even a specific room. Meeting planners can integrate into the concept of **15-minute cities** by providing participants suggested conference sites within a 15-minute radius.

Scenario 2

Hybrid Working

The realities of Covid-19 have redesigned our interactions with the office beyond recognition. Many businesses have successfully shifted towards functions from remote settings. In contrast, others indicate that they prefer a mixed approach instead of a completely remote model.

According to PWC, most surveyed company executives agree for a flexible approach, with 68% still agreeing to at least three days of in-office work per week.

There are benefits to this, such as awarding freedoms and comforts and maintaining proactive compliance with health regulations. New technologies must fill the information gap between employees and their workplace to ease users into the hybrid working model.



The Shrinking Office

Due to a fall in demand for office space, workplace square footage can be expected to downscale to reflect lower staff numbers. Gallup polling put this figure at **nearly 2 out of 3 of all office employees** in the United States alone. The cause has been due to COVID-19 restrictions, but can now be credited to changing behaviours.

Despite societal restrictions in place across Europe and North America, a sizeable group of workers still wish to return to the office. According to separate findings by Gallup and PwC, the total expressing a wish to return to the office is **41% and 32% of surveyed office employees.**

The findings suggest a continuous need for office infrastructure. A PwC survey has indicated a need for better hardware and equipment, citing it as a leading requirement for returning employees. The challenge will be for you to accommodate for these needs, and make modifications to your properties' size and scale.

Scaling Down

Your optional staff level may vary, but your objective as an office manager will continue unchanged. This will be to attain maximum possible value from Commercial Real Estate spaces. According to MapIQ, an office organisation consultancy, hot desk use, for instance, will need to shrink by **up to 43%.**

The key will be to look toward proptech modules that can calculate office capacity based on company metrics - such as productivity, official regulations, or personnel limits. A spatial analytics application can provide managers with insight into the number of employees within an office campus and offer recommendations.

Hot Desking

While it may require reductions, hot-desking should not be phased out completely. As a feature, it should continue to contribute to your office's future development, as you admit employees' phased returns. You can also deploy property management systems to assist users in making desk and room reservations – without change. Your organisation's policy of social distancing and physical separation must underpin any facility-sharing programme.

One example could be 'programmed' social distancing. Using a hot-desking module, employees who once used to select places closest to people will now choose spots at-distance from other workers. Ideally, that programme would restrict access to adjacent hot desks for safety purposes.



Hot Meeting Rooms

Face to face meetings may continue, but with greater emphasis on safety. Management can enact personnel limits, but technologies will carry the responsibility of enforcement.

Most importantly, reserved rooms must remain out of reach of unauthorised personnel. After completing a meeting, proptech modules can issue automatic notices for disinfection teams to enter the premises and carry out cleaning. Proptech can also control a range of amenities, such as lighting, air-conditioning, and filtration. Here, authorised users can view usage status of utilities. In case of any needed adjustments, they can control them from the comfort of their proptech app.

Access with buildings, lifts, and specific rooms will often require the use of doorknobs, keypads, and other high-contact items. Thanks to the digitisation, it is possible to implement a touchless environment throughout all aspects of the workday.

Redesigning for Collaboration

The offices of today should be workplaces built for everyone – not just the individual. Employees will, of course, continue to rely on offices for concentration work facilities. But as these technologies become increasingly available for home use, they will look towards more significant benefits – collaboration.

Collaborative spaces are essential to ensuring productivity and carrying out quality work. What remains central to the collaborative relationship is a productive workplace. The more users exchange information, the better a company and its employees will carry out activities.

That principle has remained the same, during times of stability, and in times of the new normal. In fact, keeping people ‘on the same page’ is always well-advised. In times of volatility, a consistent message, according to Zonifero, is a cornerstone for a robust office environment.

‘Deep Work’ Spaces

The challenges for employees working from home have highlighted barriers to concentration and ‘deep work’. Whether this is due to children in the home, or shared facilities, many employees welcome a return to the office. That places a new emphasis on the demand for focus facilities.

Associate Director at Cushman & Wakefield, affirms this approach, highlighting the need for distraction-free environments. “I believe that an effective workplace is diverse. With spaces for individual work where you can think and do your job without distraction, with rooms or zones to have both formal and informal meetings, social, and dining spaces.”

Managers should also continue to place importance on special facilities designed to facilitate deep work. These workspaces will become ever-important to new offices but should remain in-line with the demands of workers, such as through enabling confidential conversations, phone calls, or sensitive paperwork.

Re-Building a Sense of Community

Humans are social beings, and despite virtual and physical distances formed between employees, teamwork remains as crucial as ever. Whether in aviation, gastronomy, military, sports, the arts, or software development – a strong team is a bedrock for success.

A key selling point for employees has always been the likes of gyms, kindergartens, and more. But as employees seek to limit their contact, the main drivers for connectivity will be maintaining a community. Managers must ask, why are people here? Ideally, the answer should be to fulfil their objectives whilst remaining comfortable and motivated.

Every employee strives for something: a goal, a monthly KPI, a financial target. Therefore, the facilities implemented need to enforce this. Whilst it represents an abstract concept, even the branding, livery, thematic elements, and office layouts can remind workers of underlying messages and goals.





Office as a Future Benefit

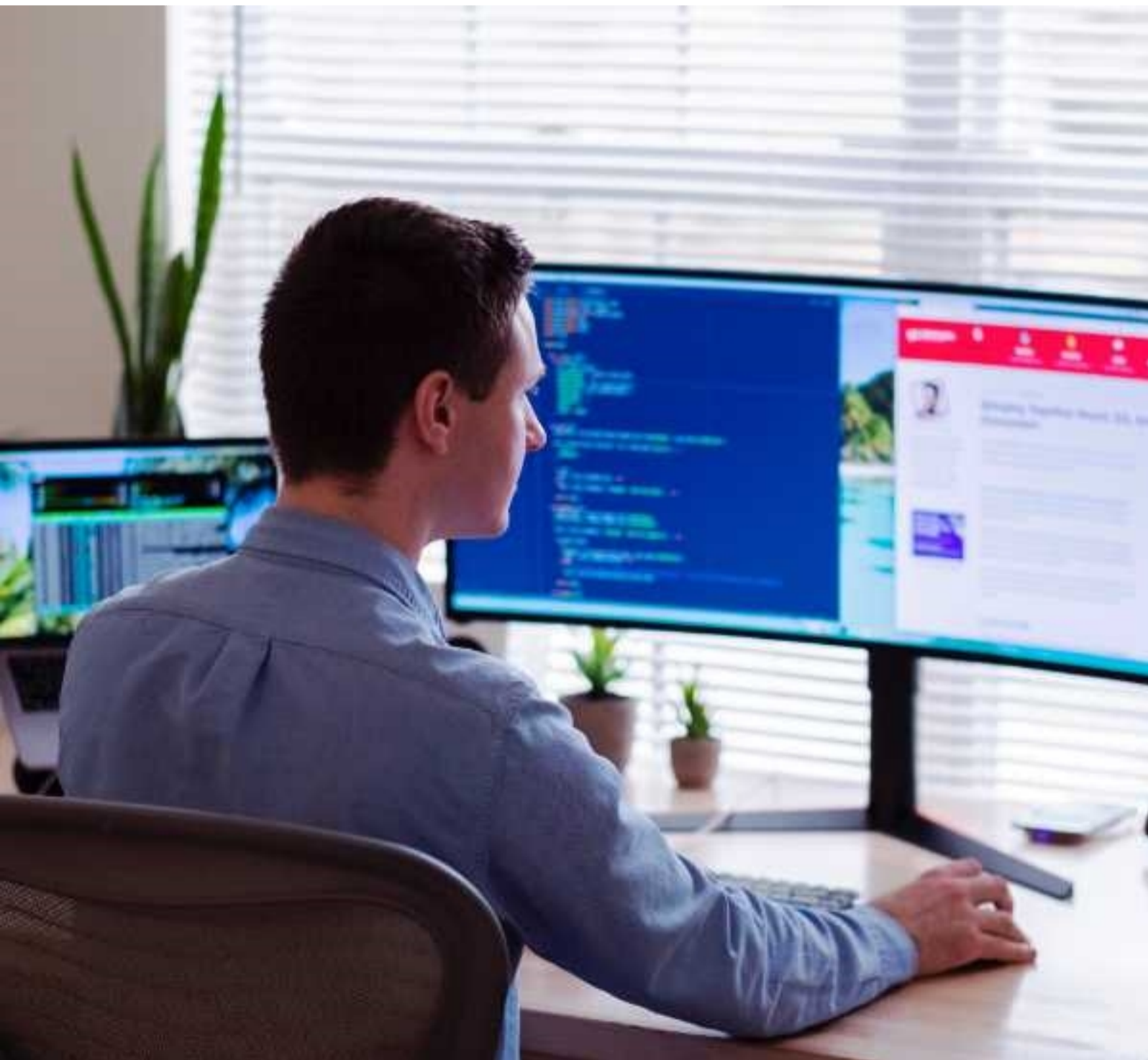
To put it simply – an office is good to have. When the option exists, employees can choose to use it according to their schedule and within a flexible work agreement framework. As companies begin to rethink the idea of maintaining an office, many will continue to retain their property as a matter of prestige.

Some businesses may also move to an online-only model to reduce overheads for rental property. However, the consequence can be a splitting of the market between prestigious ‘office-location’ businesses, and ‘remote-only’ businesses.

As businesses will attract talent, the advantage will fall on companies choosing to keep their commercial property, which can offer office locations as an employee perk. Ultimately, this will have the effect of creating an elite class of company. As economies recover, companies will face a trade-off between maintaining the property or risk compromising their convenience factor in the fallout of the pandemic.

Scenario 3

Work from Anywhere



Once employees moved to online-only settings, many were happy to stay there. Remote working began as a temporary exercise but turned into a real test for multitudes of personnel.

PwC had surveyed employees for their opinions on productivity, indicating **34% of respondents** they're more productive now than before the pandemic.

Employers have taken notice as well. According to a June 2020 survey carried out by PwC, **44% of executives citing** improved productivity in this period. What is most significant about these findings was the growth in worker productivity throughout 2020. When a similar survey by PwC was carried out in December 2020, that figure **grew to 52%**.

Physical and Psychological Challenges

The pain points of remote work are often due to the lack of connection with peers. A study carried out by McKinsey & Company indicates an alarming rise in mental health concerns among **62% of employees surveyed**. Many companies continue to struggle with addressing these issues, resulting in lower motivation and work productivity.

The societal impacts of the pandemic itself must also not be ruled out. As friends and family members face medical or economic consequences of COVID-19, this presents additional strains on workers' wellbeing, who may also become affected. The severity of the crisis can also vary from place to place.

Bearing in mind these concerns, **96% of companies** have earmarked additional mental health resources for employees. Despite these efforts, **less than 20% of employees** reported feeling support from their companies. Communication is a vital tool in crisis times, and management must work to ensure a culture of openness to issues relating to mental, and physical health.

According to Dominika Kowalska, of Cushman & Wakefield, human factors play a large role. "It's crucial to make workstations ergonomic: the screen at the correct height, an ergonomic chair, and preferably a height-adjustable desk. Does everyone work in this kind of environment?" - asks Kowalska.



Maintaining Workplace Relations

Traditional means of contact are highly reliable. A vast range of modern organisations refer to memorandums or memos for making announcements. Email is another popular medium, as are mobile text messages.

The drawbacks of these, however, are due to technical inconsistency. Messages may be misplaced, and depending on network infrastructures, the content may be prone to liabilities. Legacy systems are particularly vulnerable to compromise or cyberattack. A workplace app, combined with property management systems, can provide a consistent and responsive solution.

Location Identification

Many larger offices force employees to locate one another physically. In some instances, these employees can be away from their desks, at an unexpected meeting, or even absent from the office. Zonifero is a popular proptech solution that already exists to help colleagues get connected. The modules used to link users can keep co-workers at safe distances by helping them navigate through workplaces.





Remote Surveys and Feedback

Workplace issues begin silently before growing into unresolved workplace conflicts. Technology should play a larger role in mitigating these issues, even in the digital-only space.

Anonymous surveys are one way to help workers raise concerns, constructively. Management can refer to this tool to help power a more transparent work culture, particularly within the remote environment. Most significantly, this allows for more responsive workplace actions and a better-integrated community.

Contact List Synchronisation

Proptech apps can consolidate contact information to ensure better workplace communication, using data from mailing lists, phone books, and other sources. The result is a one-stop contact database used to set meetings, relay information, book visitors' car spaces, and even arrange for in-meeting refreshments. Use all the information at your disposal to connect with colleagues and employees, from either a desktop or mobile variant of the proptech solution.

Troubleshooting Modules

Malfunctions will happen, remotely, or face-to-face.

Technology can be the gateway to resolving service issues deemed time-consuming. With a property management application, office workers can notify IT teams of software interruptions within the virtual network. This also applies towards resolving maintenance issues within office floors.

FAQ and Onboarding

Every employee should have the same level of access to company information.

A database can improve onboarding and deliver essential materials. With an extensive database, recruits and existing employees can acclimatise to company policy. Management can also share information more transparently.

Secure In-App Messaging

Correspondence between employees should be an effortless but confidential process.

With an in-house messaging programme, users can relay less-official company matters in a familiar interface. To ensure this app acts at its most productive, it must integrate with widely used programmes.

Mobile Notifications

Keep your team informed and, in the loop, regardless of circumstance.

In times of urgency, your app is straightforward and management-friendly. With advanced mobile notifications, you can create alerts regarding company announcements and special procedures. There are multiple operating scenarios, including conference announcements, document view requests, or deadlines.

What Does the Future Hold?

Your organisation faces three scenarios. But whichever path your organisation chooses to take, it will be through digital tools and policies that will keep your employees productive, and tended to throughout their work.

The fact is, proptech can offer your company a way forward through the uncertainties of the post-COVID world. Some people may not need to return to their offices. In contrast, some will be strictly necessary for keeping your company operational. These workers will need the right tools to support their changing habits, and any evolving safety regulations your organisation may face.

New post-COVID functions of technologies should include an effortless transition from their intended purposes. These technologies will change, but the spirit of collaboration will remain the same, and continue to be a focus area for companies seeking to attract talent.

- **Do employees feel they can carry out their duties in a safe environment?**
- **How close are you to achieving pre-crisis levels of outcomes?**
- **Has the solution caused disruptions, or benefits to work?**

In answering these questions, you can assess the viability of your implementation. Proptech applications are far-reaching but should be implemented with your business needs in mind. So, ensure you keep needs at the centre of your implementation plan, as your organisation navigates the post-COVID world.

According to a PwC study, half of the surveyed executives plan to invest in physical spaces which support hybrid working scenarios. This also includes software, such as hot-desking, hot-meeting-room applications, as well as communal office space.

Above all else, adhere to guidelines, protect your assets, and remain proactive. This school of thought will be necessary, as we enter recovery modes, and continue to navigate the new normal. By maintaining the right mindset, your facility, assets, and employees will emerge safer and productive for the future.



Partner's insights

Partner's insights

Diverse Views

To have an understanding behind workplace transformation, consult industry-based knowledge from internationally reputed partners: Microsoft, Netia, Veracomp, COBU, Cushman & Wakefield, Project: People, Proptech Foundation, and CIC.

Be sure to take account of prognoses into trends of new working styles, office functionalities, and pace of expected market changes.

When understanding these evolving behaviours and technological developments, your organisation can expect a heightened awareness of prevailing issues, and gain access to informed decision-making from experts in the sector.

The following chapter combines this knowledge with dedicated insights into the future of remote working, smart offices, and hybrid working models. Your organisation can then take advantage of this experience and knowhow of renowned opinion leaders to widen its scope of understanding of the future of your workplace.

Explore a collection of industry-led market sentiments and opinions, directly from the experts themselves.



NETIA



Partner's insights

Microsoft

Today is when we assure employees that they are the most important to us.

Remote work, irrespective of current difficulties, is the future from which there is no turning back. For years, we have given employees the freedom to choose where and how to work. This is the result of our organisational culture, which includes a process of continuous learning, cooperation in innovation and a respect for diversity and perspectives. The new reality has reaffirmed that we are taking the right direction. Many years of experience in this method of organizing work has eased our adaptation to a 'complete' remote mode.



Working in the cloud now allows you to access data and collaborative apps from anywhere, and on your device. Video conferencing, messaging, file sharing all function to make mobile work convenient, and efficient. However, despite the requirement of remote work today, it is essential to continue in-person work at our offices, so as to carry out one's original job description, creating a certain hybrid between stationary and mobile work.

Moving between these worlds, though, requires a change in habits and a strong digital organisational culture that promotes and rewards trust in employees, encourages flexibility, and builds adaptability. Your success in building this culture will be the result of how work responsibilities, face-to-face relationships, the workspace, and technology all come together.

The key question for business leaders, then, is:

How can technology increase my team's innovative and productive potential, besides wellbeing?

The main challenge here will be to address digital solutions on how they contribute to success at the individual level and across the organization.

This grants us the opportunity to assure employees that they are who matter most – so as to engrain wellbeing into the organizational culture and workflow. Here, the key rests in the role of a leader, whose closeness to people within the distributed work environment can be a model for shaping the positive changes currently transforming our very way of work.



Katarzyna Cymerman

HR Director,
Microsoft Poland





The future of work in digital balance

It starts with a conference of 120 people, then it turns into a conversation with a client in their office, followed by a handshake and return to company headquarters. There, we'd attend team brainstorming sessions in the conference room, before helping ourselves to birthday cakes in the staff kitchen. Back in March 2020, this was our average working day. It was a day filled with conversations, hallways meetings, and friendly smiles.

Overnight, we found ourselves behind computer screens only to attempt recreating exactly the same situations with the help of communication and remote work tools. Online conferences, group calls with foreign customers, corporate brainstorming, and inclusive team meetings with a glass of wine... everything now takes place in front of the computer screen. We were surprised to find that home coffee tasted better than the company's coffee. We've introduced new rituals, ways to get things done, and even keep ourselves entertained. But is this what future jobs are supposed to look like?

As the pandemic progressed, many of us discovered that we could be as productive as before, and in some cases even more so. However, the new situation has created new challenges, forcing us to combine different roles simultaneously – from parent, to partner, to manager. The situation has changed the rules of the game as it enforces new standards. For many people, it turned out that the pressure of combining work and home life has a profound impact on our health and wellbeing. These radical changes put together provide a unique opportunity to reflect and think deeply about the future of the work we want. They lead us to the question of how we can come up with a more rewarding future that considers the wider scope of our lives, not just the hours we spend at work.

An important element of the new way of working are the digital technologies that support people in what they do best: socialization, creativity, inference, ingenuity, emotional intelligence, and more. We can do this if the work models we develop take advantage of the powers of digital technologies, connecting us in time and space, take care of repetitive activities intelligently, provide smart storage of large quantities of information, analyze big data, and model new scenarios.

Interestingly, by creating a human-machine partnership, we are moving towards a future of human-centered work.

These observations influence the evolution of virtual meeting tools themselves. Microsoft has expanded its Teams service to include Together mode, enhancing it with a new Dynamic view option, which on the one hand is designed to improve face-to-face relationships with colleagues, while on the other hand reduces ‘meeting fatigue’. Microsoft has also announced several features that affect employee wellbeing and help prepare for the upcoming workday by consciously ‘disconnecting’ from digital tools in the evening. What’s more is Teams users will have access to specially selected mindfulness and meditation exercises and workshops.



Barbara Michalska

Modern Workplace Business Group Director,
Microsoft Poland



Partner's insights

Netia

The idea of the New Normal is continuously changing among office workers and managers.

'New Normal' is a guiding topic of every video conference, or infrequent socially distant meeting, as offices undergo makeovers with restrictive labelling of desks and chairs. The New Normal is here - and here to stay - well into the future, as it reinvents the workplace.

Companies, which until now have argued against remote work, once-favored direct control over employees. Today, they face surprise at its positive results. Spaces previously adorned with desks now sit idle or have transformed into meeting or workshop venues. When required, employees prefer meeting in convenient locations, suited for purpose, rather than the office. Personnel visits to the office are limited to essential meetings, or short work periods, before returning home to work remotely.



All these new behaviors determine the look of a new workplace and lay the groundwork for office concepts beyond the new post-pandemic reality. To address but also anticipate customer needs, companies must look to future solutions that enable operating and developing business in this landscape.

Telecommunications and ICT services play an increasingly important role in servicing office buildings and tenants, with modern facilities dedicated to this market. A smart building service can complement any building portfolio whereby such solutions allow enterprises to adapt to new challenges and service employees. Within the New Normal, organizations can better support remote work through native, or third-party services. These can include internet access, mobile connectivity, video conferencing, communications hardware, data security and online communication solutions – each optimized for the remote worker.

As the concept of The New Normal evolves, it will be essential to be able to follow diverse employee behaviours and support them in their daily duties. Companies must place an emphasis on the ability to observe and listen, before offering support to a customer's business. As the days of standard solutions draw to a close, it is recommended not to overlook more impactful trends to the pandemic, namely AI and Next-Gen 5G networks, which enable even greater workplace personalization. Highly compelling forecasts, based on existing start-ups, can simulate working in all-virtual environments, where avatars and even artificial intelligence can even replace individuals at meetings!

5G networks will enable augmented reality, which have wide-ranging implications for future jobs. With real-time image superimposition, users can now see, for example, building structures during firefighting operations, navigate machine failure, and more!

We're limited only by imagination!



Janusz Figurski

Head of IoT Solutions,
Netia

N E T I A

Partner's insights

Veracomp

In modern times, the concept of hybrid work has always existed, but so far, dedicated only to a specific group of employees: freelancers, salespersons, or executives. However, today's environment has forced industries to shift gears toward the mainstream.



So, what is hybrid work? It's a blend of traditional stationary and remote modes of work. One should, of course, keep in mind that meeting the responsibilities of the employee remains crucial. To achieve this, the necessary conditions are required, mainly ease of communication. As of March 2020, it has become apparent that the AV-equipped meeting room is no-longer exclusive to the CEO. A personal camera is now a gold-standard device for any computer workstation, at home or in the office.



In all this, office managers should remember that these solutions need to be simple, intuitive, and compatible with 'industry norm' programmes and tools such as Microsoft Teams® and Zoom Rooms™. Addressing the demands of these key infrastructures provides businesses with the assurance that all tasks required from the employee will be completed. Let's remember that hybrid work is a 'synergy', not a 'sum' of remote and stationary work. Ultimately, this reflects the most favourable working conditions for the employees and the organization.



Piotr Janicki

Product Manager, Veracomp

Video Conferencing Tools - Logitech Business



Digital signage (DS) technology has always supported the enterprise's internal communications process; more so, it will offer vital support in communication for the facility managers and HR departments through the return to the office period.

In the past, occupational health and safety content was mainly at the manufacturing plants.

Today, management must now regard in various employee settings, which now includes the office space, due to the widening scope of the safe workplace. Using multimedia content, DS systems are more efficient concerning their paper-based counterparts, by focusing attention, engaging viewers, and enabling up-to-date content access. In-office screens may also display relevant data to employees, indicating, for example, total occupancy and population densities in particular spaces.

This can be attributed to DS systems with sensors installed in conference rooms, hot desk areas or shared facilities. Displaying data and various alert types on DS screens is fully automated and would not require additional human interaction.



Dawid Manuszak

Product Manager, Veracomp

Digital Signage Solutions & Product Development – Samsung and ONELAN





Commencing a presentation would be via personal device, whereas concluding one would only require exiting the room, as devices automatically power down. The touch-free office lives up to its name, by eliminating remotes, controllers, or even touch screens. Room settings would be personalised to user, with content cast from their device.

What would a touch-free conference room look like?

To start presenting, an employee can use any type of personal device, such as a notebook, smartphone or tablet. After the meeting has finished, participants can simply walk out of the room, leaving the devices to automatically power-down. The safe, touch free office lives up to its name by eliminating or reducing the number of 'physical' buttons to a minimum - with no need for remotes and control panels. It's a touchless, digital experience, with the employee positioned at its centre.



Adam Kaczmarek

Product Manager, Veracomp

Control Systems and AV Distribution Products



Partner's insights

Cushman & Wakefield

A year ago, no one imagined how much and how quickly our daily lives would change, and consequently how work would transform.

For many knowledge workers, the day-to-day workplace has shifted from the office to the home, with working arrangements finally becoming entirely flexible. For years, we have been training in flexibility, agility, and multitasking. At the same time, concepts such as wellbeing, mindfulness and work-life balance are gaining strength. On the one hand, workers live at an accelerated, constantly perfected pace, whereas on the other hand, the slow life movement is taking shape. Unsurprisingly, the changes have surprised many with its very momentum.



But whilst deployment time of many policies has accelerated, its direction had been largely anticipated. Technological progress alone has shifted society not by a year, but by a decade. Therefore, in a world where everything can be done online, it also becomes natural to work online.

From conversations with clients, and with colleagues from other European capitals, it is apparent that these trends are similar across Europe. These comprehensive findings are established by a Pracuj.pl report, which predicts an at-least partial remote work regime after the end of the pandemic, citing 87% of people currently performing duties and who wish to continue to work in this manner. Importantly, 71% of respondents are supporters of hybrid models, with the number of respondents wanting to work fully remotely increasing steadily, at 16% YoY, whereas 48% favor occasional visits to the company's premises. Does this mean that most white-collar workers wish to avoid office work indefinitely? That may not completely be the case, but the vast majority, in the aftermath of a pandemic will want to work from home, and much more often.

Employees who consider remote work essential in their duties should scrutinize their home office.

A sofa and a coffee table are not enough for a workplace. To carry out one's work successfully, employees should use dedicated furniture, which in addition, should be situated in separate, dedicated rooms. Thankfully, temporary home workplaces are beginning to move into more well-planned arrangements.

But what of the people who lack access to favorable home-working conditions, or don't wish to work locally? It is essential to reflect these employees' wishes and provide them with a comfortable office working environment. For those who prefer to work from home, the office would become a hub for social interaction, encouraging visits with some degree. However, there is little point in dragging employees back into the office. Instead, an encouraging approach can be recommended.



Beyond home or office work, there is a third option category – coworking; a place once designed for creative people by other professional lone wolves.

Only later was this concept adapted by entire companies, that because of this trend, adapted offices into employee coworking spaces. The key to coworking is the creative element, whereby unconventional spaces trigger new ideas, or until it changes perspectives. Citywide coworking solutions are already emerging on the market. By using a single access card, workers can gain entry into various co-working spaces. Thanks to this, it is possible not to work from home, and therefore force oneself away from local distractions, however without the need to travel far for office amenities. For many, it will be a recipe ideal for conserving personal time whilst enjoying the benefits of an orderly, albeit creative space. Nevertheless, it is also important to be able to interact with one another, sometimes strangers, as such accidental encounters are often the cause for long-term relations.

The future of jobs is diverse, and with a freedom of choice. In the first place, we find comfort and so-called User Experience, which consists not only of efficiency during the performance of work, but also satisfaction with the tasks performed. The latter consists not only of fulfillment, a sense of mission or control over the environment, but also such a simple factor, as time spent on daily commutes. In the New Normal, it is widely accepted that people will better-adapt the environment to their needs, which results in undeniably high satisfaction with work and personal life.



Dominika Kowalska

Associate Director,
Cushman & Wakefield



Partner's insights

CIC Warsaw

What is the future of the “new normal” in the workplace?

Industries must find innovative ways to address the ‘soul’ of the workplace in which communities can flourish and address the issues of the world through innovation, whilst ensuring spaces are safe, holistic, and above all - easy to use.

The overall objective would be to incubate innovators and future-shapers to develop and scale, by delivering a well-designed, functional, and accessible workspace, to complement flexible working.

But as we began reopening the office amid COVID-19, we faced a new layer of difficulty to an already advanced project.



In a time when ‘social distancing’ and ‘quarantine’ became common terminology, the idea of a space encouraging meetings between people may seem an absurd concept. But interestingly, this offers a chance for early fine-tuning of progressive proptech elements, such as advanced HVAC systems and digitised entry and exit points. This can also include contactless door handles, applying nano-septic covers to high-touch surfaces, such as iPads and coffee machines, upgrading soap dispensers and faucets, enforcing safe distances, and removing furniture to limit personnel capacities.

But as effective as this is, cosmetic changes won't be enough to make sure people feel safe and on top of everchanging government regulations.

This is when 'soul' comes into play. Here, a company culture empowers innovators to act as a responsible community. When identifying threats and leading by example through signage and transparency, companies can foster a safe and sustainable environment. This would then pave the way for creative solutions through collaborative and hybrid events, address needs of stakeholders, and connect them with people and industries to accelerate their growth.

The hybrid working model looks to be the future of the workspace. But that can't happen without strict safety precautions aimed to protect those most at-risk... and everyone can identify with someone like this.

These are the values that will shape the modern workplace, and can become foundations of any successful organisation.



Dominika Duda

Community Principal,
CIC Warsaw



Partner's insights

Project: People

For a bunch of years, we have been observing the growing trend of servant leadership, turquoise organizations and no-management companies as well as Agile and lean transformations.

All those changes were the answers to the challenges of the upcoming World of VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity).



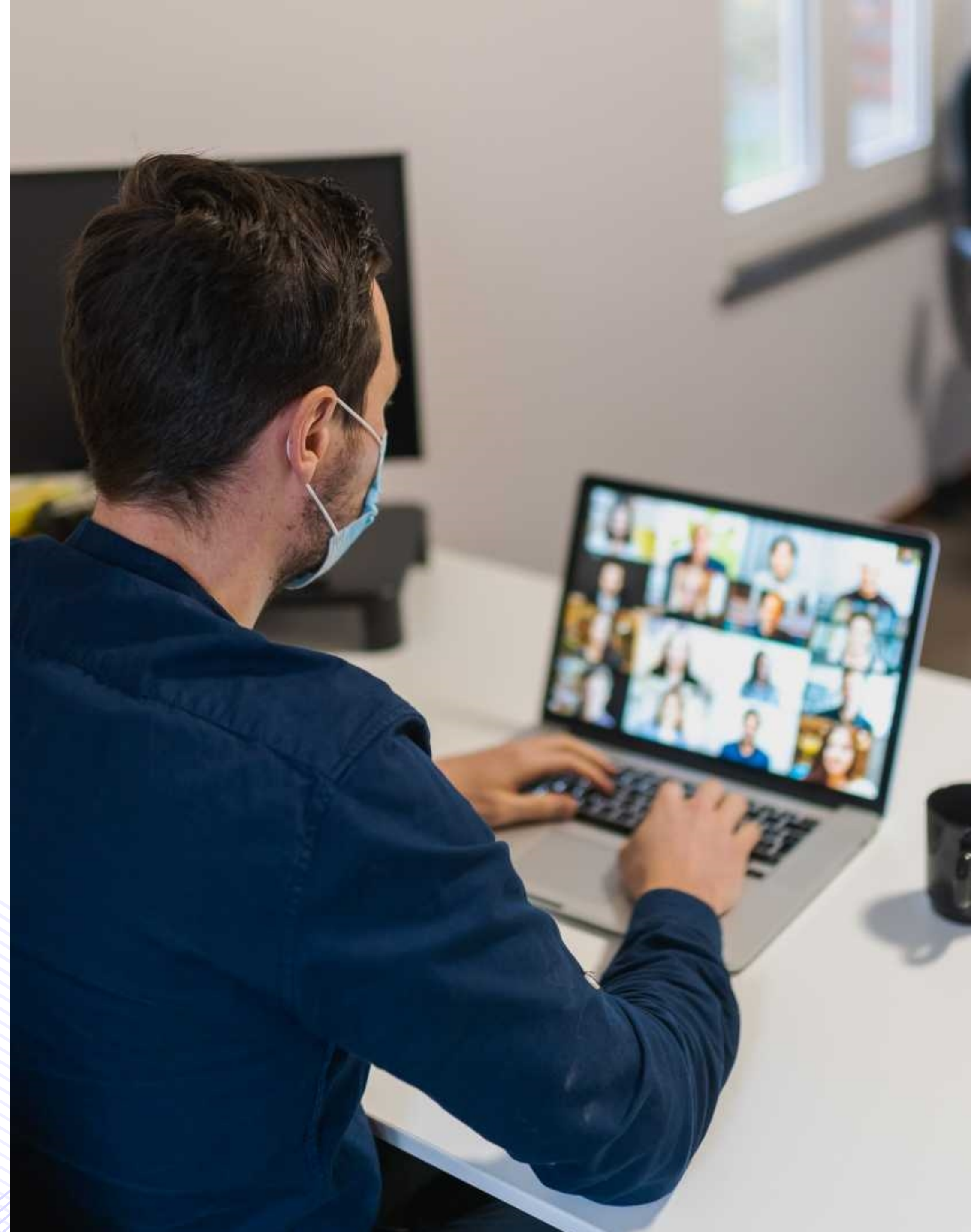
When we got a punch in the face from VUCA & COVID-19, those ideas and philosophies became even more significant. Coronavirus has changed the existing rules unexpectedly. Obviously, it has influenced the way we work, put us in unusual situations and forced us to revise our values or at least to think about them in a more profound way. But what's more crucial, COVID-19 democratizes our teams, companies and organizations.

Covid-19 affected us all without exceptions: IT developers, office managers, interns and even leaders. In the face of COVID-19, we are all humans, and humanity seems more fragile than ever before.

This puts a new light on the role of a leader, shifts our mindsets and reshapes attitudes. It decentralizes organizations and forces them to become agile. Right now, we know that the world will not go back on the beaten path and it will change its trajectory forever. The role of the leaders and organizations is redefined and focuses on:

Human leadership, human organizations

Research on the previous crises in 2000 and 2008 showed that in the face of crisis people can experience emotional instability (from anger, through fear, to depression), and changes in behavior (from postponing personal hygiene, through a loss of interest in work, to eating disorders) and cognitive struggle (memory issues, problems with abstract thinking and concentration, etc.). Also, social distancing can result in emotional and communicational distance between coworkers and the leader.



The KPMG & AIMA Survey 2020 confirmed that the corona-crisis brought those problems to the companies. Up to 30% of the respondents from companies with AUM (assets under management) exceeding \$1bn indicated that a lack of social interaction has led to poorer mental health of their employees and is their top challenge these days.

Therefore, more and more companies decide to offer their employees mental health support, organize wellbeing programs and implement internal integration methods & tools that are not typically associated with business, such as meditation, yoga, mindfulness or detached mindfulness, gratitude celebration, psychological support, etc.



This trend is visible among big corporations, small startups, and middle-size companies. Just a couple of positive examples:

- **Accenture organizes online yoga, mindfulness and zumba classes for their team,**
- **Project: People offers their employees open sessions with psychologists, and organizes Gratitude Feedback Sessions,**
- **Akademia.pl offers their employees biohacking support and they additionally pay for the days off when the employees are not using company resources.**

All those tools and programs have one main goal: to help team members calm down and avoid dissociation or freezing (survival mechanisms) which are natural reactions coming from the Autonomic Nervous System when people feel unstable and insecure.

Focus on values

These trends are growing hand in hand with the importance of company mission and vision, value-based management and organization development. Transparency, as a tool for building trust and sense of influence among employees, is also becoming crucial.

Any company that hasn't reconsidered their HR strategy should give it a thought, as it can influence some important business metrics - not only in the field of Employer Branding, recruitment and retention, but also in terms of team efficiency, ROI of the projects and business stability. An unstable team may destabilize your business in other areas.



Beata Mosór-Szyszka

Co-founder & Managing Partner,
Project: People



Partner's insights

COBU

The coronavirus pandemic has changed our lives overnight. It has influenced our natural way of functioning and the balance between work and private life. It has also forced us to change our habits despite the high cost of the consequences.



Changes in social behaviour and interpersonal relations have also influenced the way we arrange the space in which we work. The necessity to spend time at home more often has changed the way office spaces are designed – perhaps for the long term, but perhaps not forever, either. In this field, trends have evolved many times over the years – from mobile offices, through hot desking and open spaces, to the Activity-Based Working model.

What do designers opt for today?

We will try to explain this in a few points:

- **Individualism** – offices still need to be personalised and tailor-made for industries and users – even the age of users plays a decisive role.
- **Home Office design** – this trend has continued in offices, and now it will take on a new dimension. After users worked from home last year, they will expect workplaces to be even more personalised and holistic.
- **Zones** – security will be very important – we will again move towards zoning of offices and dividing their functions – perhaps common space will disappear, there will be fewer large canteens, but it will certainly be safer.
- **Logistics** – booking rooms, planning and confirming attendance at the office are habits that we will need to learn.
- **Remote work** – rooms for video conferences – once treated as a whim and a sign of luxury are now a “must have” of every office.

However, we must remember not to get carried away by all this. The world has seen many crises, and humans are herd animals who wish to live in a community – and yes – soon, we will most-likely enjoy life again. What the pandemic will leave behind is the technology that will stay with us to ensure greater safety and comfort of work.



Jakub Poznański

Founder/Managing Director,
COBU Design



Partner's insights

Proptech Foundation

In technology and real estate, what was supposed to happen the day after tomorrow has happened today.

While building the vision and mission of our Foundation in 2019 and 2020, we were convinced that it was high time to accelerate the digitalization of the real estate sector in Poland and the region. The coronavirus has become our biggest enemy as a society, but a remarkable ally when it comes to implementing technology, understanding the idea of security in the office and public space, or redefining the idea of flexibility.



In all these challenges at Proptech Foundation, we were lucky to accompany the most important players in the real estate market, with whom we exchanged solutions and trends. We tried to dispel the notion that in such a competitive industry, it is impossible to reach common ground about the best place to work. After all, we are competing for the same tenants and clients. Despite this rivalry, you can still collaborate!

Since the coronavirus has sped up the digitalization of the industry, can it only get better, and will all these solutions stay with us for good as part of the new normal? We asked our experts about their predictions for 2021.



Stabilization is the direction!

Marta Badura - Associate Director, Knight Frank:

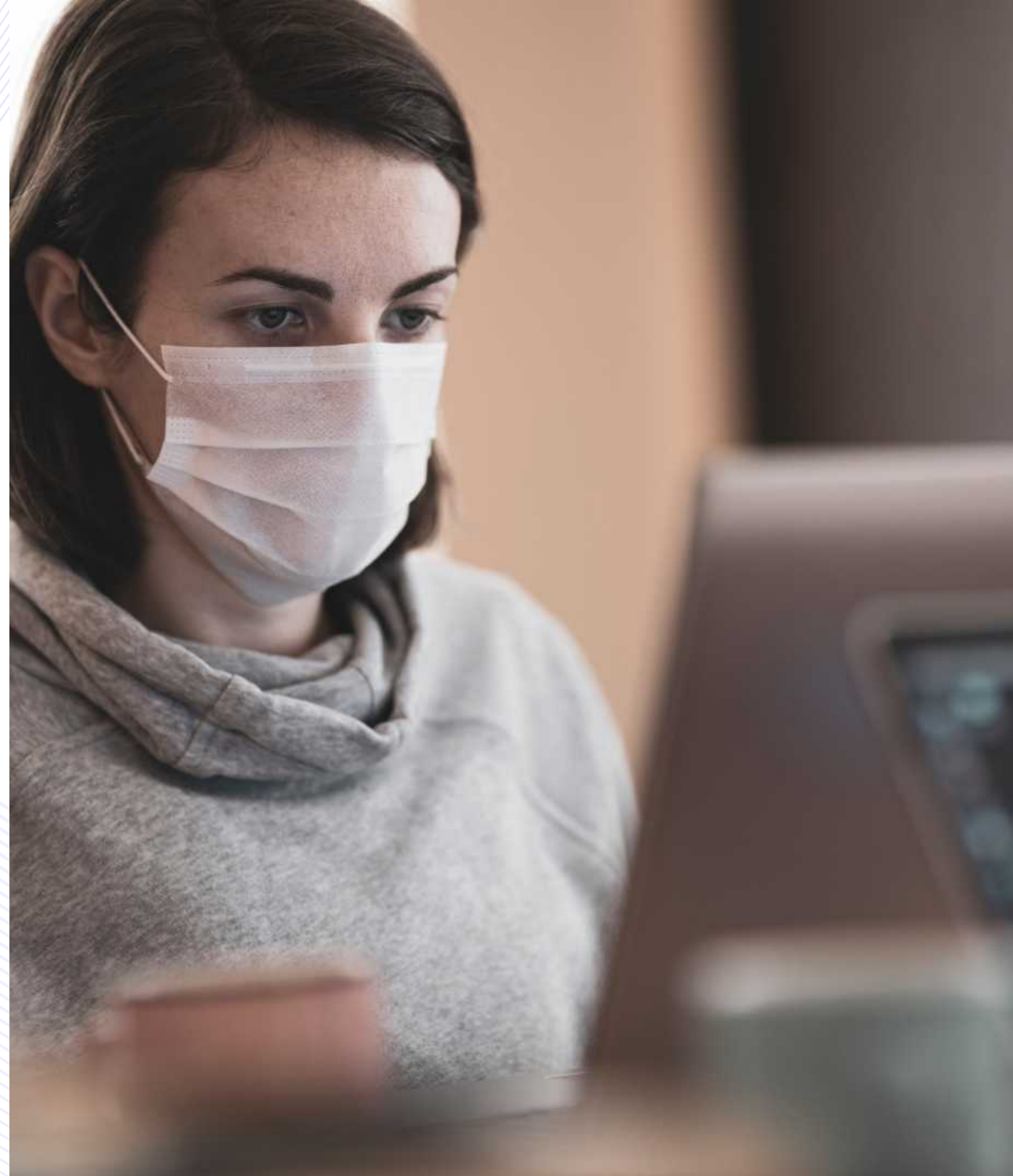
” *I will stubbornly assume that this could be a year focused on stabilization. From the perspective of change management and the innovation implementation cycle, organizations need time to solidify what is new, and introduce iterations. For many companies, 2020 was a time of forced innovation - sometimes implemented simultaneously on multiple fronts. Now time has come for continuation and full integration. Of course, the only sure thing is change, but you cannot change everything, especially not all at once, and without substantial costs - especially on the client's part.*

From toy to tool – the long-awaited innovation is here!

Adam Jaszkwski - Workplace Consultant, HB Reavis

” *In its own way, it's been a pretty fascinating year in terms of organizational change and ingenuity in adapting to new realities. But we need stability to absorb it all and reach for new ideas. I believe workspace consulting will be kept very busy in light of this.*

What has impressed me the most this year is that we are no longer talking about proptech solutions dedicated to offices as just a futuristic toy for uninterested employees. 2020 has shown that the same technology can really take care of employees' sense of safety and health. Technology has become more reliable to its users. It's here to stay with us.



We connect worlds and value communication

Tomasz Podolak - Founder, Linkleaders:

“ COVID has blasted us 5-10 years ahead into the digital future. Where we are should be in 2025 at the earliest. We will need to learn quickly. We have entered a period of fluidity of boundaries, patterns, and definitions. Nothing will persist in its distinctiveness. Offices will have a residential component and apartments will have an office component. Retail won't make it without e-commerce, and e-commerce will move closer to traditional retail, which will disperse to smaller formats that can be more easily combined with apartments and offices. There will be an increased demand for soft skills and for communication and relationships. New algorithms and valuation standards will emerge with a strong focus on capital - human, cultural, relationships and innovation, the ability to change and the ability to learn.

We, at Proptech Foundation, strongly believe that we will return to more secure offices that are open to our needs and listen to our changing circumstances. We also hope that we will return to each other, that these offices will allow us to: interact more often than in 2020, create new ideas together, gossip over coffee, and instill the hope that the pandemic will finally allow us to smile normally at one another.

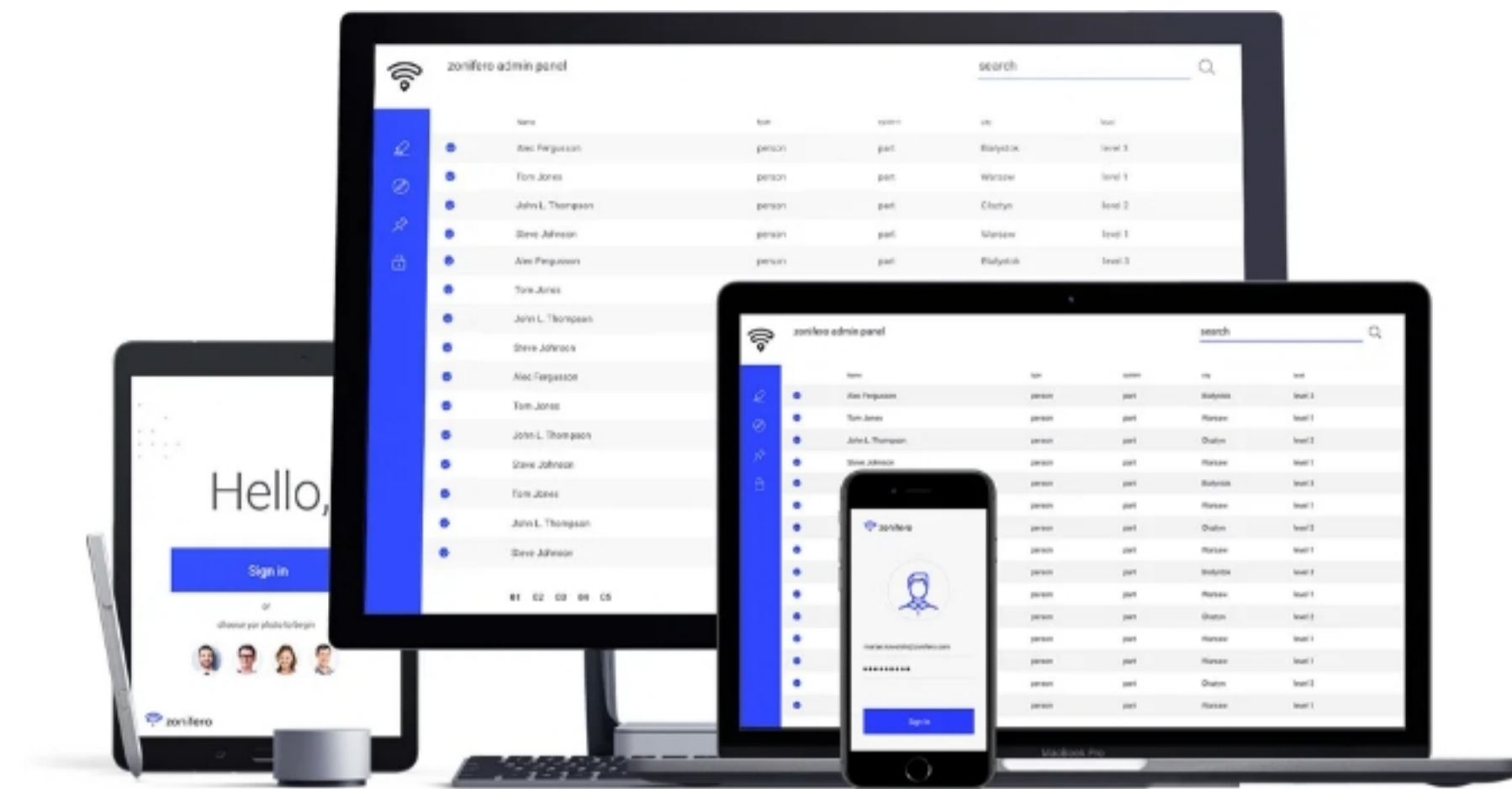


Klaudia Wojciechowska

Programme manager,
Proptech Foundation



About Zonifero



Zonifero is the digital layer of your workplace. It is a mobile-first platform created to help companies optimise their resources and improve productivity. Zonifero augments your workspace by leveraging IoT and smart building integrations and provides a guide to your organization and office, creating a frictionless experience for your employees and guests.

Zonifero is backed by TenderHut group, one of the fastest-growing technology groups in Europe, as recognised by Deloitte and the Financial Times.

This provides Zonifero with the agility and faster time-to-market, enabling superior new functionalities and customised development, to others within the industry.

Zonifero offers a collection of features far and beyond the management of desks, rooms or parking spaces and virtual cards. It is a platform used to integrate all critical building and workplace systems and amenities, taking tenant comforts to new levels, while also setting a new industry standard for workplace management.

The Team



Jacek Ratajczak
Chief Executive Officer



Przemysław Chmielewski
Chief Operating Officer



Aleksandra Żamojć
Business Director

Contact us

Have you found your answers or inspirations?
We would be grateful for your insights
regarding our guide.

We look forward to exchanging thoughts!
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