

vitra.



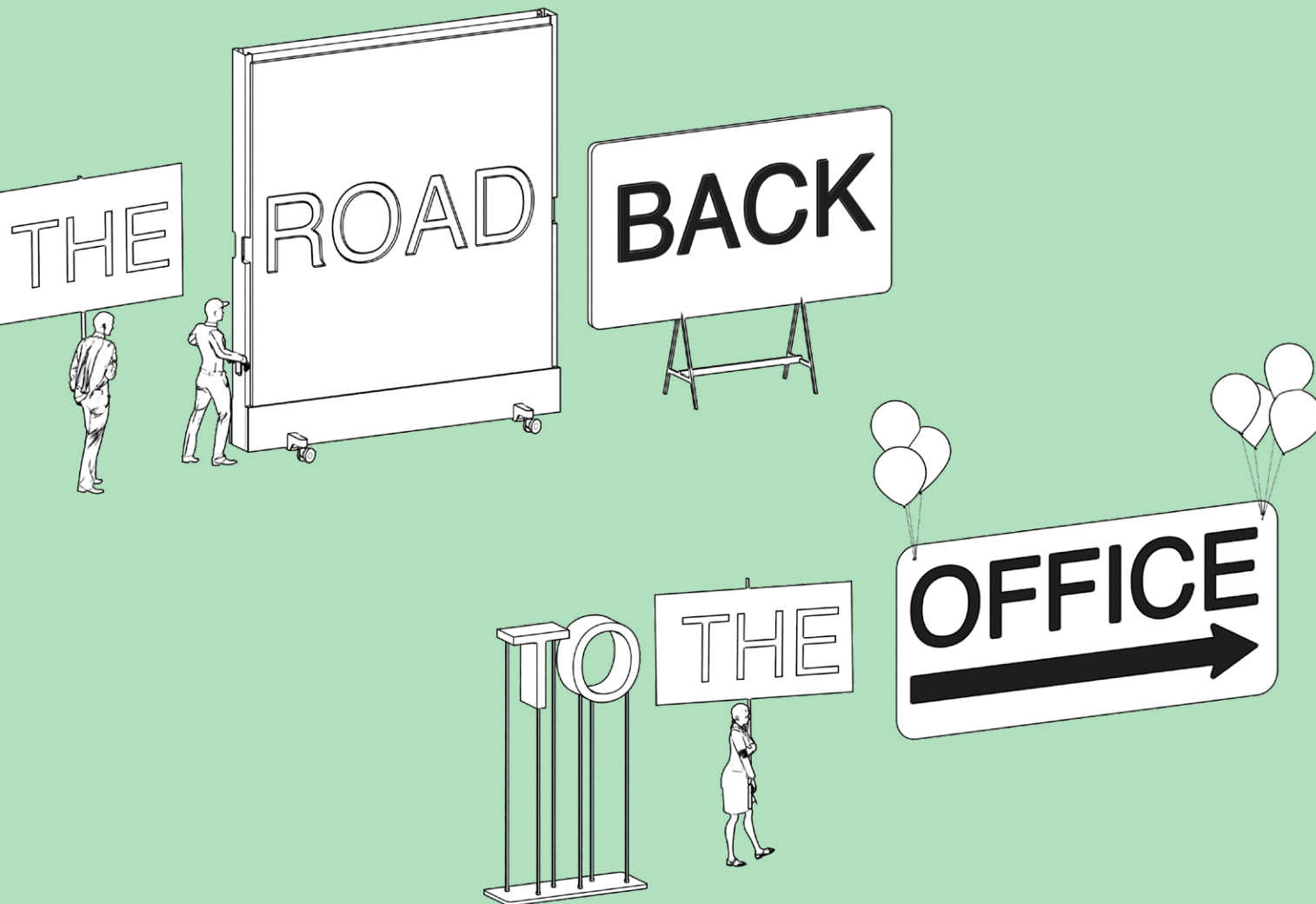
The coronavirus is first and foremost a human tragedy that has affected the lives of millions. The pandemic has not only changed the patterns of personal interaction – with increased sanitary measures, social distancing and the rise of digital communication – but has also fundamentally altered the way we work. With the progressive loosening of protective government regulations, institutions and companies are preparing to return to their normal 'modus laborandi'. Every company is responsible for taking precautionary measures in the workplace to stop the further spread of COVID-19, and physical distancing remains the most effective tool in this regard.

Applying Vitra's long-standing knowledge of the environments in which we work and live or where we travel, we have drafted a set of hypotheses that can help companies, institutions and employees return to the office with ready-to-use spatial solutions and carefully conceived planning approaches.

Nora Fehlbaum
CEO, Vitra

- p 4 Paving the road back to the office**
- p 6 Increased hygiene standards will be maintained**
- p 26 Working remotely will become much more prevalent**
- p 46 Action plan for a safe office**

Paving the road back to the office



Five hypotheses

Urgent / temporary solutions

Mid- to long-term solutions

Long-term solutions & structural changes



Increased hygiene standards will be maintained, as employee health becomes an important company value



Working remotely will become much more prevalent



How and where we meet will change



New rules will be developed for shared spaces, and office layouts will be adapted



The physical workspaces that remain become a conscious investment

Increased hygiene standards will be maintained, as employee health becomes an important company value.

p 8 Safe at work, in public and in transit

p 14 Considerations when designing a 'corona-safe' office

p 16 Easy-to-clean surfaces

p 20 Planning examples





Increased hygiene standards will be maintained

Safe at work, in public and in transit

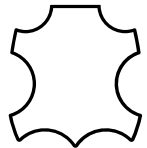
Just as airport security was permanently altered to address the threat of terrorist attacks after 9/11, shared environments will adopt new procedures to protect users from infection and disease. Disinfectants will be provided in all entry halls and bathrooms. In some places, standard temperature checks and the wearing of masks may even become the norm. Surfaces, handles, bathrooms and even frequent contact areas on chairs will be cleaned daily. Rituals such as handshakes, friendly hugs or cheek kissing will no longer be deemed appropriate.

Going to work while sick will be considered unacceptable. Sick days may increase. If not sick enough for a sick day, then employees will work remotely or – at least – wear a mask. Company doctors will have a stronger voice and play an important role in navigating these new procedures.

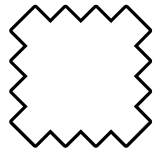
Increased health standards have a direct impact on workspaces



Self-opening doors and elevators that respond to voice prompts instead of touch buttons will be installed. Zero-touch coffee zones and canteen areas with pick up only and badge payment will be offered. Canteens will be affected: easily wipeable tables and chairs will be used, and unnecessary shared elements such as salt shakers will be avoided.



Textiles and upholstery may lose attractiveness, while materials like leathers/faux leathers and plastics that are easy to clean gain in relevance. Wood can be considered a good option: a warm natural material, comforting to touch, yet hygienic and easy to clean, wood was selected by Alvar Aalto as the material of choice for the Paimio tuberculosis sanatorium. Self-disinfecting materials and surfaces like brass, copper and other metals will be employed where available.



Members of vulnerable high-risk groups may be offered a different work environment altogether, ranging from an assigned office space or personal cubicle to single offices or even a separate floor.





Increased hygiene standards will be maintained

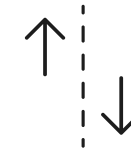
New health standards will change how we use public spaces and transport

Increased health measures will drastically influence not only the way we work together but also the way we co-exist in public. Waiting areas in airports, train stations, ports and other public transport facilities must comply with health regulations specifying the required floor space per person as well as safe distances between individuals. Here, markings and panels are simple temporary solutions. Furthermore, stricter hygiene standards are becoming mandatory in public areas. Seating and waiting areas may be cleaned several times a day.

Considerations when designing a 'corona-safe' office

The long-term implications and effects of COVID-19 are still unknown. However, the imminent return to the physical office requires certain measures in the design of workspaces and furnishings to protect employees and prevent the further spread of the pandemic.

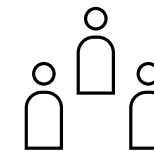
In this section you will find solutions and quick-fixes to make your existing office 'corona proof' along with planning examples for 'corona-safe' settings that you can easily implement in your workspaces.



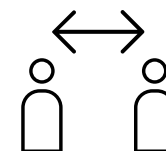
Internal infrastructure and transit zones should be adapted to maintain sufficient distance between employees.



To reduce the density of occupied office spaces, work tasks should be performed from home whenever possible.



If individual work is not feasible for certain work tasks, then fixed teams should be formed that are as small as possible (e.g. two to three employees).



The distance between individual persons in the workplace should be at least 2 m / 6 ft. These guidelines must be incorporated into the design of offices to ensure appropriate seating arrangements and the minimization of occupancy density through such measures as staggered work times, working in shifts

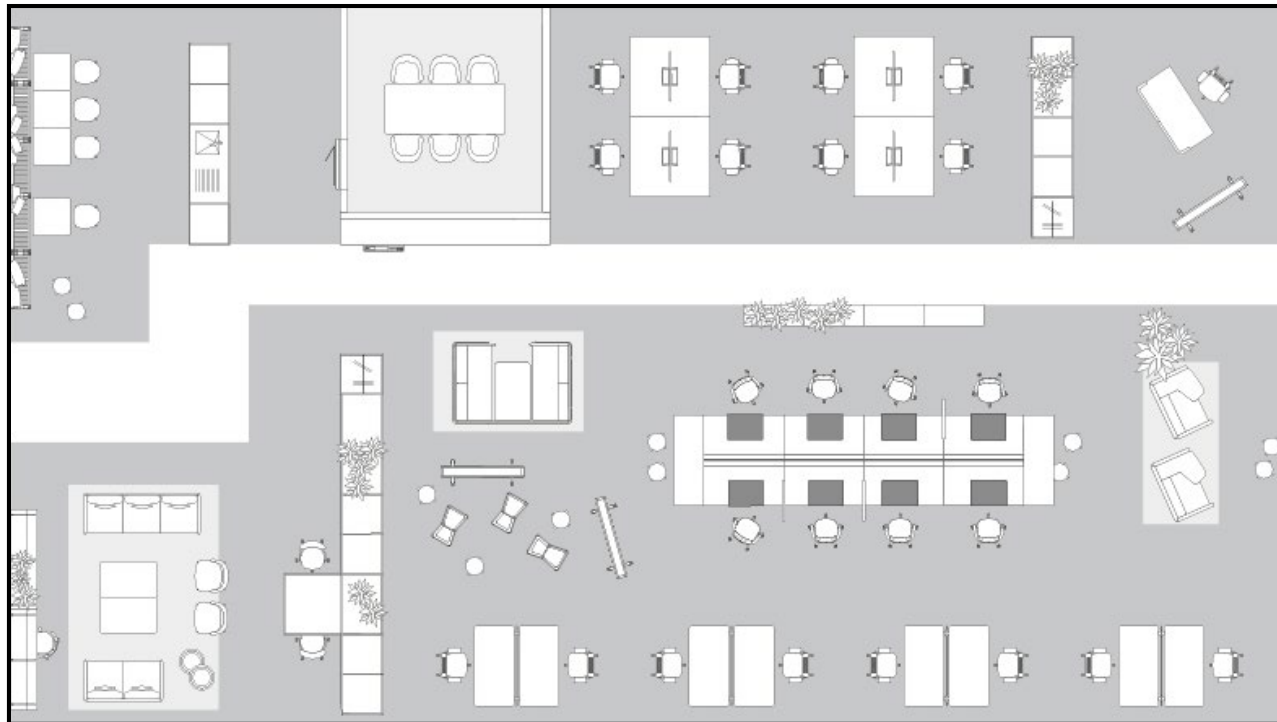


Where possible, screens and room dividers should be used to protect individual employees.

Make open-plan offices 'corona-proof'

Before: open-plan layout

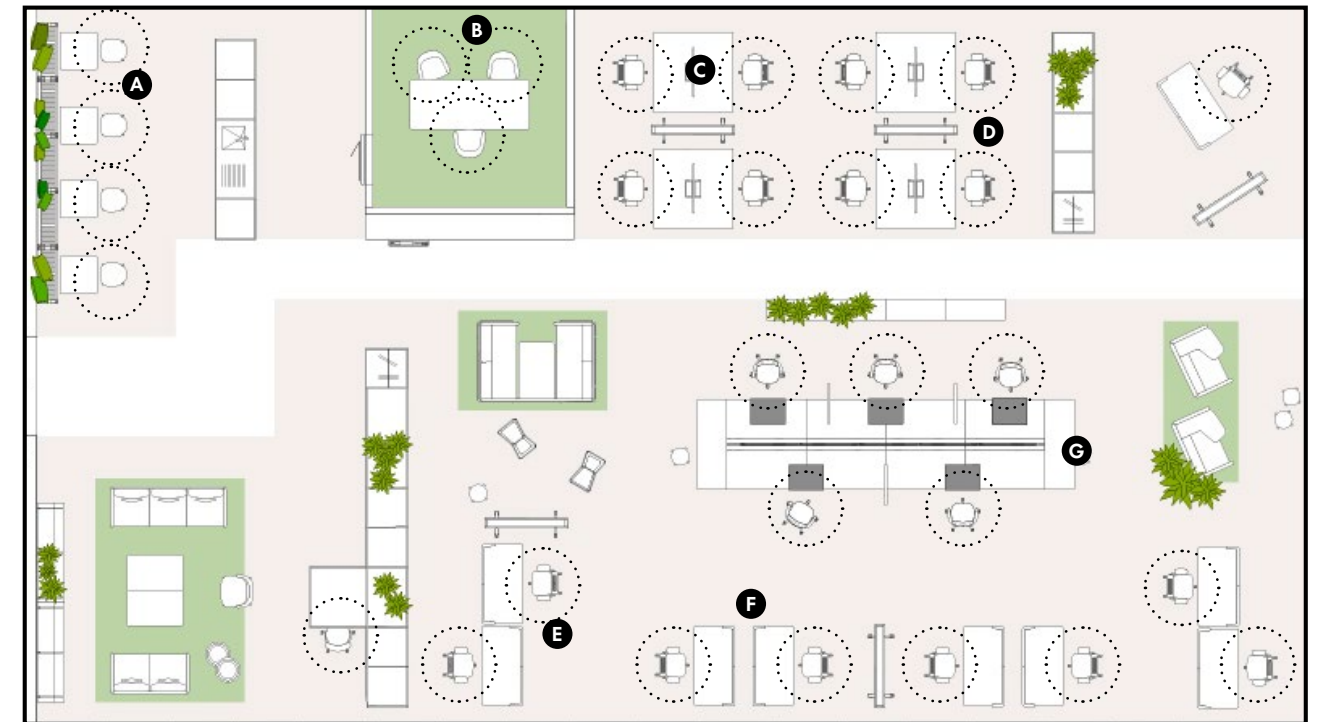
Total space: 371 sqm & 64 seats



- 25 Workstations
- 6 Seats in meeting room
- 11 Seats in communication areas
- 6 Seats in touch-down areas
- 2 Seats in retreat area
- 8 Seats in cafeteria
- 6 Seats in workshop area

After: 'corona-proof' open-plan layout

Total space: 371 sqm & 35 'corona-safe' seats



- 14 Workstations
 - 3 Seats in meeting room
 - 6 Seats in communication areas
 - 3 Seats in touch-down areas
 - 2 Seats in retreat area
 - 4 Seats in cafeteria
 - 3 Seats in workshop area
- A** Increase spacing between workstations
 - B** Reduce the number of chairs to reduce the occupancy rate or switch to stand-up tables
 - C** Use high separation screens as table dividers on workstations
 - D** Use Dancing Wall as a mobile partition element
 - E** Alternate the seating at workstations
 - F** Increase the distance between desks and add 3D screens
 - G** Reduce the number of workplaces per table and create boundaries with front and lateral screens and mark work areas with plotters

Easy-to-clean surfaces

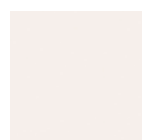
For sustainable hygiene standards in the office and in public, regular disinfection of individual surfaces is advised. However, this subjects the materials to additional wear and tear, so the use of particularly robust surfaces and materials is recommended.



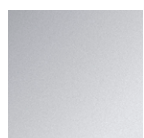
HPL High-pressure laminate, abbreviated as HPL, is composed of layers of paper that are impregnated with phenolic and melamine resins and bonded together with a protective overlay under high pressure and heat, and applied to a substrate. The resulting surfaces are simple to clean and maintain, and they are also lightfast, odourless and resistant to alcohol, organic solvents and water.



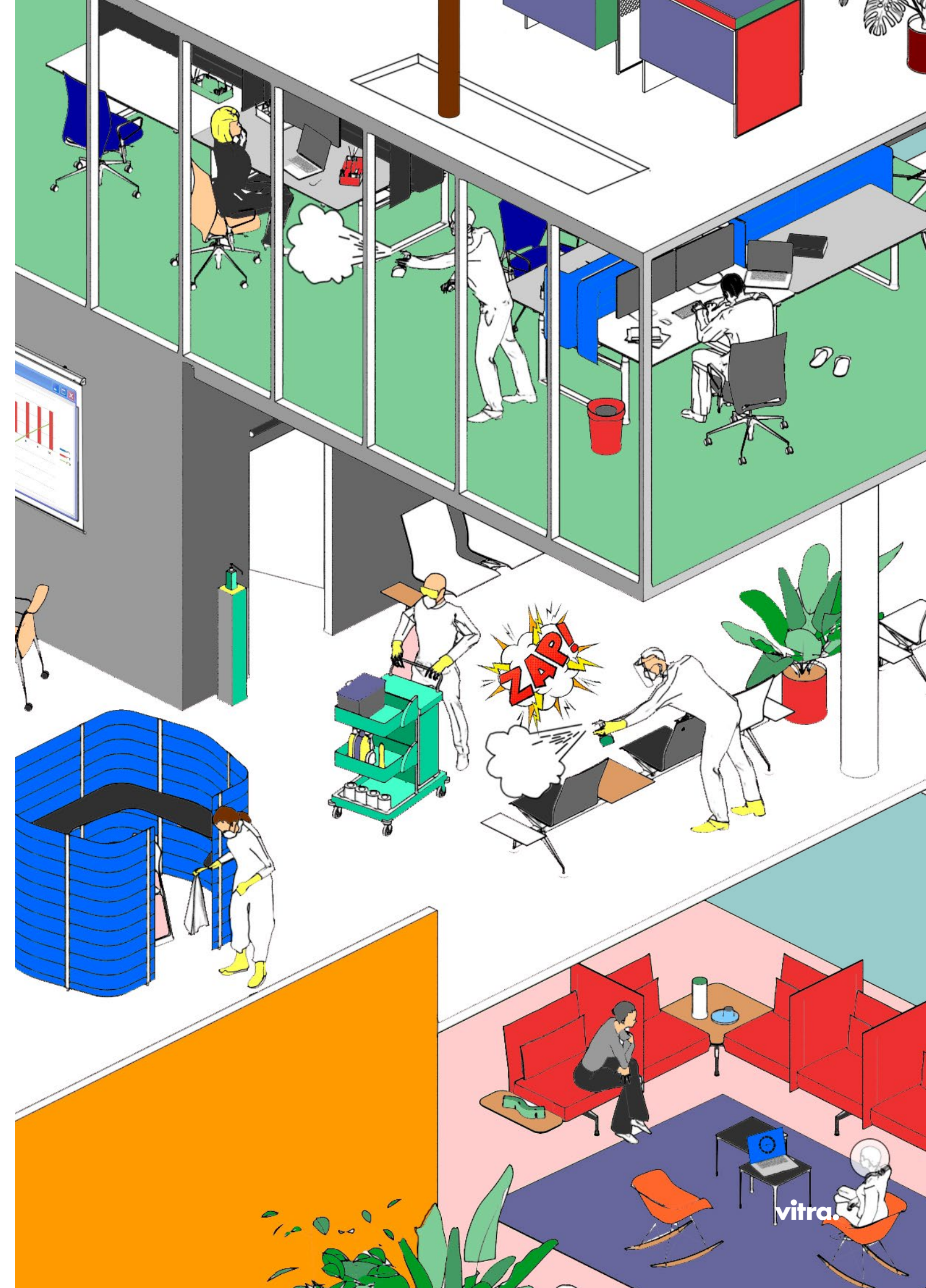
Melamine Wood materials with a melamine resin surface coating are robust and durable. They come in a variety of colours, are easy to clean, and provide a less expensive alternative to wood veneer or solid wood.



MDF Medium-density fibreboard, also known as MDF board, consists primarily of debarked coniferous wood broken down into fine fibres. Powder coating produces an even, robust surface finish with seamless edges, making it ideal for constructions with cut-outs or for complex corner joints.

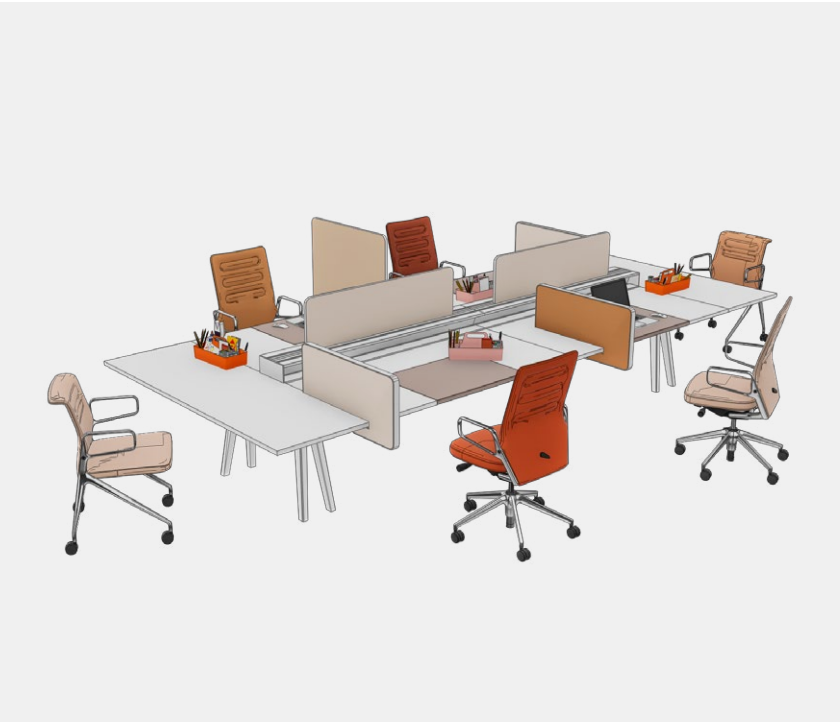


Metal Depending on the product, metal surfaces are either powder-coated, chrome-plated, polished, galvanised or lacquered. A smooth or textured powder-coated finish provides colour and surface protection.



Safe work Planning examples

Safe work settings



Setting 1

Joyn Workstations (440 x 180)
with front and lateral screens,
AC 5 Work (leather), AC 5
Swift (leather), Toolbox

Download planning example



Setting 2

Tyde Workstations (with 3D
screen), ID Air, Toolbox

Download planning example

Safe work settings



Setting 3

CDS Meeting, Physix Studio,
Happy Bin, Toolbox

Download planning example



Setting 4

Workbays Focus, Tip Ton,
S-Tidy

Download planning example

Safe work settings



Lobby setting mit Soft Work

Soft Work (leather),
Plate Table (MDF), Eames
Plastic Armchair RAR, O-Tidy

Download planning example



Public lobby setting

MedaGate

Download planning example

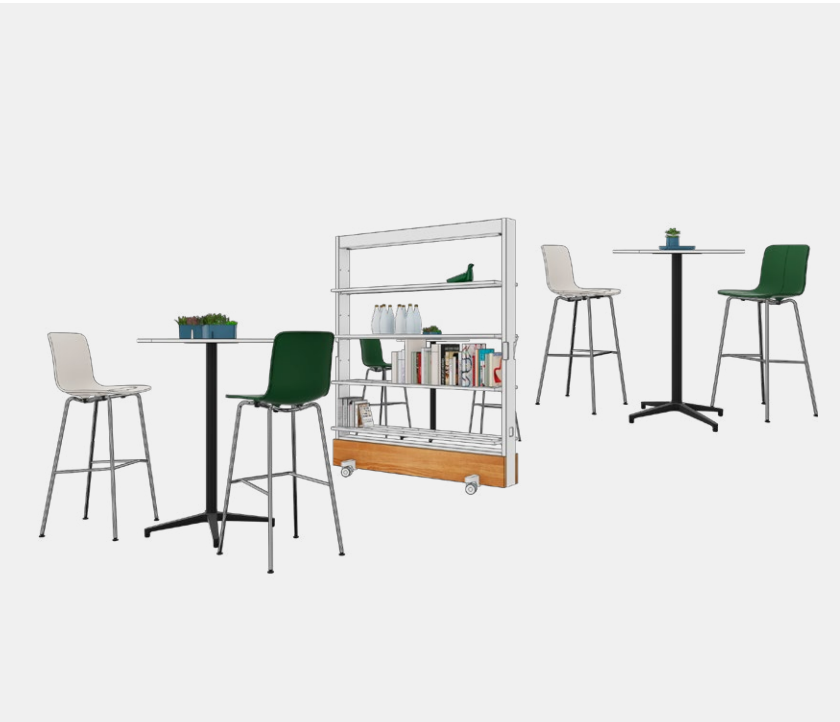
Safe work settings



Cafeteria setting 1

Eames Contract Table,
Eames Plastic Side Chair DSX,
Eames Fiberglass Side Chair
DSR, Dancing Wall, High Tray

Download planning example



Cafeteria setting 2

HAL Stool High, Dancing Wall,
Bistro Table, O-Tidy, S-Tidy

Download planning example

Working remotely will become much more prevalent.

p 28 The emergence of a new work-life balance

p 32 At home at work -
Alice Rawsthorn on the evolution
of the home office

p 36 Notes on working from home -
By Jonathan Olivares

p 40 Planning examples



The emergence of a new work-life balance

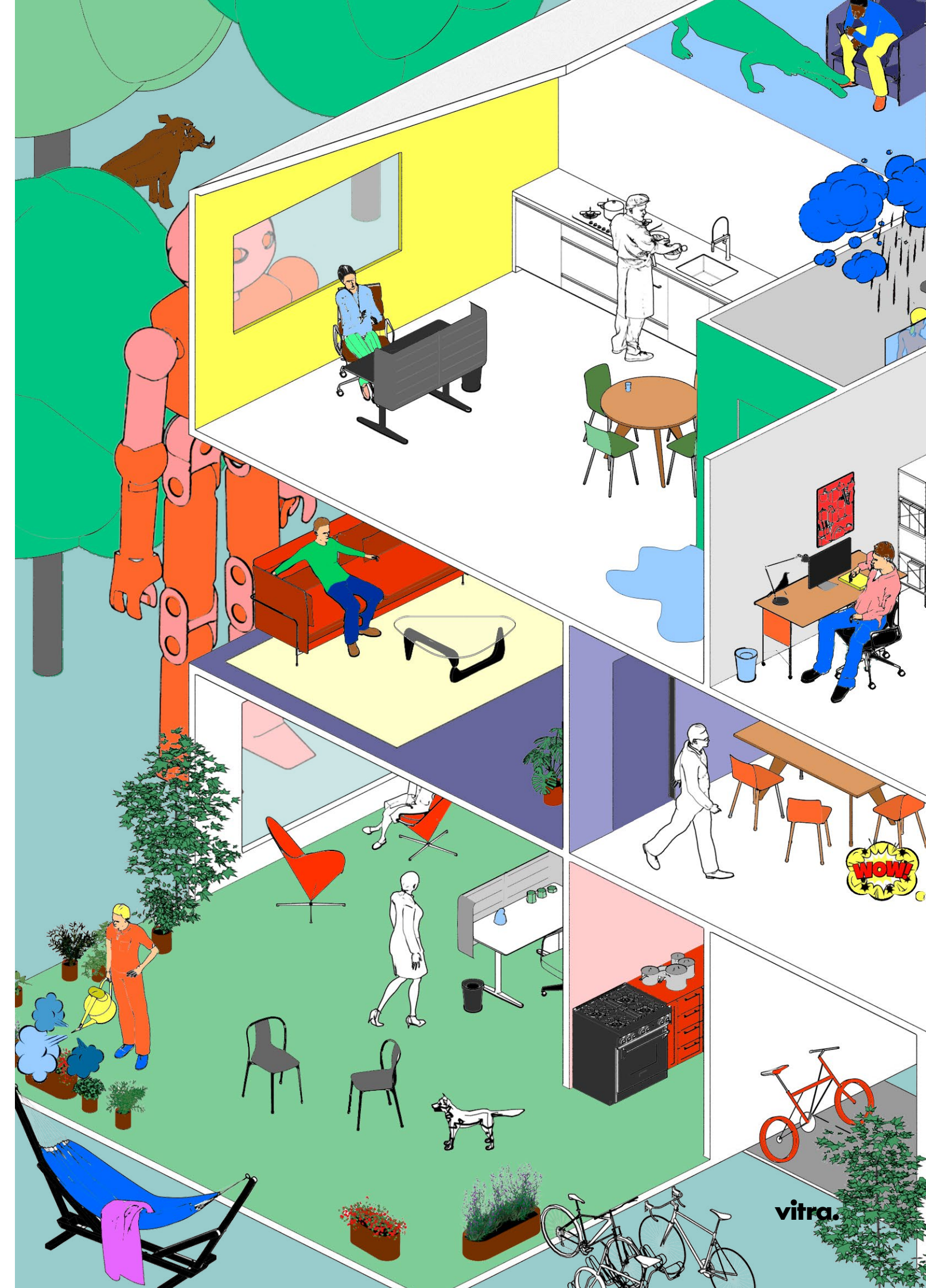
Many companies, teams and employees have been obliged to work remotely for weeks. This involuntary experiment demonstrated that functioning technology is available, productive work is possible and even teamwork can thrive. As a result, not allowing employees to work from home will no longer be acceptable for companies competing in the war for talent.

Talent will make a conscious choice after having experienced work life without commutes or excruciating travel and instead having spent quality time with loved ones: does my employer allow me the freedom to schedule my day as long as I deliver my output? Does my employer let me live where I can afford a higher standard of living without making me spend hours commuting by car or train? Allowing for remote working gives a company access to a global talent pool and at the same time reduces its ecological footprint. In a physical office, the mere act of showing up already signals commitment. An employee working from home has to continuously prove and demonstrate value creation. Working from home creates a culture that accepts more performance tracking and makes lack of performance more transparent.

Remote work has a direct impact on office and home environments

A large part of the workforce may choose to work remotely for at least part of each week. Regular remote work can reduce office space density and therefore allow for physical distancing in the workplace.

Working from home requires a dedicated space in the home. The home office protects work hours from the interruptions and distractions of personal life. Dedicating an area of the house to work ensures confidentiality while fostering digital detox and work-life balance in the rest of the home. In some cases, employees may even be able to expense the extra space required in the employee's home. Remote work requires the appropriate physical infrastructure: an ergonomic task chair, a height-adjustable desk, a desk lamp, WLAN, noise cancelling audio equipment, IT hardware and software.



At home at work

Alice Rawsthorn on the evolution of the home office



Working remotely will become much more prevalent

The way offices and teams function necessarily experienced radical changes during the last few weeks. Well-known design critic Alice Rawsthorn looks back at the history of the home office and risks a glance into the future.

Having established a thriving business by designing and making glass replicas of sea creatures and plants during the late 1800s, Leopold Blaschka bought a big house in Dresden and kitted it out as a workshop and research laboratory. In pride of place was an aquarium where he and his son Rudolf could study live jellyfish, sea slugs, snails and octopuses before dissecting them. Working alone, without assistants, the Blaschkas sold thousands of their eerily accurate glass replicas to natural history museums all over the world. After Leopold's death in 1895, Rudolf continued their work on his own, spending almost all of his time in the workshop. No one was allowed to enter without his permission, which was rarely given. Rudolf even refused to come out for meals, which were delivered through a specially installed hatch in the door.

If only all home workers were as efficiently equipped as the Blaschkas! Most of the millions of people who have set up impromptu workplaces in their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic are likelier to be battling against dodgy Zoom connections, ailing smartphones and implacable kids demanding their attention than to be calmly contemplating a bespoke research resource like a lovingly stocked aquarium.

Historically, home working was a demographically polarised activity that tended to

Left page: Legendary graphic designer Peter Saville in his studio at his home in London, photographed by Nigel Shafran, 2004
© Nigel Shafran www.nigelshafran.com

be restricted to the very rich and the desperately poor. People either toiled in their homes on pitifully paid piece work, such as sewing dresses or laundering shirt collars, or worked at home by choice because they were rich and powerful enough to call the shots. This process was rife with gender bias as the impecunious piece workers were often female, and the wealthy plutocrats mostly male.

Even a woman as accomplished and well connected as the novelist Virginia Woolf concluded in 1928: 'A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.'



Women in Thuringia (Germany) produce dolls as piece work in their homes, around 1935 © AKG-images, 2020

Woolf was painfully aware that very few of her sex had the faintest hope of having either.

From the Industrial Revolution until fairly recently, most people worked outside our homes in factories, offices, public buildings or outdoors. Those places and our ways of working in them were designed accordingly.

In his 2011 book, 'A Taxonomy of Office



Studio under a bridge, Valencia, Spain by Fernando Abellanas, lebre furniture Photo: Jose Manuel Pedrajas

Chairs’, the US industrial designer Jonathan Olivares describes how early office furniture was mostly customised, often by its user, like the pioneering wheeled desk chair devised by the British naturalist Charles Darwin in the 1840s.

An avid tinkerer, Darwin replaced the legs of a wooden armchair with cast iron bed legs mounted on castors so he could roll himself around his study to scrutinise the rows of specimens laid out on long tables by his assistants in his home in the Kent countryside.

Olivares also describes how twentieth-century workplace design reflected broader changes in corporate culture by becoming increasingly standardised and hierarchical. The French film maker Jacques Tati satirised this brilliantly in 1967’s ‘PlayTime’ by depicting his bumbling anti-hero Monsieur Hulot trying – and failing – to navigate row upon row of seemingly indistinguishable cubicles in a dystopian

modern office.

By the turn of this century, the availability of affordable communications technologies enabled more of us to choose where we worked. The French brothers, Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec started out by designing flexible

What will be the impact of the sudden surge of compulsory home working during COVID-19?

furniture that could be reconfigured to meet the changing needs of their Generation Rent contemporaries, many of whom lived and worked in the same places, often in cramped open-plan spaces shared with others.

In 2002’s Joyn, their first project for Vitra, the Bouroullecs applied the same principles to external workplaces by developing a modular desk system with adjustable screens that could

create private areas for individuals as well as being opened up to accommodate meetings. Two years later, they introduced the Joyn Hut, a mobile enclosed workspace that could be moved around, often to create small temporary offices within bigger ones.

The same principles have dominated the design of our work environments ever since, not least as soaring commercial rents have prompted businesses to economise on space by encouraging employees to work from home. So far, most home workers have adopted the improvisational approach to workplace design favoured by the Blaschkas and Darwin, although few have been as bold as the Spanish furniture designer Fernando Abellanas, who, unable to afford studio rents in Valencia, constructed a suspended workspace with a desk, seat and shelves beneath a concrete road bridge.

What will be the impact of the sudden surge of compulsory home working during COVID-19? The expectation is that lots of people will choose to continue after the pandemic. ‘Working from home works – but will anyone want to go back to the office?’ ran a recent headline in ‘The Guardian’. And why would they? Long-term devotees of home working (like me) often sing its praises. The ability to focus on your work devoid of distractions. The freedom to chop and change your schedule as you please. Rustling up delicious snacks. Avoiding arduous commutes and tedious office politics. Sneakily watching an episode of vintage ‘Top Boy’ in the middle of the afternoon. And so on.

But most of us have chosen to work from home and have been able to kit out offices, studies or desks to meet our needs. There is a huge difference between choosing to adopt a new way of working and suddenly being forced to do so. Not every ‘ingénue’ home worker will emerge from the pandemic having written that novel, completed a long-planned

research project or learnt a new skill.

For some, it will be remembered as a time of anguish over failing relationships, financial crises, or losing loved ones to Covid-19. Even for those who are spared such distress, the collective trauma may prompt them to radically reconsider how they wish to live and work in the future.

Some people will crave the security associated with conventional choices, such as regular employment in a formal workplace. Another group could be drawn to seemingly riskier options that offer greater independence and personal freedom, possibly because they feel empowered by the strength and resilience that they themselves displayed or observed in others during the crisis.

Others will be compelled to continue to work remotely by financially strapped employers



PlayTime, Jacques Tati (1967)
© Les Films de Mon Oncle – Specta Films

who are desperate to cut costs. Those employers will then face the challenge of designing digital ways of nurturing the camaraderie, shared sense of purpose, water-cooler opportunities to spark new ideas in chance conversations and other advantages of traditional shared workplaces among their dispersed staff.

Whatever the outcome of the COVID-19 crisis, and whenever it ends, our ways of working, like so many other aspects of our lives, will never be the same.

Notes on working from home

By Jonathan Olivares



Working remotely will become much more prevalent

Having spent the last two years working from home, designer Jonathan Olivares shares his notes on the process of developing a home office, the historical examples that informed him, and the habits that make it work.

After closing my physical office and spending a year working from everywhere, my preferred work environment gradually became my home. Having never practised design from home before, I had little idea of how it would work: would I live in an office, or work from a home? I was concerned that I would lose my mind being in the same space every day. And I had no idea what new routines and etiquettes I needed to stay productive. I lacked a domestic space that could foster work, and also a regimen and a protocol that would keep me productive.

I first entertained the idea of working from home while interviewing the late Richard Sapper, who had created best-selling products for Alessi, Artemide and IBM from the comfort of his houses in Milan, Lake Como and Los Angeles. Over the course of our fifty plus hours of interviews, which all took place in his homes, it became evident that his work was inextricable from the everyday phenomena – morning coffee, pasta and parmigiano for lunch, a little ‘fire water’ in the evenings – that he and his wife Dorit had cultivated in the company of their three children. Richard often worked on the sofa with his sketches spread out on the coffee table, but he also kept a room dedicated to work, with a desk that was buried in correspondence, tools and models. His walls were covered in pinned up drawings, artworks, posters, and more tools, hanging. Richard’s projects began with a ‘kiss from the muse’, which he often conjured watching the birds from his window. Where my past office had the organisation and schedule of

a laboratory, Richard’s home office provided me with a model that allows for some creative mess and some inspired breaks.

Living in California, with most of my collaborators living east of the Mississippi River and the Atlantic Ocean, I often start the day with an early morning video call. The earliest of these so far was at 4am Pacific Standard Time, where I had to present to a jury in London for a design competition. A routine has formed around these calls. Waking up before sunrise, I first prepare a hot beverage. I don’t dress up, but I also don’t do these calls in anything less than a shirt and pants. As the light changes



dramatically during the early morning hours, I sit in a place that’s dim enough for me to see my screen and bright enough for my face to be lit. I feed my dog. The call begins and I enter the virtual space we are all so familiar with – a space that would be the envy of past generations that had to send telegraphs, take cross-continental boat rides, and pay for long distance phone calls. By the time the call is over

my partner is awake, and we transition into making breakfast.

If the kitchen is the centre of the home, then it must also be the centre of the home office. Looking at photography and reading about the homes of Alexander and Louisa Calder – in Roxbury, Connecticut, and Saché, France – it is evident that everything revolved around the kitchen table. While Alexander would disappear to his home studio all day, he would inevitably return to the kitchen table, which sat on a field of hooked rugs designed by Louisa. Here the couple would spend time with their children, entertain guests, read, draw, drink Alexander's



favourite red wines, and eat Louisa's freshly baked bread. With the Calder's residence as a model, I found the closer I brought my work to the kitchen, the more productive, energetic and enjoyable my days became. Like crop rotation, working, a short break to make a coffee, working more, and then preparing and cooking a meal, each clear my mind and allow me to begin the next activity with greater focus.

Artists and designers who have practised at home abound, as do companies founded from homes – Disney, Nike, Apple – but my favourite home-born entity has to be the Wu-Tang Clan. In Staten Island, working from various

apartments, the RZA recorded the demos for 'Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)' and Method Man's 'Tical'. Then, setting up a recording studio in his basement, he produced, recorded and mixed Old Dirty Bastard, Raekwon, and the GZA's first albums. The RZA describes the basement as a 'dojo' and a 'space for gathering, training, spiritual growth' (The Rza, 'The Tao of Wu', London (Penguin Books Ltd.) 2009, p. 113).

In his philosophical work 'The Tao of Wu' the RZA writes: 'Don't have a lot of people around. Be alone and quiet. You'll start to hear yourself, feel yourself. You'll hear from the you that's not the you your family, society or history have created. You'll hear from the you that's beneath that, the one that's always there with you – the one that contains the God particle.' (The Rza, 'The Tao of Wu', London (Penguin Books Ltd.) 2009, p. 97).

Perhaps the best advantage to working at home is the freedom to carve out sections of the day with out any distractions at all. That being said, distractions can be highly productive because they offer the mind a rest, and there is an art to finding good distractions. Describing his Montblanc Meisterstück Diplomat model pen, George Nelson writes: 'Anyone with a writing chore and a deadline is always looking for some legitimate way to goof off from time to time, and refueling the pen, in this respect, was ideal. Not only did the reservoir and nib have to be washed out in water each time but when the pen was finally filled it had to be wiped carefully with tissue, or your fingers would be semipermanently stained. All this took at least five minutes, and with a little practice I was able to stretch it to ten.' (George Nelson, 'On Design', New York (Whitney Library of Design) 1979, p. 121).

I am perhaps less disciplined than Nelson, as I count a record player, a stockpile of various Japanese incenses, a wood burning fireplace, and the resistance bands and weights I keep in a basket among my many 'work' tools. It just

took me ten minutes to find and play Dyin' to be Dancin' by Empress; incense lights quickly but is critical to reset the atmosphere at the start of a major task; a fire can take a good five minutes to get going, but requires some maintenance every fifteen minutes while it's on; and a training session easily takes up half an hour.

Some tools are more critical than others, and if there is one tool that my home office could not do without, it is the internet modem. An unmemorable grey box, the Arris TM1602 – which I keep in the bottom drawer (facing a wall) of my Joe Colombo Bobby 3 Portable Storage System – is the life-blood of my home office. I was able to convince the internet provider to give me business capacity internet speeds even though I am in a residential neighbourhood. This is not only critical because the Hollywood Hills have notoriously weak mobile phone signal, but also because very little of my work is actually in the house – it is all stored in a Dropbox folder. In the 2014 publication 'SQM', edited by Space Caviar, Joseph Grima writes: 'If data is the new oil, then the home is the new Texas. The contemporary home is indeed a machine, not in the Jacques-Tati-esque sense of an assembly of moving parts, but as a factory of data where every activity of its inhabitants is quantified and broadcast, to the tune of one gigabyte per week.' (Joseph Grima, 'SQM: The Quantified Home', Zurich (Lars Muller Publishers), p. 25). When it comes to data, and most things, I embrace the phrase go big or go home.

Like any home or office, a home office is a work in progress, assembled object by object, room by room, and habit by habit. My latest interest is a coffee table that is high enough that I can pull it up to my daybed and work from it. Georgia O'Keeffe had a table like this in the sitting room of her Abiquiu House. She had it made after returning a Mies van der Rohe table she had bought that wasn't quite right. Her new table had brass legs (instead of steel) and was

wider and taller so that guests could extend their feet underneath it. This process encapsulates the spirit of a home office: you introduce a new object or new habit, you try it out, and it either fails or sticks, until all is just so.



Images: © Sam Frost; Domestic Contours: Ramak Fazeli; The Estate of Pedro E. Guerrero; Ralph Looney, Courtesy, The Albuquerque Museum of Art and History, gift of the Estate of Ralph and Clarabelle Looney

Remote working Planning examples

Home office settings



Home office setting 1

ID Trim, Tyde Workstations (140x70), Happy Bin, Uten.Silo II

Download planning example



Home office setting 2

AC 5 Work Lowback, Compas Direction, Happy Bin, Uten.Silo II

Download planning example

Home office settings



Home office setting 3

Physix, Eames Desk Unit EDU, Eames House Bird, Happy Bin, Uten.Silo II

Download planning example



Home office setting 4

Soft Pad EA 219, Tyde, L'Oiseau, Hexagonal Containers, Happy Bin, Uten.Silo II

Download planning example

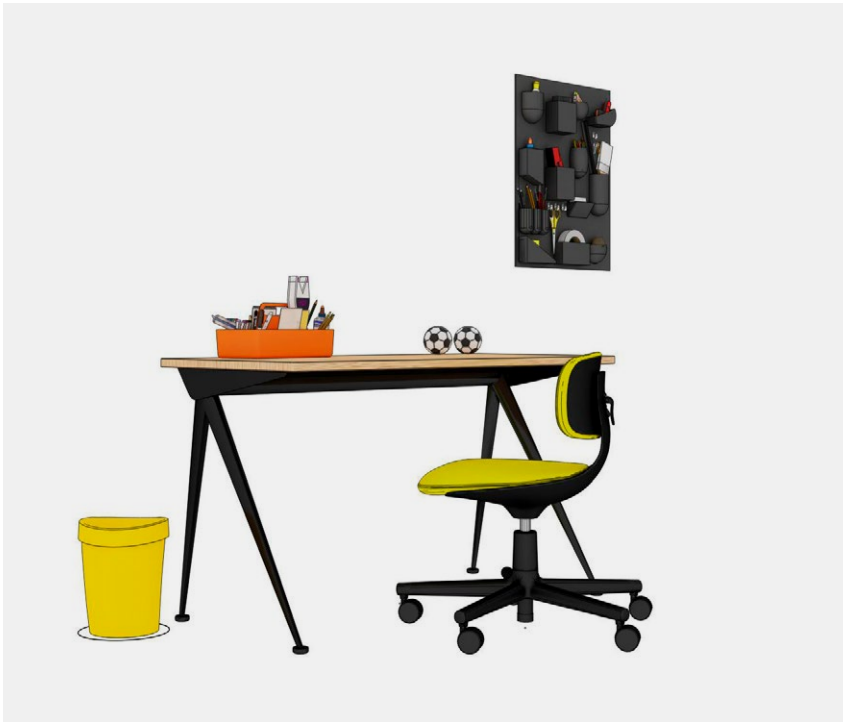
Home office settings



Home office setting 5

AC 5 Work Lowback,
Compas Direction, Happy Bin,
Uten.Silo II

Download planning example



Home office setting 6

Rookie, Compas Direction,
Toolbox, Happy Bin,
Uten.Silo II

Download planning example

Home office settings

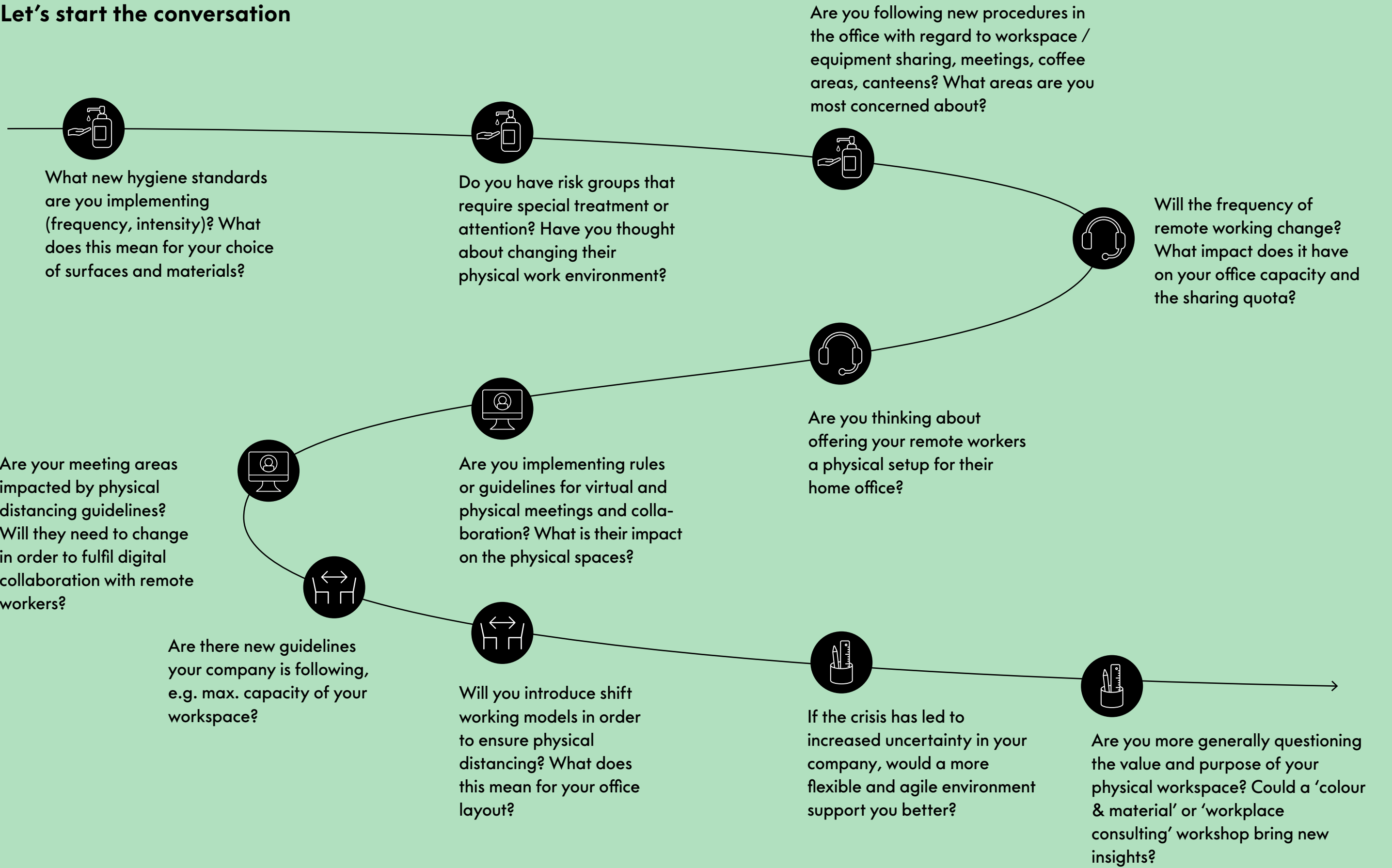


Home office setting 7

Fauteuil Direction Pivotant,
Tyde Workstations, Resting
Bird, Hexagonal Containers,
Happy Bin, Uten.Silo II

Download planning example

Let's start the conversation



We're here to help

Do you need support preparing for a successful return to your physical offices? Our teams are here to help you pave the way by developing safe workplaces and facilitating the 'next normal' with tailor-made solutions.

vitra.com/backtotheoffice

Connect with us

[instagram.com/vitra](https://www.instagram.com/vitra)

[linkedin.com/company/vitra](https://www.linkedin.com/company/vitra)

[facebook.com/vitra](https://www.facebook.com/vitra)

[pinterest.com/vitra](https://www.pinterest.com/vitra)

[twitter.com/vitra](https://www.twitter.com/vitra)

#vitra #backtotheoffice