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Can home ergonomics equal that of the office?

INSIDE

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Perception of security officers has changed

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Role of hard FM services remains crucial
Secure the new hygiene standard

It's time to go back. And move forward. Create a new normal. Together. This will include a new hygiene standard. It might feel overwhelming, but we are by your side. With extensive global experience in professional hygiene, Tork is here to support you with the knowledge and expertise you need.

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Tork, an Essity brand
We recently conducted a poll in partnership with Informa, the organisers of Facilities Show, to help create a snapshot of FM practice during COVID-19.

It covered a range of topics, including whether premises were being prepared for reduced occupancy levels; if staff would continue to work from home or adopt a blended, home and workplace-based routine; and how workplace strategies were being maintained, including sustainability, compliance and performance.

The results, which we’ll go into in more detail in next month’s issue, revealed that FMs are not only dealing with the more immediate disruption caused by the pandemic, but remain focused on longer term strategies, in particular wellbeing and sustainability.

Balancing health and safety with sustainability isn’t straightforward. Due to the pandemic, many field service suppliers have had to increase the use of motor vehicles to reduce their operative’s reliance on public transport, while research has revealed that many people’s reluctance to return to the workplace is due to the perceived bio hazards of the commute rather than being based back in the office.

With that in mind we asked our respondents whether they were looking at supporting sustainable routes to work? Over a third (38 per cent) are already exploring ways of increasing the provision of amenities such as cycle racks, lockers and showers.

Yet the feature on page 28 suggests that the sector can actually go a lot further than give cyclists access to a shower at the end of their journey.

They can lobby local authorities about route planning and the installation of footpath and cycle lanes, consider opening more local offices to reduce the need for a long commute and invest in electric vehicles (EV) for their maintenance vans. With more and more FM fleets aiming to hit zero carbon emissions it looks like sustainable travel will be a major trend for facilities management in the coming year.

As always, we’d welcome your feedback about any aspect of the magazine, together with your insight into what’s happening in the FM sector.
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NOVEMBER 2020

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**FOR THE DECEMBER/JANUARY ISSUE**

For the December/January issue we round off an extraordinary year with a round table discussion with our editorial steering committee panel on FM practice during the pandemic. We hear how the cleaning and hygiene industry has been assessing the huge impact of the Coronavirus and the lockdown on different sectors, businesses; and operatives; discover why a lack of understanding about the role that a BMS has in reducing operational carbon emissions means that many FMs are missing out on an effective and simple mechanism to reduce the operational carbon emissions of their buildings; and our case study describes how a leading financial organisation has established a new innovative operating model for managing its buildings.

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**LEGAL VIEW - EMPLOYMENT**

**CARRYING OUT REDUNDANCIES FAIRLY**

_by Alan Lewis, Constantine Law_

For many businesses the end of the furlough scheme and the jury still out on the Job Support Scheme has meant redundancies have become an inevitable prospect. So, what can employers do to make sure that they act fairly in making redundancy dismissals and thereby minimise the risks of claims for compensation for unfair dismissal from staff with more than two years’ continuous service?

The starting point is to be confident that there is a genuine redundancy situation. This is where there is a potential closure of a business, of a place of work or a reduced need for employees to carry out work of a particular kind. So, for instance, dismissing an employee who is costing the business too much and replacing them with someone on a lower salary, cannot be a redundancy situation because there has been no reduction in the number of employees required to do that kind of work.

The employer must follow a fair process of identifying who is at risk of redundancy. What is the pool of employees to select from? This can be straightforward (such as all the warehouse operatives where there is a need to reduce 10 warehouse operatives to six) but may be a little more complex. Imagine an HR team with an HR manager and two assistants and the business wants to operate without the manager. At first sight, the pool is one, the HR manager. But what about the fact that the HR manager could do the job of an assistant? On that basis, if the HR manager is prepared to be considered for an assistant role, the pool is three.

In other words, there is always a need to consider interchangeable skills.

Having identified the pool, there must be some fair method of selecting those who are provisionally redundant. This is usually done by scoring each person against a set of selection criteria, such as disciplinary record, attendance record, skills and qualifications and so on. It can be appropriate to give more weight to scores against certain criteria (for instance, skills and qualifications) than others.

Sometimes, particularly where a new type of role has been created, it will be appropriate to select successful candidates for the role by selection interviews, rather than scoring.

Individual consultation with selected employees is key before any dismissal decision is taken. Save for collective consultation (see below), this can be done fairly quickly, often with just two meetings. It is important that consultation is seen to be genuine and that employees are made aware of any alternative job vacancies in the company or with associated companies for which they can apply.

Employees dismissed for redundancy should always be informed of their right to appeal the decision. Any appeal hearings should be chaired by someone without involvement earlier in the process.

Where 20 or more redundancy dismissals within a 90-day period or less are contemplated, the first step is to collectively consult with trade union or elected employee representatives for at least 30 days before the first dismissal takes effect (or for at least 45 days where 100 or more dismissals are contemplated in 90 days or less).

**BESA INTRODUCES ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP SCHEME**

The Building Engineering Services Association (BESA) has launched a new membership category catering for individuals with a particular interest in the building services industry.

This is a significant development for the 116-year-old trade body, which has previously only admitted companies and corporate organisations into membership.

BESA said the new associate member category would provide a ‘home’ for individuals who have wanted to engage with the organisation and gain access to specialist knowledge and share their own expertise, but had no avenue to do so in the past.

They are expected to include consultants, academics, retired engineers, other experts and young engineers including apprentices and trainees. The new category will seek to create communities of like-minded individuals with tailored content covering their area of interest and supporting their personal development goals.

It will give those involved opportunities to network and provide them with insight into the sector and its ‘hot topics’. They will be able to raise their professional profiles through membership of BESA and share ideas, problems and solutions.

They will also be given access to training materials via the new online BESA Academy.

BESA associate members will receive a comprehensive suite of benefits including:
- an invitation to join relevant BESA specialist groups;
- the use of a special BESA logo;
- inclusion in social media groups;
- the opportunity to contribute to industry research and access to reports; political consultations and articles.

The new grade of membership does not provide access to the comprehensive suite of services enjoyed by ‘full’ company members, such as legal and commercial support, or the Association’s governance. Individual membership also cannot be used for project tendering purposes.

**ENGIE TO HELP SOUTH SOMERSET ACHIEVE ZERO CARBON GOALS**

Engie has been contracted by South Somerset District Council (SSDC) to develop a net zero carbon roadmap to help achieve zero carbon at 10 of its largest energy-consuming sites.

The move follows SSDC’s declaration of a climate ecological emergency in May 2019 and publication of an environment strategy that sets out immediate actions and long-term goals for achieving significant reductions in carbon emissions.

The South Somerset district covers an area of 370 square miles and ranges from its borders with Devon, Wiltshire and Dorset to the edge of the Somerset Levels. The District Council’s environment strategy sets out ambitious targets with a goal of reaching carbon neutrality by 2030.

Engie will carry out energy audits and carbon assessments of all the sites involved and develop a carbon reduction waterfall to identify priority areas where the greatest reductions can be achieved. This will map out a path to enable SSDC to achieve optimum carbon savings in the most efficient and cost-effective ways.
Serco increases 2020 forecasts following strong revenue growth in Q3

Serco Group, has provided an unscheduled update on the outlook for trading in 2020. In a recent trading update statement, the international provider of services to governments says it has achieved “strong revenue growth in the third quarter” and this, in conjunction with “good cost control”, means it is upgrading its full year revenue guidance to around £3.9 billion (prior guidance £3.7 billion) and underlying trading profit to £160 million to £185 million (£135 million to £150 million).

This would represent organic growth in revenues of around 15 per cent, growth in UTP of over 30 per cent, and a UTP margin of just above 4 per cent.

Serco added the range of outcomes around these numbers, up or down, is expected “and as a result it are performing better than expected and a result it has increased its forecasts for 2020.

In the UK, Serco has been awarded extensions to its contracts to provide test sites and call handlers for NHS Test & Trace. It has also seen increases in the number of asylum seekers it is looking after on behalf of the Home Office, and its new Prisoner Escorting contract has been successfully mobilised. Added to that Serco has announced it has secured an extension to the Emergency Measures Agreement on the Caledonian Sleepers to the end of the year.

Looking ahead to 2021, Serco expects the uncertainties of 2020 will persist into 2021 with recurring outbreaks of infection.

BCO HONOURS LONDON’S BEST WORKPLACES

Five London businesses have been recognised at the annual British Council for Offices’ (BCO) regional awards.

This year, the prestigious event which marked the 12th year of the BCO Regional Awards dedicated to London was held virtually as part of the BCO’s Festival Awards Week, which recognises the highest quality developments in the UK and sets the standard for excellence in the regional and national office sector.

Brunel Building, 1&2 Canal Side Walk won the Best Commercial Workplace award. This is a people focused establishment, centre around the daily desires of workers, such as access to the canal and underground tube lines, flexible office space and enhanced natural light and air provision. Judges have particularly praised the solar shading incorporated in the external structure, which provides passive energy saving and addresses environmental concerns held by occupiers.

Pennington Street Warehouse won the Best Corporate Workplace award. The judges referred to this workplace as somewhere that “put a smile on everyone’s face”. The judges were struck by the remarkable adaptation of a London Dock Grade II listed building into a single, creative and collaborative design studio, as well as the commitment to sustainability through local sourcing of key materials.

Post Building, won Best Fit Out Of Workplace. The refurbishment of The Post Building into McKinsey’s new workspace has taken the company from an old, traditional office into a new, modern space that drives efficiency, enables flexibility and improves connectivity between colleagues. Judges were particularly impressed by the building’s focus on access to natural light in aid of workers wellness, encouraging the business to build healthy behaviours.

160 Old Street won both the Refurbished / Recycled Workplace and the Innovation Awards. The judges were struck by the transformation of this space from a neglected 1970s building into an innovative, sustainable and modern development. Chieflly, the use of an innovative smart building app which informs occupants of the latest local events and offerings, as well as allowing workers control over the light and temperature of their personal desk space, creating a truly enjoyable and personalised experience at work.

5-6 Eccleston Yards has won the Projects Up To 1,500m category. This development has completely reviewed the way their business works and the role of the workspace in supporting this. The central circulation spine not only spreads natural air across the office but creates an open environment which occupiers feel at ease working within. Judges noted how the extended window space has allowed workers to better engage with nature throughout the day, enabling them to be their best every day.

Dates for the FM Diary 1181-1210 May 2021

03-06 November 2020
Interclen Amsterdam
Virtual event
www.interclensehow.com/innermedam
03-12 November 2020
Workplace week International
Virtual event
https://www.workplaceweek.com/
11-12 November 2020
Luxlive Digital Festival
Virtual event
https://luxlive.co.uk
25-26 January 2021
Facilities Management Forum
Radisson Red, London Heathrow
www.facilitiesmanagementforum.co.uk
09-10 March 2021
Smart Home Expo
NEC Birmingham
www.smartometechlive.co.uk
16-18 March 2021
The Cleaning Show 2021
ExCel, London
https://cleaningshow.co.uk/london
04-06 May 2021
UK Construction Week London
ExCel, London
https://www.ukconstructionweek.com
11-12 May 2021
Hotel Facilities Management Expo
ExCel, London
www.hfmexpo.co.uk
22-23 September 2021
RWM Exhibition
NEC Birmingham
www.rwmxhibition.com

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25-26 January 2021
Facilities Management Forum
Radisson Red, London Heathrow
www.facilitiesmanagementforum.co.uk
09-10 March 2021
Smart Home Expo
NEC Birmingham
www.smartometechlive.co.uk
16-18 March 2021
The Cleaning Show 2021
ExCel, London
https://cleaningshow.co.uk/london
04-06 May 2021
UK Construction Week London
ExCel, London
https://www.ukconstructionweek.com
11-12 May 2021
Hotel Facilities Management Expo
ExCel, London
www.hfmexpo.co.uk
22-23 September 2021
RWM Exhibition
NEC Birmingham
www.rwmxhibition.com

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NEWS & ANALYSIS

ASSOCIATION NEWS

NEW GLOBAL PROCUREMENT CODE INTRODUCED FOR FMS

The critical expertise of RICS professionals across corporate, commercial and facility management is making a unique contribution around the world and delivering solutions to evolving challenges. As we enhance their professionalism through common practice standards, we are pleased to announce a new Global Code of practice which is designed to bring transparency and consistency to the facility management procurement process.

Clients and service providers will benefit from new clear guidance on the key factors that need to be considered through the planning, procurement and post-procurement of facility management services, helping to uphold high professional standards.

Designed to be applicable globally, the new code will support public and private sector property professionals to help clients understand the value of facility management expertise.

This code of practice (CoP) is aimed at property professionals involved in a facility management (FM) procurement process either within their territory or region, or globally. This includes property managers, directors of estates, heads of FM, consultants, RICS-regulated firms acting for a landlord and FM suppliers procuring services from subcontractors. Those managing in-house teams delivering FM services may also find some of the content helpful. This CoP is also aimed at professionals who have already decided to procure FM services, whether single sourced, bundled or TFM/IFM services, or those who have previously outsourced services and are engaging in a reprocurement process.

The CoP provides guidance on the various factors that need to be considered throughout a procurement process, including activities and key decisions during planning, procurement and postprocurement. It aims to:

- Help the professional choose an appropriate procurement route and;
- Consider the various factors in delivering an effective procurement process that results in a successful contract with benefits for both the client organisation and the supplier.

For RICS-regulated firms procuring FM on behalf of a landlord, care should be taken to comply with the current edition of the RICS professional statement, Service charges in commercial property.

We’re pleased to roll out the new code for procuring facilities management services to ensure the agreement of common practice standards, transparency and consistency – all of which underpin successful delivery – on a global basis.

The code ensures there is a level playing field and clarity on what is going to be delivered before anyone, be it a client or a facilities provider, signs on the dotted line. In the UK the industry has already benefited as these guidelines have been used for over two years – now the global facilities management sector will be able to use this best practice to uphold high professional standards and deliver services that satisfy consumers.

For more details visit www.rics.org

NEW IOSH PRESIDENT SAYS INSTITUTE IS RIGHT BEHIND ITS MEMBERS

From the outset of the pandemic, IOSH has provided support for its members around the world, to help them guide their businesses on looking after their people. This has included an online resource hub, full of key information including how to reopen workplaces safely. The Institution has also run regular webinars.

To ensure the profession supports businesses into the future, it is crucial that it continues to recruit a high calibre of people, something he is keen to focus on in his Presidential year.

This can be done in two ways: through people seeking a career change moving into safety and health and through those starting their working life.

IOSH supports members new to the profession in a number of ways, including its Future Leaders Programme, competency framework, career hub, mentoring platform and Student Membership category. Quinn himself is an Army Veteran of two-and-a-half decades and said the support he received from IOSH and some of its members when he changed career was invaluable.

“The guidance I received from IOSH helped me navigate the difficult transition into a new career. Without that support, I wouldn’t be speaking to you as President today, and I am grateful for that. I am keen that people who are starting out in the profession, whether it’s their first career or they’ve just made a career change, receive the same level of support as I did.”
Smoke control is a crucial life safety system. It needs to be carefully designed, properly installed and meticulously commissioned by recognised experts. Once installed, it must be regularly checked and maintained by qualified engineers. These people should hold recognised third-party certification.

Smoke kills twice as many people as fire.
Fire grabs more headlines but it is the smoke that’s more likely to kill you. It takes only 2-3 breaths of toxic smoke to knock you out. 5-10 minutes of smoke inhalation can cause permanent brain damage. You could be dead within 15 minutes.

Smoke control is too important to be entrusted to a ‘fire company’.
Although clearly related to fire, smoke control systems demand specific, thorough maintenance by specialist engineers. Too often, smoke control is lumped in with fire alarms and security and then “subbed out to a smoke vent or AOV man”. Sadly, not all of these are fully qualified or competent.

Customers trust our smoke control servicing.
Our engineers undergo thorough and comprehensive training from experienced staff on joining. This is refreshed regularly and supplemented whenever there are important developments or regulatory updates.

Colt has been the industry’s leading smoke control expert for over 70 years. Our engineers are qualified to service all smoke control systems – not just our own.

It’s no surprise then, that when looking for someone reliable and trustworthy to handle the design, installation and maintenance of their smoke control, so many more people do the same thing. They choose the most qualified. Colt.

To find out more, visit: coltinfo.co.uk/service-maintenance Alternatively, call us on 02392 491735 or email: service@uk.coltgroup.com

Using a ‘fire company’ for your smoke control maintenance could be dangerous.

Choose Colt
Workplace Trend’s flagship October conference should have taken place at the National Gallery, but due to the pandemic switched to an online platform, chaired by Mark Catchlove of Herman Miller Insight Group. The theme of the day, “Success in Uncertain Times” was certainly very apt and although the agenda comprised a broad mix of topics, including home and agile working, the future of real estate and understanding change management; as the final speaker of the day, Neil Usher remarked, we really spent the whole day thinking about change in all its fascinating ways.

For the opening session, Tim Oldman, founder and CEO of Leesman presented data from Leesman’s working from home survey and how it related to the rest of the day’s topics. His revelation that the majority (82 per cent) of staff agreed that their home working setting allows them to work productively compared to 62 per cent in the office suggests there are some serious long-term decisions to be made about the state of the workplace.

Oldman warned that FM has some massive challenges. Over the last 10 years the sector has distanced itself from the services side of the job, for example cleaning, but now more than ever is embracing these operational aspects. He concluded that employers need to cultivate a much deeper understanding of how employees are coping with home and hybrid working, or risk ‘sentiment drift’.

Delving deeper into the Leesman research shows that the satisfaction rates of home workers is dependent on a wide range of factors. In his examination of long term WFH, Guy Osmond of Osmond Ergonomics outlined why it’s important to examine the individual needs of workers, from their personal circumstances to their personality type.

He explained there is an enormous variation in home working. It’s very pleasant for those working in a study with a view across a field but not so great if you’re sharing with flatmates or in a bedroom and can’t get away from your work area. Worryingly he also reported seeing a marked increase in the number of people with musculoskeletal disorders who never had any issues prior to the pandemic. He advised that rather than organisations providing loans to staff to source their own ergonomic desks and chairs that it’s left to the experts in FM to manage.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Employers’ legal responsibility for health and safety was considered in an eye-opening session by Simon Joyston-Bechal of Turnstone Law who looked at working from home and how far employers’ duties extend. There was so much to process in this session that Joyston-Bechal will produce a full report on the legal aspects of COVID-19 in the Workplace in the December issue of FMJ.

While for some of those WFH, the issue is that we’ve been plunged into a new way of working but we need some management and training on how to deal with it.

Wrapping up the day, author, blogger & GoSpace Chief Workplace Officer Neil Usher explored seven key areas in which the dominant notion of the 21st Century workplace has been entirely flipped during the turbulent year of 2020.

He noted that every aspect of the workplace industry has been geared around the idea of static environments which is in complete opposition to the element of change. We sense change all around us now he said, which is better as “normal is boring”.

It’s the first time in history we’re able to work together without being in the same physical space, affording us one amongst a series of places where we can work. Excitingly, this gives us the potential to untether ourselves from the notion of “normal old money”. For example, instead of looking at the working week in a sculpted way, with mid-week being collaboration days and Friday’s being working from home days, why don’t we style it depending on what we need to do each day?

With so many of us now working from home and dodging the long commute there is an opportunity to really focus on the communities we live in and instead of designing our offices for full occupancy, wake up to the impossibility of every worker being in the workplace all at once, for they never are. From a sustainability point of view alone the traditional office behemoth is not environmentally responsible which is why “going forward this means we should design only what we need and release the rest.”

Given that the pandemic isn’t going away soon, workplace managers, FMs and CRE have got some breathing space to consider the longer term, strategic view. As Puybaraud concluded, “Offensive is a long path but the best in my opinion as I’m a long-time advocate of the transformation of the workplace. Like Neil, I think that normal is boring”.

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

The Workplace Trends annual conference included some innovative ideas for the long-term future of the workplace which facilities managers could be well advised to consider says Sara Bean
Get them sorted with over 18,000 products IN STOCK, all available for same day* and next day delivery!

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0808 168 28 28

ONLINE: Shop 24/7
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CONTACT TRACING AND COVID-19

There are regulations in place for certain industry sectors to ensure that they have track and trace controls in place. This specifically relates to venues in hospitality, the tourism and leisure industry, close contact services and local authority facilities.

THESE ORGANISATIONS MUST:

- Ask at least one member of every party of customers or visitors (up to six people) to provide their name and contact details.
- Keep a record of all staff working on their premises and shift times on a given day and their contact details.
- Keep these records of customers, visitors and staff for 21 days and provide data to NHS Test and Trace if requested.
- Display an official NHS QR code poster from 24 September 2020, so that customers and visitors can 'check in' using this option as an alternative to providing their contact details.
- Adhere to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
- Hospitality venues must also refuse entry to those who refuse to participate.

Failure to undertake any of these requirements will result in fixed penalty fines.

CONTACT TRACING APP

The contact tracing app was rolled out from the 24 September 2020. The Government has urged businesses to display NHS QR Code posters on entry to their premises, which are able to be scanned by the app, so that individuals that attend certain locations can be identified and notified in the event of an outbreak related to that location.

The app will then be used in conjunction with the more traditional approach to contact track and tracing methods, by staff employed to manually carry out these duties. The contact tracing information remains on the individual’s phone for 21 days before being deleted.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Collection of Contact Details etc and Related Requirements) Regulations 2020 support the new track and trace requirements for organisations. Under these Regulations, requirements on organisations include:

- Asking at least one member of every party of customers or visitors (up to six people) to provide their name and contact details. Where the party is larger than six, then it must be broken down into smaller groups and have a designated person provide their details.
- Details gathered from the individual must be: name; time of visit to venue; size of group; either email/phone number/or postal address.
- Keeping a record of all staff working on their premises and shift times on a given day and their contact details.
- Keeping these records of customers, visitors and staff for 21 days and provide data to NHS Test and Trace if requested. Following which they must be securely destroyed as soon as possible after that date.
- Displaying an official NHS QR code poster, so that customers and visitors can ‘check in’ using this option as an alternative to providing their contact details.
- Adhering to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Retention periods

- The track and trace app currently stores individuals’ information for 21 days before deleting it.

TEST AND TRACE FOR STAFF

Staff exhibiting symptoms must isolate in line with Government guidance and seek a test at the earliest possible time.

- For staff that test positive, they will be contacted by the NHS Test and Trace and asked to provide details regarding anyone they have had close contact with.

- Staff should be kept informed about possible cases of the virus amongst their colleagues, but individuals who have or may have the virus should not be named. In most cases, the duty to protect the health and safety of your employees by informing them that they may have been in contact with the virus will over-ride the confidentiality risk, but each situation should be considered individually.

DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION (GDPR AND THE DATA PROTECTION ACT 2018)

As part of developing and establishing these controls, organisations must consider how any bespoke controls they develop conform to the requirements of GDPR and The Data Protection Act 2018.

This would include conducting a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to fully understand the impact of their system upon an individual’s rights and freedoms.

Data protection notices – Individuals must be given information that explains what data is being gathered, why, how it will be used, who it will be shared with, how long it will be kept for.

Lawful grounds – The lawful ground for gathering contact tracing information is currently a Legal Requirement.

Retention periods – The track and trace app currently stores individuals’ information for 21 days before deleting it.

Accuracy of information – Under track and trace it is only necessary to keep an accurate record of the information provided. There is no requirement to ask for evidence such as driving licences, etc.

Individuals’ rights – An individual has the right to ask you to tell them what information you have on them, and to request that it is corrected if the information is found to be incorrect.

Sharing of information – Only share contact tracing information with public authorities and ensure that you verify the identity of anyone requesting this information on behalf of a public authority.

Handling of information – Restrict access to tracking information to a limited number of staff and train them regarding the need to keep this information private and secure.

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When the world as we know it came to a grinding halt in March 2020 and the country was thrown into lockdown, you would have been forgiven for thinking the need to complete statutory testing – both on residential properties and commercial – had stopped, too.

This has been one of the biggest misconceptions to emerge in our industry during the pandemic and, especially in those early days when the nation was gripped with uncertainty, maintenance work in many residential properties was put on hold as landlords and tenants alike struggled to come to terms with the circumstances we all found ourselves in.

However, the fact is, nothing changed from a facilities management perspective. Statutory testing has continued to be required throughout, along with the need to conduct regulatory maintenance tasks, inspections, and remedial work.

But, as the weeks passed, and landlords became more aware of the need to ensure continued compliance with regulation, another issue emerged – accessing tenants’ properties.

In the midst of a global virus pandemic, when many residents were being asked to stay at home, landlords’ duties to keep their premises safe became even more important.

Yet many residents were understandably nervous about allowing engineers into their homes at a time when they couldn’t even see their families.

Facilities management companies had to adapt fast - providing reassurance and empathy in what was, and continues to be, a challenging situation.

TAKING CONTROL

It would be easy for FM companies to get caught up in the chaos of the pandemic. However, it is important to remember the crucial role we play in helping landlords maintain the safety of their properties. And, at a time like this, when tenants are more likely to be in and around the home, that role has never been more important.

For us, this meant taking control of the situation and putting in place clear policies for residential property visits. Many of the landlords we work with were feeling nervous and wanted to protect their tenants from the risk of coronavirus.

We proactively tackled the issue by sharing our working policies and practices with them and their tenants, providing the reassurance they needed that our teams would access their properties in a safe, COVID-secure way.

WORKING PRACTICES

Key to gaining access to tenants’ properties is a conversation with the tenant in advance. We have taken this on ourselves, contacting residents directly on behalf of the landlords we work with to allay their concerns and assess their level of both risk and anxiety.

For example, how we approach a tenant who has a family member who’s required to shield would be different to how we would approach a young couple.

Of course, the use of full PPE plays an important part in reassuring tenants, as does ensuring frequent hand-washing and the wiping down of any touchpoints with sanitiser.

All of these processes have become part of our day-to-day working practices at Signum. Additionally, each of our employees must complete a daily Covid assessment before starting work, ensuring nobody with any sign or symptom of the virus goes on site.

STRIKING A BALANCE

In recent months, as the lockdown has eased, gaining access to properties to conduct testing and maintenance had become an easier task, as people started to relax and become accustomed to having people in their home.

However, as the government’s guidance continues to change – with the ‘rule of six’ being recently introduced for example – we have found tenants are becoming increasingly nervous again.

This is understandable and, of course, both landlords and FM companies need to prioritise the health and wellbeing of tenants at all times, but this must not be at the expense of regulatory requirements.

Landlords are legally responsible for the proper maintenance of their properties. Manual inspections, such as EICR electrical testing and the safety checks and servicing of gas appliances, need to continue and have an important role to play in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of tenants, too.

It is our job as FM professionals to fulfill this role in a way that provides comfort, reassurance and empathy to tenants and landlords, in this strange new world.

Ensure landlords are aware that their maintenance responsibilities haven’t ceased

But bear in mind they will be concerned about tenants’ health and wellbeing

Take the time to proactively share Covid-secure working policies with landlords and tenants in advance

Book visits well in advance of due dates to allow for rescheduling

Assess the risk level of tenants and have a conversation with them

Make sure your Covid precautions are visible to tenants, from wearing PPE to frequent hand washing and sanitisation on site
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**ADVICE & OPINION**

**FAST FACTS**

**HOME ELECTRICS**

**FMJ AIMS TO SUPPORT TECHNICAL EXPERTISE IN THE FM MARKET**

Darren Tonge, Sales Director at Hawkesworth on the importance of ensuring that you don’t overlook electrical equipment testing for those working at home

As you will be more than aware, Coronavirus has had a massive impact on the facilities management industry, with buildings closing their doors to the general public and staff being encouraged to work from home where they can. The Government began by encouraging employees to return to the office over the past few months to kick-start the economy and encourage city and town centres to start trading again, but a recent surge in cases means that advice has been reversed to asking people to work from home where they can.

Some organisations are encouraging staff to continue to work outside of the office environment for the time being; for example, Royal Bank of Scotland is allowing its 50,000 staff to work remotely until the start of 2021.

**YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES**

For FMs, your responsibilities don’t just extend to the building you look after. It extends to the staff too. Health and safety requirements apply to all employees whether they are in the office or at home, in line with The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. As the designated duty holder for the building, the appointed facilities manager is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of employees, regardless of whether they are working in the office or working at home. This means that if you are a facilities manager for a building and you have staff working from home, you need to ensure their electrical equipment continues to operate in a safe condition.

Staff working from home may not be aware of the potential fire risks of working from home, leaving phones and laptops charging on beds and sofas as well as overloading extension sockets and reels. This is something that would be closely monitored and controlled in a building.

**ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT TESTING AND HOME WORKING**

Electrical equipment testing (or PAT testing) is still far the best way to ensure printers, monitors, extension leads and chargers are safe to use and will not cause a fire risk. Electrical equipment testing should be carried out by a ‘competent person’, at a frequency appropriate to a business’s needs. The frequency of this used to be automatically determined, but in line with the IET’s release of the 5th edition, it is now decided by a risk assessment. This risk assessment takes into consideration factors including working environment, the type of equipment, frequency of use and equipment service life.

If staff are working from home, there are two ways you can still provide electrical equipment testing to staff and ensure compliance. You can carry out testing at an employee’s home, where the person responsible for testing carries out testing there. Home testing can be more convenient for the employee and ensures their home setup is safe but can be expensive.

Alternatively, you can test equipment when employees attend the office, for example for a performance review or team meeting. This is a more cost-effective solution but can be hard to coordinate and requires staff to bring heavy or cumbersome pieces of equipment into the workplace.

**TESTING IN THE OFFICE – WHAT HAS CHANGED?**

As well as arranging electrical equipment testing for those working from home, testing priorities in the office environment may have changed where buildings have started to reopen. For example, onsite catering facilities have now been reduced, meaning staff are more likely to make their own teas and coffees, as well as bring food in from home that needs heating.

Physical distancing has meant having to use additional extension cables to ensure staff are adequately spaced out from one another and can still use their computers and phones. We are more reliant on our computers to carry out Zoom and Microsoft Team meetings and coordinate with each other on channels like Slack and Trello.

These factors mean it is more vital than ever to ensure this electrical equipment is working and is safe to use. In the best-case scenario, you run the risk of frustrated and angry staff; in the worst-case scenario, you run the risk of loss of assets, structural damage to your building and most critically, the potential loss of life.

The FM sector has had to drastically change the way it works over the past year and work hard to keep clients happy. Even though buildings are now starting to reopen, things are not quite back to normal just yet, and with winter around the corner, there is still the possibility of a second wave and a return to working from home.

Staff safety is still imperative, whether employees are working from home or have returned to the office, and electrical equipment tests should not be disregarded just because of a change of location.
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**Long-Term Thinking**

It’s time to think about the long-term. And, amidst the madness and uncertainty, take a positive stance. COVID-19 will be here for some time. More flexibility, pivoting and adaptation will be required. Yet, despite the regrettable but understandable side-step from the ‘return to work’ push, we must recognise that sometimes a step back is needed in order to have a running start. Therefore, this period should be used to plan, prepare, and collectively further our understanding on the long-term role technology will play in the office. The spotlight is on the enlightened FMs who are rightly resisting knee-jerk responses when it comes to deciding the fate of the future workplace.

COVID-19 has brought unprecedented personal and professional challenges. FMs have risen to this, acting swiftly to safeguard their employees and adapt to an unforeseen new way of working. They should be proud of that and take stock of the role they have played thus far. However, the journey is only just beginning. The latest ‘pause’ should be used to reanalyse the large-scale work from home experiment to address the dilemma they have on their hands when it comes to surplus corporate real estate. Workplaces are near empty and, coupled with social distancing rules when the time comes to return, have too much space to host what is predicted to be 30 per cent -50 per cent drop in occupancy. It’s time to reimagine how work is done—and what role offices will play—in creative and bold ways.

This has all shifted FM up the business agenda, and you can rest assured that it will remain at the top for some time. That’s because social distancing is going to transform the workplace. Effective workplace social distancing goes beyond removing desks or marking one-way systems with coloured tape. Everything should be effectively configured with clearly marked and coloured coded desks and spaces which can be used each day. These systems can be displayed on digital signage throughout a building and on employee return to work (RTW) apps which allow an employee to pre-book a cleaned desk and co-ordinate diaries with colleagues. The overarching objective is to aid business continuity and keep people safe.

This is an opportunity for FM professionals to make a big difference. A combination of behavioural change and new systems, processes, policies and ways of working will be vital in achieving a safe return to work programme when the time comes.

Employers will need to remain proactive and nimble given the highly unpredictable situation and the constant possibility that additional outbreaks will occur. A data-led approach will support this and ensure longevity when it comes to business continuity and workplace safety and compliance. This insight, gleaned from workplace technology, can support FMs as they challenge plans to dramatically downsize property portfolios.

Space bookings and occupancy sensors which are linked to cleaning systems and processes can provide a highly effective and visual reassurance of internal COVID-19 control measures. There are fiscal benefits to be had with this and it provides a full audit trail and traceability. Environmental sensors can also play a role with automated and localised adjustments to Building Management Systems (BMS) and HVAC conditions which are critical in maintaining a safe and healthy environment across different parts of the building.

However, workplace technology must be combined with proactive communication. Staff will want to be reassured that their employers have taken every possible measure to keep them safe and protected from infection risks with digital ‘building health’ displays linked to the BMS and digital signage. This demonstrates that the building is maintained within ‘safe and complaint’ environmental conditions.

Many of us want to get back to the workplace. But we need to accept the situation for what it is and work together to simply make things better and more streamlined for when we can eventually return to the office. It’s time to break from the past by dispensing with suboptimal old habits and systems. Change is here and we must accept and adapt to it. The union of FM and workplace technology will enable us all to create a better workplace experience for talent, improve collaboration and productivity, and reduce costs. That kind of change will require behaviour which is grounded in facts. Data from workplace technology can provide just that.
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This November marks two years since the British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM) became the Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management (IWFM) with the aim of working towards chartered body status. Have those plans been derailed by the impact of the pandemic? What is the IWFM doing to help existing members through these challenging times? How can the Institute remain relevant to up and coming FMs and attract and retain membership levels?

In FMJ’s regular monthly column, our team of FM experts answer your questions about the world of facilities management.

**A:**
**THE IWFM’S VIEW**
LINDA HAUSMANIS, CEO OF IWFM

It’s been two years since the launch of the Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management (IWFM). The move marked a bold new direction for the Institute. We sought to reframe the rationale for FM to foster a better understanding of the value that facilities and workplace professionals can contribute to the success of organisations, and to empower and enable them to reach their full potential.

At the time of the name change, we set out our ambition to become a chartered professional body; and as we illustrated to members at our AGM last month, the work we have been doing since that time is focussed on meeting the conditions necessary to achieve that goal.

Back in 2018, no one predicted the global crisis that has unfolded this year – up-ending society and the economy and transforming the way we work, perhaps forever. Yet in the face of the biggest challenge we have seen in decades, the workplace and facilities profession has proven itself to be innovative, resilient and above all, essential.

Far from making the role of these professionals irrelevant, the shift of hundreds of thousands of employees to a remote-working model has proven just how vital the profession is to the success of organisations. From setting the start of the crisis, this ‘super connector’ profession has held the key to bringing together the space, culture and technology aspects of work into a coherent whole, a workplace strategy, that has enabled organisations and individuals to remain productive, whatever their setting. From managing the transition to remote working, to reviewing business continuity plans, overseeing deep cleaning and maintaining essential infrastructure, workplace and facilities managers hold many of the levers fundamental to maintaining an effective and productive workplace experience, and supporting organisational performance. Their effect was perfectly encapsulated at the recent 2020 IWFM Impact Awards. Throughout the crisis, IWFM has redoubled its commitment to supporting our members; helping them to enact their plans to keep us safe, maintain productivity and help the UK economy bounce back. We launched a dedicated website hub for sharing resources and best practice guidance to help members navigate the pandemic – from cleaning regulations and procedures to risk and business continuity management and guidance on returning to the workplace. Our popular weekly webinars continue to engage and inform thousands of professionals on a diversity of matters from catering to the future of work, and everything between; and to make sure our members’ professional development can continue unhindered we’ve made all our flagship activities available online.

It’s a tough climate for everybody right now and professional bodies are no exception. Despite the twin headwinds of Brexit uncertainty and a global pandemic, we remain committed to becoming a chartered professional body as part of our vision to be the trusted voice of a distinct profession recognised, beyond the built environment, for its ability to enable people to transform organisations and their performance.

IWFM remains committed to supporting new and existing members through the challenging months and years to come, as they navigate and forge innovative approaches to the new world of work.

**THE PUBLISHER’S VIEW**
DAVID EMANUEL, MANAGING DIRECTOR I-FM

I don’t think the plans to get chartered status were ever really fully calculated or developed. I tried to get some tangible data on timings, cost and probability of success two years ago from the then Chair as I
wasn’t convinced that it was actually a viable initiative, regardless of projected costs or timescale – nothing was forthcoming. There’s been no communication since, and I doubt the Institute now has the resources, let alone the appetite these days. Nor indeed does it seem likely to qualify for and be awarded the status - its financial history for one is enough to make it ineligible and the Privy Council would almost certainly reject its application.

I’m confident that the FM sector will exceed previous market analysts’ expectations and it will continue to expand and grow financially and enhance its reputation. Unfortunately, that probably won’t be true of the Institute. It was already becoming less of a members’ Institute and more a training provider. The pandemic has affected many of its revenue streams, postponing events and its ability to deliver services, although its financial stability has been in question for some time. It has been loss-making in its last two published accounts - 2018 and 2019 - but not in the same way as in 2015 when it incurred losses of £724,000. But will its net reserves of £205,000 be able to support it through 2020?

Training, networking events, the awards dinner, the conference have all been adversely affected this year, so revenues will be drastically affected, and membership is also in decline. Membership numbers were once proudly published on the website; and the use of ‘Britain’s fastest growing Institute’ and the strapline ‘Advancing our Profession’ are long gone. What we can identify is that ABC, which audits magazine circulation, shows this has fallen 20 per cent year-on-year to July down to just 10,500 copies (99.7 per cent of copies are for members) – so gone are the aspirational days of membership levels of 25,000-plus which was the target set for the previous CEO.

Professional membership bodies have to provide value to all their members both to individuals and also to their corporates. It’s hard to identify the ROI provided when the Institute does not represent those corporates: it is not a trade association and not their voice or representative body. Individuals undergoing professional qualifications still have a choice of which training provider to use and there are many good ones up and down the country.

So whilst IWFM outsources the provision of their membership magazine, there are of course other publications available, which will provide the same informative read. IWFM has put on some good webinars, but that really doesn’t bridge the gap left from all the other services not being provided; and all those regional events organised by the volunteers were always the real attraction for most. It’s unlikely any will be back anytime soon.

Cost is what you pay, value is what you receive. It will ultimately be for others to decide if the cost of belonging gives them back the necessary value in return. I’m no longer a member of the IWFM. There are of course other FM bodies out there including IFMA & RICS, and I’m involved with both.

THE IWFM VOLUNTEER’S VIEW

CATHY HAYWARD, CHAIRMAN OF MAGENTA ASSOCIATES & CHAIR OF THE IWFM’S LONDON REGION

Like many of us, the pandemic caught the IWFM unawares. Despite that, within a few weeks the Institute had set up its Turbulent Times webinar series which has proved enormously popular. The one I facilitated in May on the return to work had more than 600 attendees. Running since April, it has provided a much-needed source of independent advice for facilities professionals. The IWFM website is also packed full of information to support FMs.

Yes, the institute could have acted quicker in some areas. I was initially critical of the lack of pandemic-related advice on the website, for example. But in March and April we were all navigating unchartered waters. Few outside the scientific world could have predicted the impact of the pandemic then. The IWFM wisely took the decision to avail itself of Government support programmes, including the furlough scheme, which meant that it was operating with fewer people while at the same time adapting to home working. The webinar series was up and running remarkably quickly while other areas took longer.

At this year’s AGM, there was some challenging questions from members about the Institute’s finances and its plans for chartered status. It’s a matter of public record that the IWFM was loss-making in 2018 and 2019 and its reserves are falling. With the conference and awards – significant revenue-generators – forced to be virtual this year, it’s likely to be loss making in 2020 as well. Membership of professional bodies has fallen in many areas as organisations cut spend and people affected by furlough or redundancy stop paying for their membership. Although the figures aren’t available, it’s likely that the IWFM is also affected by a fall in members.
The challenges of FM during the current pandemic is making us all think on our feet and we are having to evolve, flex and adapt therefore currently those fortunate enough to be employed are probably learning significantly more on the ground than via any membership body.

But none of this should preclude the organisation from becoming a chartered body according to the requirements set out by the Privy Council. Facilities managers are members of a unique profession with only some overlap with other bodies, such as RICS, and a growing number are degree-qualified. While there are question marks over whether the institute could be described as ‘financially sound’, the same could be said of many organisations at the moment. Within a few years, if managed prudently, the IWFM could regain its financial footing.

What’s key is what the institute does next. After a period of adjustment, it has developed a good online offering. The key for it – and other similar organisations – is how to monetise that. It also needs to better harness the power of its active members and volunteers – the institute’s critical friends – many of whom feel their membership as the timing isn’t right for me personally, but as a rule members that are most beneficial for career progression.

The BIFM, now the IWFM has always been seen as the industry organisation to join when you enter the facilities management sector. It is known as the pioneering body for workplace and facilities management professionals for its training and guidance and at its peak has had over 15,000 members. I have been a member of the IWFM for many years and I have heard both good and poor feedback from individuals and organisations regarding the level of service; for instance, I myself have tried on a number of occasions to speak to the Institute regarding upgrading memberships and the system does not appear to be overly user-friendly. However, the training and guidance notes/documents on the website make a very handy reference for new FMs to help keep them up to date. As the facilities sector changes and moves in some odd on-line article regarding COVID back in the early days. Incidentally, on this point, for any guidance regarding managing FM related matters regarding COVID, we have sourced all guidance and information direct from Central Government. In early March, I had asked IWFM for some initial guidance to which I received quite a poor response.

MEMBER’S VIEWS
LUCY HIND, PROPERTY AND ESTATES PROFESSIONAL
The BIFM, now the IWFM has always been seen as the industry organisation to join when you enter the facilities management sector. It is known as the pioneering body for workplace and facilities management professionals for its training and guidance and at its peak has had over 15,000 members. I have been a member of the IWFM for many years and I have heard both good and poor feedback from individuals and organisations regarding the level of service; for instance, I myself have tried on a number of occasions to speak to the Institute regarding upgrading memberships and the system does not appear to be overly user-friendly. However, the training and guidance notes/documents on the website make a very handy reference for new FMs to help keep them up to date. As the facilities sector changes and moves in some new directions it occurs to me that the IWFM is promoting a wider range of data to its membership but I wonder if FMs actually know this and if they have visited the new website? Are they just renewing their membership annually by habit and not paying attention to the website and some of the data that is available?

I am however now acutely aware that there are discussions around which Bodies are most relevant to our field of work, to include technical elements in more detail and embrace an expanding FM role. Should it be the RICS? Where does CIBSE fit etc? I think that this is causing confusion and a lack of understanding and in some respect distrust. I believe that there is a lot on offer through the IWFM and I think that if there was more collaboration between the sector groups there would be less confusion. I have recently seen many job roles requesting RICS membership for FMs and currently very few requesting IWFM, which may force a change in the sector and a review of sector specific memberships that are most beneficial for career progression.

STEPHEN BURSI, FACILITIES LEAD, BAE SYSTEMS
Personally, I have had little engagement with IWFM (other than corporate membership), with my only portal into IWFM being via their journal and the odd on-line article regarding COVID back in the early days. Incidentally, on this point, for any guidance regarding managing FM related matters regarding COVID, I have found physical networking events useful and certain SIG’s interesting to follow and over the years I have been pointing these scenarios to my less senior team as I feel that they would benefit more than I am these days. The challenges of FM during the current pandemic is making us all think on our feet and we are having to evolve, flex and adapt therefore currently those fortunate enough to be employed are probably learning significantly more on the ground than via any membership body. This isn’t to say I won’t renew my membership as the timing isn’t right for me personally, but as a rule and concept I am supportive of the IWFM.

RUSSELL WOOD, FM AT DENTSU AEGIS NETWORK
My membership lapsed in May this year. I don’t personally feel I am missing out on anything as I use LinkedIn to my advantage to connect, network, read/educate etc. I had found physical networking events useful and certain SIG’s interesting to follow and over the years I have been pointing these scenarios to my less senior team as I feel that they would benefit more so than I am these days. The challenges of FM during the current pandemic is making us all think on our feet and we are having to evolve, flex and adapt therefore currently those fortunate enough to be employed are probably learning significantly more on the ground than via any membership body. This isn’t to say I won’t renew my membership as the timing isn’t right for me personally, but as a rule and concept I am supportive of the IWFM.

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It’s fair to say that life has become more difficult for everyone this year. Coronavirus has changed many aspects of our lives and we have all had to adjust to new ways of living and working. Six months ago, businesses had to act quickly and adapt to flexible working. Six long months and countless video calls later, the latest announcements have outlined that it could last for another six months. So where does this leave the traditional office working 9-5?

According to the Office for National Statistics, still only half of UK workers had returned to their workplace by the end of August, with many still working from home or splitting their time between home and the office. Unsurprisingly, remote working is now a reality and will be part of the foreseeable future, the new normal if you will.

This has inevitably changed the roles of FMs dramatically as the shift moves towards more permanent home working which brings with it an array of different challenges and hurdles to overcome.

Whilst many had set up temporary workspaces in their homes when lockdown started, this is no longer a short-term arrangement, and many companies are already integrating this new way of working into their business models. That being said, it takes more than a laptop to set up a home office so it’s up to FMs and employees to work this out together.

WORKPLACE ERGONOMICS

We know that our working environments have a huge effect on us and similarly, employees need the correct tools to do their jobs effectively. Uniting these two aspects for home working can be challenging, but innovative new solutions
including products and technology are enabling businesses to fully embrace new working patterns, including remote working.

Establishing what people require to be set up to work from home effectively is the first step to implementing a good home working practice. FMs are familiar with ensuring employees are set up correctly with the required products in the office. The challenge now is for FMs to understand what is necessary for employees at home. There is one important thing to bear in mind and that is ergonomics for home working.

Ergonomics is the process of designing or arranging workspaces and using products that enhance productivity, comfort and health. Creating an ergonomic workspace will not only provide employees with a comfortable workstation, a home from home away from the office, but also create a positive working environment.

Often when we hear of workspace ergonomics we think about positioning and posture. Yes, a good office chair or one that supports posture is essential for workers, the kitchen stool or dining chair will not suffice for long-term working from home arrangements. Not only do workers need to feel comfortable in their new working environment, but this also leads to less health issues in the future. Given that the majority of UK workers were office-based in the past, many staff will also not be working on a suitable or dedicated office desk, so proper ergonomic positioning must be passed onto employees by FMs. For an ergonomic sitting position, elbows and knees should be at a 90-degree angle, and the top of the screen should be exactly at eye level.

There are certain products FMs can draw on to support with this. Many UK workers without a home office set up are working on laptops, which leads to working hunched over, causing back and neck pain and general discomfort after long periods of time. Using a monitor mount keeps posture at the correct angle and using mounts which support multiple screens boosts productivity. This could be something that FMs can provide staff with to help them maintain a good ergonomic posture whilst working from home.

But it’s not just about the desk and chair. Choosing the correct working environment can also help workers to be more productive when working from home.

We might not realise it, but light has a significant impact on processes inside the body. It regulates the production of various hormones including the sleep hormone melatonin, which ensures that we relax in the evening and encourages us to fall into a refreshing sleep. Raconteur(i) recorded in 2018 that 40 per cent of 7,000 employees surveyed are working in poor lighting every day which was having a negative impact on their performance – and that’s in the office. Working side on by a window is the optimal place for light to balance with your circadian rhythm. Failing that, human-centric lighting solutions such as LUCTRA replicate the motion and colour spectrum of the sun, which maintains the body’s healthy circadian rhythm, leading to more productive, happy and healthy employees. Encourage your staff to set up their home office using the best possible light.

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WORKSTATION AND CLEAN DESK PRINCIPLE

The practicality of working from home is another area that FMs need to approach. Although flexible working was on the up before 2020, this may be a new concept to many workers and employers alike. Do employees have all the necessary technologies and products to work from home effectively? Flexible and remote working calls for flexible solutions so here are a few suggestions to provide your employees with to make their lives a little bit easier (especially if they’re splitting their time between home and the office, or don’t have a dedicated space at home to work).

Following the Clean Desk Principle, ensuring employees have a functional and organised workspace will be FMs’ biggest challenge. It’s easy for workers to develop bad habits, perhaps from the early stages of lockdown – makeshift workspaces with paperwork which was grabbed last minute from the office strewn over the desk. According to the Fraunhofer Institute(ii), 10 per cent of productive work time is lost through searching for equipment and paperwork which was grabbed last minute from the office strewn over the desk.

By following the Clean Desk Principle, FMs can provide staff with to help them maintain a good ergonomic posture whilst working from home.

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FOCUS | ERGONOMICS

paperwork. Organisational drawer boxes help to manage paperwork and files without the need for conventional and let’s face it, outdated filing cabinets that are impractical for home working. Desktop drawer boxes which are lightweight, easy to assemble and more functional for the home office, can help organisation through colour-coded drawers. There’s nothing worse than spending time untangling wires just to be able to charge your laptop. Once employees have created their workspace, encourage them to tame the cable spaghetti with cable management solutions which can bundle cables together to keep them tidy yet accessible.

Space may be small and limited for your employees so keeping their desk area clear and organised leads to less distractions and increased concentration. We’ve all heard the saying, ‘tidy home, tidy mind!’ Products like these help to minimise the stress of organising a permanent workspace, especially if your staff have to share their working space with home life duties, e.g. dining table.

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

The most important factor in this new transition into remote working is to maintain staff satisfaction. Facilities Managers are no longer only responsible for ensuring staff have the correct equipment, they need to support workers with flexible and ergonomic solutions to make this shift to home working as seamless as possible.

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SUMMARY

We are all currently facing a big challenge, but there are some key tips and tools to get FMs started in their ‘new’ roles. FMs can play an important part in bridging the gap between traditional office working and enabling businesses to fully embrace home working whilst maintaining productivity and staff morale.

To recap, Facilities Managers can adopt and facilitate proper home working solutions by providing staff with:

**Ergonomic solutions**

- Monitor mount to help maintain proper ergonomic positioning and/or provide employees with a second screen to boost productivity, especially if they are used to having this in the office.
- Advise staff on choosing the correct environment in their home.
- Setting up their office side on to a window will expose them to the sun which helps to regulate the body’s circadian rhythm and boost performance.
- If this is not possible, supply staff with human-centric lighting which replicates the motion and light of the sun.
- Arrange for staff to have time saving and organisational products.
- Drawer Boxes keeps all files and folders in one place, perfect for home offices as they are light and compact.
- Cable management boxes and clips to keep workspaces cable free, especially if workers are sharing their workspace with home living.

Keep in touch

- Keeping in touch with staff will make them feel connected and more confident to ask for support if they need it.

REFERENCE NOTES

(i) www.raconteur.net/
(ii) www.iao.fraunhofer.de/lang-en/
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Pressure on organisations of all kinds to become more sustainable, cut their carbon emissions and basically do the right thing is commonplace and rightly so. The UK’s leading commercial property owners and FMs have signed up to the delivery of net zero carbon real estate portfolios by 2050 including ENGIE, Mitie, Sodexo, ISS and JLL. But when times are tough it’s not easy to keep faith with green pledges, especially when research suggested people preferred to avoid public transport, and many employers agreed.

Jean-Patrick Judson, Anabas Account Manager, explained: “Reacting in a safe manner had to be priority. To protect the health of our workforce, Anabas, and some of our clients, advised staff not to use public transport. Colleagues that needed help travelling to work to avoid using public transport were supported by the company. This was the right thing to do to safeguard the wellbeing of our employees.”

Everyone we spoke to made safeguarding staff the top priority. Jasmine Hudson, HR Director, Mitie explained: “We’ve put a number of initiatives in place to support our people when travelling to work. This includes simple solutions, such as being flexible with start and finish times wherever possible and giving all Mitie employees two reusable face coverings to use on their commutes, all the way through to providing buses for colleagues who normally car share, ensuring there’s enough space on board to socially distance.”

Again, like other service providers, Anabas adjusted shifts and some people were furloughed so there was less of a demand for transport. But how did they get to work? James Mabbett, Head of Client Solutions and CSR, Atalian Servest said: “From January to August, we saw around a 50 per cent reduction in fuel use across the business. This can largely be attributed to people working from home, where possible, but our cycle to work scheme, which has been in place since March, has seen a positive uptake, providing a cost-effective and sustainable method of transport to get to and from work.”

**SAFE TRAVELS**

The pandemic has brought a range of challenges, one of this is just getting to work. How do you help workers stay safe, healthy and comply with social distancing measures while still meeting ambitious environmental targets? Andy Brown looks at alternative routes to work.
Taking an active route to work is a major environmental plus. That should make it something central to FM thinking as it helps with placemaking and improving how we view work. It’s positive for the environment: easing congestion, improving air quality (mitigating COVID-19) and good for physical and mental wellbeing. But it is not for everyone.

“Our main concern remains the congestion charges in the heart of London. Our security officers, along with other key workers, are having to travel to work in the city centre via the Tube and other means of public transport,” said Theo Nicolaou, Managing Director, SmartSec Solutions. “At the height of lockdown things were a bit different and more manageable when traveling to work because our security officers were able to park at their convenience. Now they fall into the costly congestion charges which are now active from 7am to 10pm Monday to Sunday.”

No one we spoke to confirmed rumours that individual operatives are being offered vans or cars to reach clients due to concerns about using public transport. But if that’s been happening it is understandable – albeit not in keeping with environmental goals.

“It might sound harsh given the circumstances, but there are other options. But it comes down to analysing the distance, costs and efficiency. This is a business argument. Time costs, health costs, parking costs, purchase costs. Does the investment add up? It almost certainly doesn’t especially if the distance is an inner urban area and less than five miles,” said Megan Sharkey, urban studies research scholar at Westminster University.

Steve Brewer, Workplace Designer and Director of Burtt-Jones and Brewer agrees and points to different options.

“There are many options for an eco-friendly mode of transport to work. Electric scooters are being trialled in the UK right now and could radically change how we move around. They fold up easily, so why not ride one to the bus stop or station then put it under your desk? Or, if you only have one or two miles to go, why not scoot all the way?”

Thinking differently is the way to beat many problems, from COVID-19 to improving congestion, reducing carbon emissions, and creating healthy lifestyles. But it requires a change in mindset. It is so easy to revert to the motor car to feel safe, despite the arguments against using it. “People go to where the work is, so why not put the opportunities to work closer to where people are to cut out the need to move around,” argued Commentator and Facilitator, Simon Heath. We need more strategic thinking around FM and the workplace. Why not use the vacant spaces appearing on our high streets; continue to make it easier to work from home. FMs can help their own people to stay safe, but should they be advising their clients about a total rethink of how they use the workplace to mitigate risks. It’s too easy for owners of business and buildings to call for a return to work and business as usual. There’s a chance here for FMs apply their skills, knowledge and influence to change the landscape of the very nature of work itself.”

ON YOUR BIKE

So, what role is there for the humble bicycle? Is it different enough? “Supporting colleagues’ ability to cycle to work is fundamental for sustainability and Covid-safe travel. With more cycle lanes being introduced as alternatives to public transport and car-sharing, we believe more companies should be actively promoting this to their workforce. Not only does it provide safe travel, but exercise also supports mental and physical health.”
will be more attractive for people to make the move to cycling to work,” said James Mabbett of Atalian Servest.

This is a fine example, but can more be done? Tom Bogdanowicz, Senior Policy and Development Officer, London Cycling Campaign said: “Every employer should be providing an active travel plan for its employees to get to work. Many do, but not enough and right now, despite campaigning by us and other groups like ours across the UK, there is still not enough information about how much easier and safer riding a bike is in our cities now. There’s more to be done, but, for example, the new cycleways running north-south and east-west in London make it possible to ride across the city with a child, as I do, because road danger has been reduced.”

Even before COVID-19 many forward looking offices saw more than 10 per cent of the staff riding a bike to work. During the pandemic riding a bike was so popular shops ran out of bikes to sell and parts for repairs. Bogdanowicz continued, “The potential for cycling is obviously much higher than it is. TL estimates an additional eight million cycle trips per day could be made in London. And cargo-bikes have increased in numbers now that they have electric assistance and can carry loads all day without getting too tired. The stigma of cycling has reduced and it’s no longer unusual to see an estate agent arriving at a property by bike and there is no shame in parents taking a child to school by bike. Some gardeners get around by cycle (no parking problems) as do workmen once they’ve delivered their tools.”

There’s a business opportunity for FMs and it’s complicated. Theo Nicolaou of SmartSec Solutions said: “In June, we also saw a significant increase in the number of cycle racks installed in our client sites — up by 30 per cent in some instances. However, there are obstacles to this from a security perspective. Many of the buildings we support have closed their shower facilities because their risk assessments require them to sterilise or deep clean them between use and this is seen as impractical. Therefore, people cycling to work aren’t able to have showers and this sometimes triggers unsavoury behaviour born out of sheer frustration.”

Steve Brewer observed that people just don’t like communal showers. Good end of route facilities will always encourage an active route to work. “In a multi-tenanted building you might have more people using showers than in an average gym. We see demand for dedicated facilities for each occupier – but generally developers and architects don’t design this in. It is a refurbishment project.”

“To help people stay safe and be confident about taking an active route to work we need to know what kind of journeys staff are making. If any employer, not just FMs, can make a risk assessment for their people it’s a big start,” says Dr Rachel Aldred, Professor of Transport and Director of Westminster University’s Active Travel Academy. “If organisations think through all of the options then people can move about in a low carbon, socially distanced manner but it needs planning.

Mitie appear to be doing this, Jasmine Hudson explains: “Since the lockdown, we’ve also held two application windows for our Cycle to Work scheme, to support our colleagues looking to get healthy, help the planet and avoid public transport. We’ve tripled the allowance to £3,000 so that everyone can get the bike and kit they need to travel to work safely.”

It’s working too. Mitie saw a 57 per cent increase in accepted applications for C2W in 2020 compared with 2019, even allowing for pushing back the window by a couple of months, due to COVID-19.

This is good, but Rachel Aldred and other experts want to see employers to think differently. Dr Aldred and Tom Bogdanowicz agree that not enough information is shared about the potential for reaching work in different ways. The information is out there, but it’s not promoted. Likewise, employers could and should take the opportunity to lobby local authorities about route planning.

“We should all be responding to consultation about installation of footpaths, cycle lanes or whatever is being planned by councils to help create safer, more sustainable and active routes to work. If it affects staff or end users of a workplace reaching their destination is shared about the potential for reaching work in different ways. The information is out there, but it’s not promoted. Likewise, employers could and should take the opportunity to lobby local authorities about route planning.

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No one is actually saying it loud and clear, but the commute to work by car might be over. Depending on where you live it is beginning to feel like a last resort. However, with winter coming and infection rates on the rise will that change – will people return to the car as a default transport bubble?

What’s required is a more concerted effort by FMs and all employers (FM customers) to call for more support for active travel from central and local Government and investment in public transport. If it aff ects staff or end users of a workplace reaching their destination then employers have a role to influence that planning decision,” said Rachel Aldred.

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What’s required is a more concerted effort by FMs and all employers (FM customers) to call for more support for active travel from central and local Government and investment in public transport. It’s clear that it’s happening but we need to see more joined up thinking to support people’s route to work, plus there’s a clear requirement for different attitudes to FM transport logistics. The virus isn’t going away. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, restricted access to central urban districts, limitations on service vehicles and freight – it is all here to stay.

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The perception of security officers has changed in recent years but none more so than during the last six months. Its modern-day role is more than just a guard within a gatehouse, explains Steven Moore, Managing Director of Security, Atalian Servest.

“When the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, the role of the security officer saw a greater transformation. Rightly so, there was an expectation to protect properties and assets but most importantly, the wellbeing of people. This rocketed to the top of the agenda. For security officers, this involved new responsibilities including implementing temperature screenings at entrances to buildings, enforcing mask-wearing and managing social distancing and one-way systems around properties.”

Security officers have many other skills that have set them up well for dealing with the crisis and their new responsibilities argues Darren Read, Managing Director, Amulet. “Officers have public-facing roles, such as front of house and in retail centres. Many of these are so/f_t   skills such as communication and problem solving, duties that require tact, delicacy and empathy.”

According to Nigel Davies, Director of Security for Salisbury Group, while some organisations are using automated access control and visitor systems, at the many buildings without this kind of tech, security officers who have previously been tasked to record visitors, contractors and issue passes must oversee safe signing in procedures. “When issuing or checking passes, our officers ask each person to confirm they do not have COVID-19 symptoms. They are also briefed to look for symptoms and to tactfully prevent entry and report to management if they suspect a person to be infected.”

As returning employees find their offices changed to allow for social distances, this is likely to be most evident at the entrance and reception areas and major pinch points, says David Mundell, Managing Director, Axis Security. “Security teams at multi-tenanted buildings, for example, have been instrumental in implementing new procedures that allow for social distancing, as well as helping to educate and remind returning employees and visitors of new one-way systems, or new processes they need to follow.”

DEMAND FOR SECURITY STAFF

The level of demand for security staff during the pandemic has been sector dependent says Mundell, with some sites requiring more security and some less at any given moment. He predicts this will continue to change depending on the movement of people and how long it takes the UK to get back to normal. “Footfall is down in the world of the arts and entertainment but educational sites are opening up new learning areas to allow for better social distancing between students and so this requires larger security teams.” Davies of Salisbury Group explains that to help make buildings COVID-19 Secure, many clients
are separating access/egress points as part of risk control measures. This requires additional staffing. “The main draw on security resource at present is in NHS Testing Centres, supporting local authorities and retail sectors. The UK Government are giving a further £30 million to local councils to enforce restrictions some of which will be spent on ‘COVID Marshalls’ and of course the private security industry will be only too willing to support this.”

At Amulet says Read there has been a requirement to provide extra support to customers in ensuring their premises are operating in COVID-secure environments.

“This is particularly true where our customers business involves direct engagement with the general public. A great example would be the work our teams are carrying out across large parts of the rail network. Working alongside our customers, we are ensuring that passengers are not just made aware of the rules but that that our presence serves to reassure and advise all on safe travel measures.”

Mike Bullock, CEO, Corps Security contends that alongside NHS facilities and supermarkets, where there is demand for a higher volume of officers, “there are also sectors such as logistics, where, for example, the core business activity hasn’t changed, but the pandemic has presented officers with an increased remit of duties to carry out. Distribution centres have a constant flow of people coming and going and checking these people in and out and ensuring they adhere to COVID-safe measures takes a lot of time to manage.”

**KEEPING SECURITY STAFF SAFE**

The numbers of security people working alone has increased, especially in office buildings which remain shut or severely reduced, and responding to this at Salisbury says Davies: “We have revised all core security duties, assessments and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to reflect risks. Established lone working protocols and procedures exist as part of risk control measures for a number of situations as part of the company safeguarding policy, such as working during nights and weekends, but are now expanded in buildings or areas where people, property or assets have become more vulnerable due to the absence of workers.”

The measures include lone worker checks via a control room set at varying intervals or prior to or during patrols. All sites are equipped with mobile phones and where appropriate GPS based guard patrol systems enabling active tracking of patrols. The devices also have a panic button and ‘person down’ facility which can be used to summon assistance.

He adds: “Regular contact with line management is particularly important in conducting welfare checks and supporting our officers during this difficult period. Security hours are lengthy, and an empty workplace can be a lonely place for security officers used to being involved dynamically with a client’s business in a once vibrant building. The company also has a range of staff assistance programmes such as Healthy Living, Mental Health Awareness, Positive Thinking, and Wellbeing.”

The use of Bodycams by Amulet, reports Read can deter aggression against lone workers and can also provide both audio and video monitoring from a remote centre that provides great reassurance for individuals faced with challenging situations. At Atalian Servest they’ve employed a ‘push-to-talk’ capability where the central control system is notified and can use live GPS tracking to contact the security officer.

“In addition to this function,” says Moore, “the application will also trigger an alarm if the device has not moved for a set period, and the geo-fencing ability will flag if an officer leaves a zone or, enters an area that they are not permitted to enter.”

**TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

A range of new technology has been introduced over the past few months, including thermal imaging, density control, face mask detection and skin temperature monitoring, many of which employ Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to help reduce the human factor. However, Davies believes that while, “smart technology has its place, it can also frustrate and in certain circumstances there is no better experience than a security officer being on hand to assist.”

Read feels similarly that security solutions are best-served with a mix of officers and technology. He says: “During the lockdown, we were able to protect a lot of vacant buildings with technology, meaning that officers could be on-site where they were needed most. As employees have returned to work we have seen how technology has acclimated to provide more specific alerts related to new situations.”

People counting technology helps limit the number of people within a building, from monitoring social distancing across a large estate or by simply restricting the number of people in a meeting room, alerts can raise the alarm and immediate remedial action can be taken. Says Davies: “Information from CCTV, analytic alerts and building sensors are vital tools that help our teams protect customers buildings and the people within. The security officer’s role here is to act on the information received and take that agreed action.”

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MULTI SKILLED SECURITY

While combining front of house/cleaning duties with a security specific role may in theory be a practical way of helping to combat COVID, Mundell of Axis Security doesn’t believe a more effective security team can be achieved by “taking on responsibilities that ultimately detract from the provision of security.”

He does agree though that security officers are in an ideal position to add a greater level of security when they work with front of house or reception teams and they can also support cleaning operatives. He says: “This is why on some contracts our officers will carry disinfecting wipes with them when they go on patrol to wipe down touchpoints. This new addition to their duties does not replace the cleaning regimes, instead it adds an additional layer that crucially allows touchpoints to be cleaned more frequently and also provides a visible reassurance that environments are being kept safer.”

“What we do also see, from our work with Acuity (our front of house business) and also with our sister business Axis Cleaning and Support Services, is that there can be benefits to combining the management of these different teams - allowing for one site manager who oversees multiple functions. It brings a level of simplicity for our customers and greater harmony and collaboration between the onsite teams.”

Bullock of Corps Security says that the role of security and front-of-house have merged in recent years and the front-of-house customer service role has complemented the role of the security officer, so, in this respect, it is a positive, multi-skilled collaboration.

But he cautions: “Combining cleaning with security is completely different and not something that would be effective. These roles demand entirely different skills and would see critical skills that are essential as part of each role being diluted.

"Security officers will not have the desired hygiene expertise that a cleaner does and a cleaner couldn’t manage secure practices and possible conflicts in a way that a security officer could. If these roles were merged, we’d see neither role being carried out to its full potential and this could be severely detrimental, with significant implications.”

VALUED PROFESSION

In June of this year the BSIA was involved in an awareness campaign designed to reset public perception of the security profession as a valued profession. Since COVID hit, security officers have become more visible to the wider public, first through their work in retail and now increasingly in workplaces.

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In a Cleaning sector changed by COVID-19
UhUb is playing a significant role in supporting people, business and service customers.

As we continue to manage change brought on by COVID-19, we see how the cleaning sector is being impacted, with cleaning standards and their delivery under increasing scrutiny. At UhUb we know that proper training is the only way to ensure the highest standards are both achieved and maintained, and for us, our client community, and their customers this starts with demonstrable, whole workforce training & engagement. Something we know a lot about! Pre-COVID our clients already valued the benefits UhUb provides (they kept telling us!), and now these benefits have grown in importance.

Here’s just some of the things our clients have to say about how UhUb has helped during COVID…

HOW DID YOU USE UHUB TO HELP DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Simon Duke (MD) NuServe
During the lockdown period, we found UhUb invaluable, both in delivering coronavirus specific training material, and in keeping furloughed team members engaged. As our people have returned to work, I’ve felt a lot more comfortable knowing that we’ve been able to prepare them for a different set of challenges, and to protect their safety and that of our customers. NuServe’s mission is to uphold the right to good work and fair pay, to protect our planet, and to deliver quality services that honour the trust afforded us. UhUb is one of the tools we rely on to help us realise our vision.

Iain Frazer-Jones (MD) Greenzest
We were able to share additional training on COVID-19 procedures and processes as well as specific training on using the equipment employed in our coronavirus sanitising tasks. This was a significant advantage as it ensured that we knew the teams involved were trained in using the equipment before being deployed. The equipment items themselves are costly and we were able to ensure staff knew what they had to do and how, thereby saving time and cost.

DURING THE PANDEMIC HOW DID UHUB HELP YOU COMMUNICATE?

Gemma Bowers (HR & LD Director) Regular Cleaning
As the pandemic began, we thought about what we might do to protect & reassure our colleagues and we knew UhUb would be fundamental to our communication as meeting & contacting people was going to be more challenging. We utilised UhUb to update our colleagues on constantly changing advice & guidance. Also, creating our own video content on UhUb gave our people the confidence & knowledge to deal with their ever-changing work environment in difficult circumstances.

Iain Frazer-Jones (MD) Greenzest
The ability to deliver whole workforce messages was a real asset when it came to communicating with our colleagues. Information on what the furlough scheme meant to our teams, how to ensure that they stayed safe, and messages around additional training available to deal with specific COVID-19 threats and tasks. All of these were delivered using UhUb saving huge amounts of time for our managers and was successful in bringing the team together, at all levels. Because our UhUb engagement levels with staff are consistently above 95% of our workforce we knew that we were getting the fullest reach to our colleagues.

As you can see from these comments, UhUb is much more than a Training Solution, it’s a fully adaptable Engagement Eco System that helps you easily Educate, Inform, Engage and Protect your people. With the ability to share not just industry standard skills training for Cleaning and Supervisory staff along with Product & Equipment training for those you use, you can also create and share Company, Customer specific and specialist task content across the workforce, all with real time reporting.

It has genuinely helped to ease the worry that COVID-19 has created and as one of our clients told us, “it has helped me sleep at night”.

Why not get in touch? In 20 minutes we could change the way you think about Training & Engaging staff forever. Call to chat: 0203 291 3439 or email info@uhub.co.com or find us at www.uhub.co.com
The pandemic caused by the global spread of the Coronavirus has presented immense challenges to society, and within that the responsibilities and activities of those operating commercial offices and other places of work. As an engineering company, JCA has been having to adjust to a new, evolving set of requirements, some of which are not supported by industry guidelines but based on our own learning and interpretation, such is the speed with which the impacts of the pandemic have unfolded.

The government’s advice was, in the first instance, quite clear. Work from home if you can, if you cannot work from home then go to work. This affected our clients in different ways. Those operating commercial offices that supported a workforce that could viably work from home went from bustling working environments to an eerie stillness quite literally overnight. The support of those buildings from a building engineering perspective could not, however, stop.

**MAINTAINING BUILDINGS IN TIMES OF LOW OCCUPANCY**

The requirements for maintenance activities continued throughout the initial lockdown phase, tasks such as those detailed in SFG20 Red covered the statutory requirements of the building systems. Building owners were advised to liaise with their insurers to understand what levels of building attendance were required to maintain their insurance cover. Where clients took a more long-term view on building occupation, we have been able to refer to the SFG30 Mothballing and Reactivation standard recently updated by BESA (Building Engineering Services Association).

In addition to the statutory requirements for maintenance continuing, the hugely reduced occupancy for commercial offices required further considerations such as the secondary risk of legionella caused by stagnation within building water systems. Increased maintenance regimes were put in place to increase levels of flushing, and water storage capacity was reduced to ensure a constant turnover of water. Testing was increased to ensure that water quality was monitored and maintained. These activities maintained the safety of the water system but also mitigated the risk of extensive remedial works when buildings were put back into operation. Another element that was common across our affected client base was the adjustment of environmental control systems to make sure that the building efficiency was optimised for the occupancy level.

**PREPARING FOR THE RETURN OF STAFF TO A COVID SECURE WORKPLACE**

The return of staff to their place of work represented a significant challenge for our hard FM teams and we played a role supporting our client’s staff communications. Heightened levels of staff anxiety induced by the pandemic had to be addressed with clear messaging that was, as far as possible, supported by visual change. Signage, screening, and sanitiser stations were all
obvious but impactful. Building services in the commercial office have generally been deemed successful if occupants are unaware of their presence and the effect they have providing a comfortable working environment. The benefits of increased ventilation rates were well communicated during the early months of the pandemic, as was the recommended reduction of recirculating air movement systems, with ventilation to be prioritised over thermal comfort and energy efficiency. The REHVA (Federation of European Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Associations) COVID-19 guidance document\(^{(iv)}\), originally generated in March and updated in April and most recently in August identifies that ventilation is the primary engineering control available to prevent airborne infection beyond 1.5m. Within 1.5m social distancing is more effective.

**CHANGES REQUIRED TO ENGINEERING WORKING METHODS**

Based on these recommendations it was necessary to ascertain the original basis of design and review the original design intent for the building ventilation and cooling systems to identify the appropriate changes to make the building more COVID-19 secure. We would advocate the following basic process:

- Establish original basis of design - this is the design capability of the building systems
- Gap analysis to identify deviation from original basis of design - modifications that have taken place to support change of use for example
- Engage with end users regarding predicted usage short, medium and long term
- Formulate design proposals to optimise building systems
- Agree on optimisation strategy ensuring approach is holistic
- Implement proposed changes
- Update record information following change control procedure
- Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of change

Using JCA’s in-house design and consultancy division\(^{(iv)}\) we were ideally placed to support our customers with this review and to quickly identify and scope improvement measures. To assist with the communication of these measures we were able to provide revised 3D imagery for offices so that staff could understand, prior to arrival, what changes were to be experienced and how their individual safety had been considered during the lockdown phase. Another recommendation by REHVA was to avoid recirculation of air via centralised air handling units. This posed significant challenges to commercial offices served by VAV (variable air volume) systems, in which heating and cooling is fundamentally dependent upon the centralised recirculation of air. When designing the fitout of one such office, we were able to draw on our experience in healthcare to introduce an ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) in the return air ducts of the existing air handling plant to inactivate viruses and bacteria. Again, due diligence of both the original and current basis of design was imperative in retrospectively introducing such measures.

At the start of the lockdown phase it was necessary to review a significant amount of data regarding revised methods of working, to evaluate the implications to each task conducted by our employees and our sub-contractors, and it wasn’t unusual to have to respond to changing information on a daily basis. Company-wide we implemented short and frequent “huddles” so that information could be shared between operational and back-office teams swiftly and concisely. This allowed our approach to be as dynamic as possible and provided an invaluable route for site-wide feedback regarding the consequences of implementing revised working practices.

**OPERATING IN CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTS**

As specialists in the area of data centre design, build and operations - one element that was particularly relevant to us was the safety of engineers operating in high air recirculation rate, low air change rate environments such as data centres and switch rooms because of the low levels of airborne dilution. Fresh air is an expensive commodity to introduce to a building and whilst it is required for healthy human occupancy, it is used in minimal quantities within technical environments, predominantly for pressurisation purposes.
These spaces require high air recirculation rates to provide the cooling to IT equipment and electrical plant such as UPS's (Uninterruptable Power Systems). Once again referring to the REHVA COVID-19 guidance document it could be deduced that an enclosed space with high air turbulence and low ventilation rates would create an environment with increased risk of aerosol transmission. As such we made it mandatory that engineers operating in environments such as these did so wearing FFP2 grade face masks\(^{(vi)}\), based on an altruistic approach, trying to prevent the release of airborne viruses within the turbulent air streams.

The closing and reopening of commercial offices represented challenges, but there was at least a degree of time available to develop and stress test the necessary strategies. As a multi-faceted engineering company providing design consultancy, project delivery and maintenance services we work across a range of industry sectors, including healthcare, life sciences and data centres. For our engagements with our clients in these sectors the opportunity to pause, reflect and plan did not exist. From our 40+ key workers maintaining a major London hospital, to our design team overseeing the commissioning stages of a 64 bed intensive care unit the demand for their time, commitment and professionalism could not have been greater. We had significant design and build data centre upgrade/expansion projects ongoing, the timely completion of which was required to maintain the increasingly vital digital infrastructure that was sustaining a population many of whom were working, or schooling, from home. Collectively we have risen to the many challenges that COVID-19 presents, every member of the team and our trusted supply chain performed, and continues to perform, fantastically. To continue to offer a high-quality service to our clients we didn’t lose service on any critical facilities and many strategies that we deployed initially in response to the virus will be accommodated into our daily working practices. Necessity has certainly driven innovation in operations and for all the obvious downside from the pandemic it has helped to highlight the importance of the building services sector to industry at large, something we should capitalise on and utilise to encourage young engineers to pursue a career in building engineering services.

**REFERENCE NOTES**

(i)  [www.fmj.co.uk/dfg20-definitive-standard-building-maintenance/](http://www.fmj.co.uk/dfg20-definitive-standard-building-maintenance/)
(iii)  [www.thebesa.com/](http://www.thebesa.com/)
(iv)  [www.rehva.eu/activities/covid-19-guidance](http://www.rehva.eu/activities/covid-19-guidance)
(v)  [https://jca.co.uk/fit-out/cat-a-b/](https://jca.co.uk/fit-out/cat-a-b/)
HIGH PRAISE

Conor Logan, Technical Director at Colt International explains why he welcomes the Draft Building Safety Bill and what it will mean for the service and maintenance of high-risk buildings.

There has been an intense focus on building and fire safety following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017[1]. In response to this Dame Judith Hackitt chaired an independent review of building regulations and fire safety which has led to the new proposals being put forward. The Draft Building Safety Bill[2] was borne out of the government response to the Building a Safer Future recommendations from Dame Hackitt.

The government has accepted the review’s recommendations and this Draft Bill, which, alongside the Fire Safety Bill[3] and fire safety consultation[4], will set out how it will be helping to ensure the most significant improvements to building safety in nearly 40 years.

The Draft Building Safety Bill will enable the government to bring forward necessary reforms to the service and maintenance of high risk buildings, with a clear focus on improving both building and fire safety. The Government’s objective is for the long-lasting reform of the building safety system so that people will feel, and will be, safer in their homes. And, crucially, they can trust in the competency of those who are responsible for the service and maintenance of their building.

The Bill is effectively enabling legislation. Once passed, it will give government the powers to make changes to the law regarding building safety. Until these new laws come into being, the smoke control service and maintenance regulations will continue to come under the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (fire safety) Order 2005[5] (RR(FS)O). To understand what your legal obligations for maintaining smoke control are under the RRO, you can download the whitepaper[6] for more information.

However, changes are also expected to be made to the RR(FS)O, for example, common areas, such as external walls, balconies and front doors of apartments are expected to come into scope.

What this means for the service and maintenance of existing buildings:

- The Building Safety Bill has introduced the concept of the ‘Accountable Person’ or Duty Holder, and a Building Safety Manager (BSM) in each building. This will mean that there will be someone who is permanently tasked with holding the responsibility for keeping residents safe in high rise buildings – those that are 18 metres and above.
- The BSM will be responsible for ensuring all life safety systems are fully functioning and that maintenance is carried out professionally and on time.
- The ‘Accountable Person’ will need to listen and act upon any concerns raised by residents about their building safety. This will mean that residents are given a louder voice as to what service and maintenance is required in their building.
- Residents and leaseholders of these buildings will both be given full access to vital safety information about their building. This will give residents more clarity when it comes to the service and maintenance of their building.
- In addition to the ‘Accountable Person’, there will also be a new national regulator for building safety, within the Health and Safety Executive. Their role will be to manage the accountable persons and ensure that their jobs are being carried out correctly.
- The regulator will also oversee the appointment of a panel of residents who will therefore be given another platform to raise any concerns about the safety of their building. And importantly to give the residents a role in the process of the service and maintenance of their building.
- The regulator is there to improve the competence of people responsible for managing and overseeing building work.

It is hoped that the implementation of an accountable person and a building safety regulator will lead to higher standards of building safety and performance across all buildings. And it will make the process of servicing and maintaining a building a more transparent operation for the residents of these buildings.

What you need to check under the new rules

- Your service supplier should be fully equipped to comply with any changes implemented by the Building Safety Bill for building managers.
- The Draft Building Safety Bill will establish a more stringent regime to strengthen the management of fire and structural safety risks for new and existing buildings.
- The stringent new set of rules for high-rise residential buildings contained in the draft Bill will apply when buildings are designed, constructed and then later occupied.
- At each of these three stages, it will be completely clear who exactly is responsible for managing the potential risks and what is required to move to the next stage enabling a ‘golden thread’ of vital information about the building to be gathered over time.
- Aspects of building safety such as Smoke control is a necessity for buildings and especially those buildings considered of a higher risk.

Smoke control is vital to protect means of escape and to ensure that fire-fighting stairs remain usable. As pioneers of the science behind smoke control since the 1950s Colt is acutely aware of the potential danger that a poorly maintained smoke control system can lead to.

The new Building Safety Bill protects buildings from firms that are primarily motivated by cutting costs ahead of ensuring the safety of the building they are contracted to work on.

The Draft Building Safety Bill means that those who are responsible for the building and management of higher risk buildings will need to actively demonstrate how they have taken resident safety into consideration in their work.

The regulator will be given the power to take quick and effective action against those that don’t prioritise safety, by imposing heavy fines. New criminal offences should ensure that those responsible for the building during design, construction and operation can be held accountable for any shortcomings.

According to the Bill “The regulator must provide such assistance and encouragement to relevant persons as it considers appropriate with a view to facilitating their securing the safety of people in or about higher risk”. Therefore, the regulator will need to directly assure the safety of higher risk buildings is being fully and vigilantly considered.

Colt’s competency not only means that we are fully confident that we will be able to meet the rigorous new standards outlined in the draft Building Safety Bill, Fire Safety Bill, and Fire Safety Order consultation, we welcome the system of reforms that will bring forward vital improvements to safety standards for residents of all buildings.

REFERENCE NOTES

Over the last six months the need to equip FM field operatives with the most efficient digital mobile tools has never been more crucial to help ensure continuity of service while maintaining social distancing. This is a space where Totalmobile, specialists in field service management and mobile workforce software solutions can offer their expertise, but surprisingly up until now the firm hasn’t had a high profile in FM, despite being around since the 1980s.

Explains Jim Darragh, Chief Executive Officer at Totalmobile: “The firm was born and bred in Belfast, beginning with delivering solutions for local councils, which migrated to managing social housing repairs. As mobility became more prevalent within the housing space, we got one of our technical experts to build us mobility tools in earnest and the company pivoted and became more about mobile workforces and mobile workforce management.

“As the tech has matured the market has matured alongside and we’ve now got quite a critical mass, with local government bleeding into social care and healthcare, to encompass housing associations, hospitals and transport customers, a lot of which is outsourced to FM. This all links to FM services delivery for properties and so on. Our mobility has become a part of the FM offering and we bring something different to the providers in that space.”

The difference he believes is that the technology is designed from the ground up with the mobile worker in mind, “a subtle statement but one which means quite a lot to us.” He explains that quite often the technology mobile workers are given is just a version of a back-office system. They may be linked in to a CAFM system which has a mobile element that is adjusted for field workers, but in practise it means taking a back-office system and porting it into a mobile device.

He says: “We’re coming from the opposite direction, saying ‘you’re a mobile worker, what will make your life easier?’ We will allow you to be more efficient. You’ll need data from the back office but we won’t start with that. Instead we’ll say, ‘you’re going out to the field today what do you need from us to do your work?’

“Because we think of mobile workers first - that’s what makes us different. We’re also very customer centric so in any conversation with a client we’ll make them think about what their before and their after will look like. It’s not part of the sales process it’s part of the value add.”

While it is to be hoped that maintenance teams are no longer using time sheets, there are some organisations that are only now migrating over to digital platforms. The duel benefit is making individuals and groups of people more efficient – particularly when it comes to the scheduling of works.

Says Darragh: “We think the digital mobility piece gives you 20 per cent more efficiency but the second [scheduling] one gets you another, and 40 per cent more efficiency equates to two extra days a week.”
Any piece of tech is only as good as its usability so how do front-line operatives tend to cope with new mobile solutions?

“The user interface is essential as we live or die by user adoption”, says Darragh. “Because the tools are designed for the mobile user, and are adapted to work with Apple and Google we’re ensuring someone can pick it up and almost instinctively navigate their way round the system. It’s not designed to fox people, it’s designed to help them.”

He cites cleaning as one example. Totalmobile equipped Mitie cleaning staff with smart watches that alerted them with a buzz when a room needed to be cleaned. By double tapping the app, the cleaners indicated they were on their way, and a triple tap meant that the job had been done. Both basic but useful.

BACK OFFICE BENEFITS

A solution that links seamlessly to the back office is obviously crucial, so the tech must be designed for this more complex piece of the puzzle, i.e. ‘how do I get the right information so that person can do the job first time, every time?’

Explains Darragh: “When you look at hard FM and big infrastructure and assets that need to be maintained you need contextual information. We’re pulling that from different back office systems that are connected to a particular job, so that when you do a job of a more technical nature you have everything to hand. Basically, it’s the same platform but the complexity can vary, from quite simple cleaning tools to using our software on the project to build Hinkley Point nuclear power station.”

The firm is already working closely with some of the big FM providers, including Interserve, Mitie, Compass and Graham, which use its solutions for a variety of different tasks, from health and safety tracking all the way through to a range of field service management solutions. He adds that some of the leading FM supplier systems are looking to the firm to help enhance their CAFM systems; for example, making the software interact better with end users and be more adaptable to back office changes.

He says: “We’re not working in direct cooperation with the CAFM systems suppliers yet, but we do integrate with them where ever we go, within healthcare, government, transport, etc.”

“What we often find though is that there is a gap between the information they have and making it mobile ready. They might hold the contract information but not the asset data, or hold the asset information but not the service record.

“We can supplement this information in order to make a field worker capable of doing the job by helping to manipulate and store the data. For example, where a security guard is on a site where there is a regular checkpoint, the system would record every checkpoint time, and the location of the person as they do their rounds. Alongside proof of attendance, you can calculate how much time each round should take. This means (for FM) you can price contracts more accurately by interrogating the huge amounts of data you gather across the system.”

“At the front end, there is an increase in efficiency, the ability to allocate work better and have more time to actually do the work. If a mobile solution can offer speed, efficiency, proof, consistency, these are the elements which remove the need for discussion or error and make sure a task is done in the same way all the time.” He argues that for the FM market and particularly large-scale repeatable tasks such as security and cleaning that is a big deal.

“I heard from a large brand in the FM space, which believes there is a 40 per cent efficiency gain in using IoT sensors to organise on-demand cleaning. With the FM market having such tight margins, why would you not take advantage of that as the tech investments are miniscule compared to the gains? The worker spends less time doing admin or paperwork and the suppliers are more efficient, with jobs all traced and tracked.”

COVID CARE

Like many digital suppliers, Totalmobile has responded to the COVID-19 outbreak, with new or amended products such as Remote Assist, a solution to help organisations provide remote support to their customer base. Instead of having to send field engineers out to fix an asset, the technology provides video diagnostic technology that reduces the number of unnecessary site visits.

The solution creates a shared live video stream that can be viewed by the support team or engineers who can then walk through the problem virtually with the customer, discuss potential solutions and if possible, assist the customer to remedy the problem.

Explains Darragh: “This also has a long-term gain because if you can cut down on physical visits you can reduce your costs. If you do send a worker who doesn’t recognise the tech they can connect to someone else in the back office who knows the system. This helps improve first time fix rates by delivering a new layer of efficiency, and with the COVID situation by reducing the need for multiple visits.”

Another solution is a lone workers device that equips a field worker with a device that allows emergency access to support via an alarm call centre.

FUTURE INNOVATION

The FM sector isn’t renowned for the early adoption of the latest tech, and one of the reasons has been a suspicion by stakeholders, from boardrooms to occupiers who are concerned about a ‘big brother’ use of AI in managing people and buildings.

“I would like to demystify AI” says Darragh. “It’s really just about computers making intelligent decisions. Our scheduling tech learns that one route is faster than another, that one job takes so long, and in the background assesses the time taken to adjust it next time if necessary. It’s the ‘see it learn it’ approach and there is no reason to be nervous, we’re just tuning the system to be better.”

He says a sensor may monitor a meeting room and by attaching rules that automate the restocking or cleaning process creates a job.

“It’s the flow of create the work, do the work, finish the work. That’s just a more efficient way of all of us going about our job and doing what needs doing, not because the contract states that it does.”

Future innovations include developing a range of new wearable tools such as google which could recognise an asset (such as a boiler) - bring up its service history and enable the engineer to access more information using hand gestures.

Within FM he explains; “Some thought-provoking conversations are going on already looking at wearables and IoT. COVID may accelerate the process as the FM sector looks to rethink how it does things. There will always be a focus on how cost and technology can be utilised to deliver more demand-based services which will be more efficient and help operators rebuild some margin. So, I believe within the next couple of years, there will be real thrust for the adoption of the latest technologies by FM providers, both hard and soft.”
TOUCH-FREE URINAL FLUSHING TECHNOLOGIES FROM VIEGA

Viega has introduced two new touch-free flushing technologies for urinals in public facilities. The concealed and infrared flushing solutions are available in a variety of design options and are protected against vandalism.

For the concealed flushing solution, a sensor is installed inside the urinal siphon, which registers the change in flow and temperature when the urinal is in use. This will trigger the flushing mechanism automatically, delivering exceptional hygiene for the user. In addition, the whole system is concealed behind a wall, protecting it from any form of damage or vandalism.

Adaptability is another important consideration for public sanitary facilities. The concealed flushing system offers the option to set a one or three litre flush depending on the requirements. A dynamic option is also available that will automatically detect high frequency use and reduce the flushing volume from three litres to one.

The infrared technology system offers another option to deliver maximum hygiene with touch-free flushing. The system is installed behind the wall together with the compatible Viega PreVista Dry urinal element. Once installed, only the flush plate with its integrated sensor is visible. The flushing mechanism will trigger when a user stands in the detection range of the infrared sensor for at least eight seconds, preventing unnecessary activation.

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SHORT CUTS MAY CUT A LIFE SHORT!

SPECTRUM INDUSTRIAL LAUNCHES A GUIDE TO LOCKOUT - TAGOUT - TRYOUT

Safety Signs Manufacturer and Safety Products Supplier Spectrum Industrial have launched a guide to help industries implement a LOTOTO process within their facilities.

Lockout Tagout Try Out (LOTOTO) is the correct method for isolating machinery to ensure that when repairs, maintenance, cleaning or inspections of equipment is undertaken, it is done so safely.

According to hse.gov.uk in 2019/20 there were 111 workers killed in workplace accidents and nearly 70k injured and major industries are now adopting the lock out tag out try out process. Due to the awareness and associated real life risk, it is now being recognised as best practice for safety management in quarries, oil & gas, manufacturing, food processing plants and more.

Spectrum Industrial have built this guide to raise awareness, promote best practice and to help increase safety across high risk establishments where harm can be caused from machinery. The guide will show you the step by step procedures that should be followed to complete a successful isolation and will help you to create your own LOTOTO process.

You can download a copy of the guide or for more information or to view Spectrum’s product range visit www.spectrum-industrial.co.uk

www.spectrum-industrial.co.uk

SNICKERS WORKWEAR - SUPERIOR, ERGONOMIC KNEE PROTECTION WITH D30

World-leading certified Kneeguard solutions to save your knees.

Hard work all day, every day means that some craftsmen and craftswomen put more pressure on their knees than many top athletes. So, the risk of long-term knee injuries and chronic pain can be far higher among trade professionals than most other occupations.

For years, Snickers Workwear has had the market-leading solution with its trousers and kneepad combination that it invented over thirty years ago. That solution has now become the patented Kneeguard and unique Kneeguard PRO system which delivers advanced knee protection for frequent kneeling on site, as well as those annoying knocks and bumps around the workplace.

Designed specifically for the increasingly popular street-smart, slim fit stretch work trousers, the newest slim fit D30 Ergo kneepads are made of durable material that moulds around your knee to provide enhanced impact protection.

It has an EN 14404 Type 2 Level 1 rating to guard against pebbles, nails and various floor debris. There’s also superior cushioning and protection as standard with D30 – a high-tech material that’s flexible, durable and cut-resistant.

www.snickersworkwear.co.uk
01484 854788
sales@hultaforsgroup.co.uk

www.spectrum-industrial.co.uk
NEW NHS NIGHTINGALE HOSPITAL IN EXETER IS AIR CONDITIONED WITH TOSHIBA SHRM-E HEAT RECOVERY VRF

The 116-bed facility, operated by the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust, is part of the UK’s network of seven Nightingale Hospitals designed to treat patients with coronavirus, and remains on standby in case extra capacity is needed for patients with COVID-19.

The air conditioning project was designed and installed in seven weeks, and includes 46 Toshiba Super Heat Recovery Multi (SHRM-e) air conditioning systems linked to the manufacturer’s high capacity 14kW cassette indoor units. The system serves hospital wards, testing facilities, meeting rooms and clinical support areas. A high performance Toshiba split system also cools the hospital’s server room.

“It is a substantial project and involved high heat gains due to the intensive care medical equipment used on wards. It required careful planning due to the complexities of the site and the critical healthcare application,” said Gary Tidball, who headed the design and installation project for Mechanical and Electrical contractor TClarke. “We selected Toshiba because of its reliability and the company’s large capacity cassettes, which enable a high density of cooling with minimal intrusion of indoor units into the space.

“The support we received from Toshiba throughout the project was outstanding. Seven-day-a-week working was required to meet the project timetable, and early on in the project, Toshiba’s regional sales manager Wayne Dolley himself delivered units to site over a weekend to ensure work could progress.”

To optimise air circulation and cooling, TClarke converted the 4-way cassettes to two-way units, augmenting lateral coverage along the length of wards. Closing off two side-outlets in this way delivers increased cooling and air-throw to the remaining open louvres.

Toshiba’s SHRM-e three-pipe heat recovery VRF air conditioning system sets an industry benchmark for energy efficiency performance and continuous heating, achieving a world-first European Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (ESEER) of 8 in most capacities. The system uses an advanced rotary compressor, developed and manufactured by Toshiba, which uses a two-stage compression process for improved efficiency and performance. Wear surfaces on compression vanes are treated with a high-tech Diamond-Like Carbon (DLC) coating, giving outstanding hardness, wear resistance and reliability. This enables a significant increase in compressor rotation speed, resulting in a higher displacement volume – up to 50% greater than for the previous generation of VRF systems, delivering a higher duty from a smaller compressor, with less power.

More details on Toshiba SHRM-e here:
https://www.toshiba-aircon.co.uk/product/shrm-e-three-pipe-heat-recovery-outdoor/

High-efficiency Toshiba variable refrigerant flow (VRF) air conditioning – supported by some 5km of electrical cabling – has been installed as part of a fast-track project for the new NHS Nightingale Hospital at Exeter. Toshiba Carrier UK Ltd (TCUK) is a joint venture between Toshiba Carrier Corporation and Carrier in the United Kingdom, and is part of Carrier Global Corporation (NYSE: CARR), a leading global provider of innovative heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC), refrigeration, fire, security and building automation technologies.

www.toshiba-aircon.co.uk
DRESS FOR WINDY WEATHER WITH SNICKERS WORKWEAR’S GORE WINDSTOPPER JACKETS

Delivering great wind protection and efficient ventilation. Snickers Workwear jackets are well known for delivering performance and comfort at work - integral features of this new range of Windproof Jackets.

Sharp, stylish looks and market-leading GORE WINDSTOPPER and stretch CORDURA fabric technology to make this jacket a must for winter on site or outdoor leisurewear.

This great-looking jacket has a fleece-lined interior for warmth and climate control fabric to keep your body warm or comfortably cool when you most need it. With a water-repellent fabric, it can be worn on its own or combined with Snickers Mid and Base Layer garments.

Fashionable and functional, this jacket has long arm cuffs with thumb grips for warm comfort and a high collar that delivers extra wind protection. It’s also got stretchable side panels in for comfort and flexibility with stretch CORDURA-reinforced elbows for durability.

With street-smart, contemporary designs, all Snickers Workwear Jackets are packed with must-have features that focus on fit, comfort and freedom of movement as well as using innovative fabrics that deliver long lasting protection when you most need it. With a water-repellent fabric, it can be worn on its own or combined with Snickers Mid and Base Layer garments.

Maintenance of Windproof Jackets

www.snickersworkwear.co.uk  sales@hultaforsgroup.co.uk
01484 854788

TECHNOLOGY BUILDING BENEFITS FROM KINGSPAN TECHNICAL INSULATION

Coventry University is laying the groundwork for future developments in STEM with a new, state-of-the-art postgraduate facility, the Beatrice Shilling Building, completed with a building service specification featuring premium performance Kingspan Kooltherm Pipe Insulation and Kingspan Therma Duct Insulation.

As part of its commitment to reduce its carbon emissions by 20% relative to a baseline period of 2008-9, the University has developed a sustainable building framework which focuses on full lifecycle emissions and costings for new buildings. The Beatrice Shilling Building was the first to be constructed under this framework and this contributed to the specification of over 7000m Kingspan Kooltherm Pipe Insulation for all domestic, heating and chilled water service pipework across the building whilst 400m Kingspan Therma Duct Insulation was fitted on external ductwork.

With an aged thermal conductivity as low as 0.025 W/mK at 10°C, Kingspan Kooltherm Pipe Insulation effectively limits heat loss from system pipework with a reduced thickness than would be possible with other, lower performing materials. This design will help to limit the long-term heating energy demand and carbon footprint of the building whilst supporting a simpler lagging process for installers.

The Kingspan Thermo Duct insulation used around the external ductwork is specially designed to insulate ductwork and associated outdoor equipment operating in a temperature range of -20°C to +80°C.

www.kingspantechnicalinsulation.co.uk  info@kingspaninsulation.co.uk  +44 (0) 1544 388 601

MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING RULES WITH REGULAR SERVICING OF MOVEABLE WALLS

Demand for the routine servicing of moveable walls and folding partitions has been on the rise as the need for maintaining flexible space has become essential due to social distancing rules.

According to Jovan Nel, head of Style’s moveable wall service and repair division, the need to ensure that operable walls are in good working order has caused a surge in demand.

“Businesses, hotels, schools, colleges, universities, local authority venues, community centres and healthcare trusts have been booking our technicians to carry out routine servicing and inspections while lockdown restrictions eased,” said Jovan.

“With a need to maintain social distancing, and with the rules now becoming a moving feast regarding numbers of people allowed in one area together, it’s never been so important to ensure your moveable and folding walls are in good working order.

“With a team of nationwide technicians operating from Style’s four regional offices, which are spread evenly across the south, midlands, northern England and Scotland, we have engineers in all parts of the country who are fully trained and experienced to work on all makes and types of folding partition systems.

“All engineers are fully accredited to service, operate and repair all makes of moveable wall, even if Style didn’t install it, from fully automatic systems to simple folding partitions.”

www.style-partitions.co.uk  01202 874044
sales@style-partitions.co.uk

FORBO REAFFIRMS MARMOLEUM’S CARBON NEUTRALITY

As part of its Live Forward campaign, Forbo Flooring Systems is underlining its commitment to sustainability and minimising the environmental impact of its products and processes wherever possible. This includes highlighting that its linoleum product, Marmoleum, is CO2 neutral without carbon offset and is manufactured from 97% natural raw materials - using linseed instead of plastics.

Unlike many vinyl or resilient floor coverings, Marmoleum does not use plastics such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and is instead made from 97% natural raw materials. This includes flax, jute and linseed oil, which are obtained from annual crops, and wood flour and pine rosin that are sourced from sustainably managed forestry plantations. In fact, 62% of the natural ingredients are renewable, of which 29% are rapidly renewable, meaning it will grow back within one year.

Marmoleum also boasts 43% reused and recycled content to reduce the demand for virgin raw materials.

The carbon neutrality of Forbo’s 2.5mm Marmoleum from cradle to gate is confirmed by the independent Environmental Product Declaration (EPD), which shows that the CO2 removed from the atmosphere during the growing of its natural ingredients balances out the CO2 produced in the extraction, transportation and manufacturing processes. For specifiers and contractors this means that, for example, using Marmoleum 2.5mm on a 10,000sqm project could equate to a 66,200kg CO2 saving when compared to a PVC vinyl floor.

www.forbo-flooring.co.uk/liveforward
AJ PRODUCTS AND UKACTIVE INVESTIGATE HOW TO TACKLE SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR IN THE WORKFORCE

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed new light on an already critical aspect of working life: that of employee health and wellbeing. While awareness of the dangers of sedentary working was already increasing, these unprecedented times underline the importance of companies taking a more comprehensive approach to support the physical and mental wellbeing of their workers.

AJ Products UK and ukactive have teamed up on a report to examine the impact of working practices on employee health and wellbeing. ‘Tackling sedentary behaviour in the workforce’ is a comprehensive study into the state of workplace health that looks at the risks associated with long hours spent in sedentary positions at work, whether that work is office-based or remote, and what can be done to improve activity levels among the working population. The report investigates how our office spaces must change as well as what companies can do to support remote workers and ensure wellbeing practices are sustained away from the physical workplace. It also examines real-world solutions based on case studies from businesses running successful wellbeing programmes to provide a ‘best practice’ guide for other companies to follow.

AJ Products is a supplier of workplace furniture and interior solutions that focuses on ways to solve the problem of a sedentary workday. The company is committed to making workplaces healthier and more active through an innovative and ever-growing range of sit-stand furniture and by raising public awareness of the health risks of prolonged sitting.

ukactive provides services and facilitates partnerships for a broad range of organisations from across the public, private and third sectors to improve the health of the nation by getting more people, more active, more often. Work stress and negative health outcomes associated with sedentary behaviour have reached substantial proportions within western industrialised societies at great cost to businesses as well as employees. ‘Tackling sedentary behaviour in the workforce’ demonstrates how simple measures such as equipping offices and homes with better furniture and encouraging employees to increase their physical activity levels can mitigate the negative health effects associated with sedentary behaviour during the workday. It looks at how interventions around workplace design have been shown to reduce sitting time by as much as 40 minutes over an 8-hour work day while other evidence shows taking multiple standing breaks or engaging in some physical movement throughout the day can be more beneficial than moderate to vigorous activity for a singular set amount of time.

The report also features case studies from businesses of all sizes that highlight health and wellbeing strategies that have worked effectively as well as how these programmes have been adapted in light of COVID-19 to provide the same level of care to employees working from home. The case studies highlight the need for each business to consider what types of interventions would be most effective based on employee preferences and demographics. It also calls attention to the need for companies to promote flexibility to ensure that employees feel comfortable prioritising their health.

‘Tackling sedentary behaviour in the workforce’ comes at a critical juncture. With the rise of homeworking and increasingly flexible working patterns, employers have a unique opportunity to reshape their values and play a more proactive role in supporting the physical and mental health of their employees. This report gives businesses an insight into the importance of prioritising employee health and will act as a guide on how best to implement successful practices to support the wellbeing of our national workforce.

Download the full report for free at www.ajproducts.co.uk
TAking the hassle out of workplace specification

Taking a holistic approach to commercial office design is key to ensure that the workplace environment has a positive effect on an employee’s productivity, health, wellbeing and satisfaction. From reducing impact sound, to improving air quality and thermal comfort, as well as being instrumental in the overall interior décor, floor coverings play a significant role within an office.

With a wide variety of products available on the market, it can be difficult for Facilities Managers to identify a suitable solution for each area of an office. Luckily, Forbo Flooring Systems’ Office Fit-Out collection takes the hassle out of workplace specification. Featuring floor coverings that have been designed to work perfectly together, the collection is ideal for office refurbishments or to quickly and easily redefine spaces – thanks to the modular format of the floor coverings.

In today’s modern office environment, modular floor coverings are a smart choice as the use of a tackifier adhesive means that they can be adapted easily and quickly to new and changing requirements. For example, Tessera carpet tiles are perfect for main working spaces, Flotex flocked flooring is suitable for areas that require more comfort and privacy and Allura Flex provides a more sophisticated look and feel in reception and breakout spaces.

What’s more, as office design steers towards the creation of zones and connecting multiple areas within one space, Allura Flex can be installed alongside carpet tiles without the need for transition strips or subfloor build up, as the products are a similar thickness. This opens up new opportunities for designers who are looking for more flexibility when delivering projects to challenging deadlines – or even designing to aid social distancing by redefining individual areas.

And now, with the help of Forbo’s new Office Design & Fit-Out sample book, FMs can easily discover the company’s comprehensive portfolio of textile and resilient modular floor coverings that can be installed together at various price points. The handy tool provides the ideal source of guidance and inspiration to create truly integrated office flooring schemes. Simply mix, match, combine or contrast various shapes, sizes, colours and textures to create unique designs with contemporary juxtapositions.

The most popular colourways within the Allura Flex collection are readily stocked in the UK to ensure a speedy turnaround for your project. And as Allura Flex can be installed alongside any of its Tessera carpet tiles, if stock or quick delivery is a concern, then Tessera Layout & Outline carpet tile collections are available via Forbo’s five-day delivery scheme, Forbo Direct.

Creating the modern office using integrated flooring schemes no longer has to be complicated – thanks to the development of flooring solutions that complement one another both in terms of installation and design. Forbo understands the needs and challenges of the office sector and can provide quality solutions, product, service and advice to take the hassle out of workplace specification.

If you’re planning your next office project, please visit the Forbo website to learn more about the Office Fit Out collection and download your sample book www.forbo-flooring.co.uk/officebook
Standby generators are used to supply power for the duration of a mains power outage. Such a break in power can have a serious effect on life as well as a huge financial impact on business, so the need for continuous power is becoming increasingly critical.

A well-maintained standby generator has a design life of more than 25 years and purchasing quality equipment that utilises the best design, quality materials and manufacturing precision will greatly influence the lifespan of your machine.

To achieve this design life, a planned preventative maintenance program (PPM) should be implemented, wherever possible utilising genuine OEM parts. PPM and service are typically conducted on a schedule which is based on time periods known as the maintenance cycle or actual running hours. This cycle should be adapted to meet each application requirements. Essentially if an engine operates for more than the standard hours, or in an extreme environment, it will need more servicing.

Annual maintenance will consist of a combination of major and minor visits and tests conducted by a manufacturer trained service engineer, covering all the main components. To ensure any generator is fully operational, tests conducted should include:

- Running the generator for five to ten minutes weekly, proving its ability to start in an emergency.
- Once a month, a mains failure simulation test, running the generator on the available site load for one hour. This proves the changeover arrangement is operational and the generator can support the site load.
- Should the site load be less 30%, it is recommended that on an annual basis, an artificial load bank is attached to run the generator at 100% to prevent excessive carbon build up.

A robust programme of servicing and preventative maintenance helps to safeguard the long service life of engines and alternators.

The control system plays a crucial role in maintaining and managing your generator. Whilst the technology behind alternators and engines changes little year on year, electronic components and electrical controls are continually evolving. This often means a perfectly viable engine and alternator risk becoming redundant due to outdated control technology and component obsolescence.

With constantly moving and improved technology, control manufacturers often cease making and supporting older versions of their products. In the event of failure, this makes sourcing replacement parts problematic and costly, creating periods of extended downtime, and putting your power continuity, and ultimately your business, at risk.

Additionally, older control systems present very little by way of the capability, usually because the technology was simply not available 10 to 25 years ago. Any older system with an ageing or obsolete control system therefore increases the risk to your continuity of power.

A cost-effective way to extend the life of your generator and ensure continuity is to upgrade or refurbish your control system.

Modern control systems offer increased functionality, including remote monitoring options, and reduce the risk of failure or faults as they are more resilient than older models.

A new digital control system can provide anything from a simple local start to remotely controlled and managed synchronised sets. Generators with communications ports can have alarms monitored remotely, offer full system data visibility and management, all via a laptop or smartphone from anywhere in the world, offering complete system flexibility and enhanced capabilities.

Even with the best maintenance regimes, it is essential to keep your control system up to date and reliable. Don’t wait until you have a controls failure, take the initiative to ensure your system is up to date and ready to perform when you need it most to avoid major business interruption.

By Billy Myers, Aftermarket Director at DTGen.
HYDRO-X LAUNCHES NEW OFFICES ACROSS THE UK

It has been a year of great uncertainties for businesses, and Hydro-X Group has been no exception. However, amid a global pandemic which is defining a ‘new normal’, shrinking businesses and forcing some SMEs out, Hydro-X Group has continued to grow and expand its offerings and reach. The continuous growth and success the company has enjoyed, especially during these unprecedented times, is primarily due to its adaptability, agility, innovation, investment in technology and human capital.

Hydro-X Group, which already boasts of seven offices across the United Kingdom, is further strengthening its local presence and ease to respond to the needs of customers by opening three new offices over the next couple of months. The new offices will be in Ely and Exeter, opening in October and Hemel Hempstead which is opening in November.

Richard Sanderson, Group Managing Director, said the company would continue to invest in growth opportunities that serve the needs of customers. “This year we have expanded our graduate scheme to recruit ten graduates, added new COVID-response service and product range, launched the game-changing chlorine dioxide generation and increased our local reach,” he said.

The expansion comes as the company enters its 30th year of delivering effective and reliable compliance solutions in the UK. From its establishment in 1984, Hydro-X has quickly grown to be the country’s largest independent compliance company and a trusted provider within the industry.

In the last six months, the Group has been working extensively to support customers within the key industries in the fight against coronavirus; ensuring a safe and efficient working environment for staff, customers, and visitors.

BOSTIK HELPS STEER HOSPITAL PROJECT THROUGH COVID-19

Bostik have enabled the progress of the new 3,600m² three storey ward block at Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital. Nationwide Flooring Contracts was employed to install safety vinyl and anti-static flooring and turned to Bostik for product recommendations and technical advice.

Bostik’s technical team visited the site carrying out moisture testing on the subfloors of the modular building and compiled a report that outlined a methodology and system of products for how best to tackle the job. To suppress the residual moisture in the subfloor, Nationwide used Screedmaster One Coat Membrane with Screedmaster One Coat Accelerator.

Nationwide Flooring Contracts primed most of the subfloors of the modular building and compiled a report that outlined a methodology and system of products for how best to tackle the job. To suppress the residual moisture in the subfloor, Nationwide used Screedmaster One Coat Membrane with Screedmaster One Coat Accelerator. Bostik supplied its Screedmaster Epoxy Primer and fibre-reinforced Screedmaster Flex smoothing compound, which is specially designed for use where vibration and minimal thermal movement can be problematic.

For the skirting in the ward block, Nationwide used Bostik Roll, the company’s solvent-free, reinforced adhesive tape. Solvent-free also means it is ideal for healthcare applications, since there is less impact on building occupants.
Looking to create a safe, comfortable and sustainable workplace for your employees?

In the current climate, never has it been more important to create safe and hygienic workplaces that will make employees feel comfortable and confident about coming into work and using the facilities. Research has shown that more than 1 in 4 people are now worried about returning to work, something that needs to be acknowledged by all companies, whether large or small.

Whether employees are being brought back into the workplace as part of a phased return, or are being split into working group bubbles, ensuring the workforce knows its wellbeing is in safe hands is essential for maintaining motivation and settling nerves and concerns.

Adapting to an evolving workplace

It’s clear that the working environment as we know it has changed. Adapting work routines and practices are exactly what prompted BRITA VIVREAU’s innovation team to develop two new water dispensing systems which incorporate the company’s latest energy-saving and hygiene technology, so that workplaces can provide high-quality, sustainable and safe filtered water for employees.

BRITA VIVREAU’s Top & Extra self-service water dispensing systems feature innovative HygienePlus and ThermalGate™ technology which protect against retrograde contamination and self-disinfect thermally to clear 99.99% of bacteria, resulting in cleaner, clearer, great tasting water. Not only this, but the ThermalGate™ technology is always on duty, even during inactive phases such as overnight or weekends, so no manual effort or chemical additives are required.

Flexible solutions that work for all

As well as offering flexibility for different sized workplaces, the BRITA VIVREAU Top & Extra systems also give a choice of water capacity depending on consumption needs, along with a choice of four varieties of great tasting water types.

An all-in-one unit, the BRITA VIVREAU Top, offers clean and fresh water no matter what the individual facility situation. Available as a stylish countertop or floor standing model, the product will complement the aesthetic of any premises and comes with a customisable base allowing businesses to build brand awareness.

For companies looking for a more minimalist solution, the BRITA VIVREAU Extra water dispenser is one of the brand’s most elegant products, with technology that is built under the countertop, so that all you see is the premium design tap that fits perfectly into its surrounding.

Creating a resilient green future

For workplaces with sustainability targets, the two water dispenser systems give a more environmentally friendly provision. Not only do they help reduce carbon footprints by encouraging the use of reusable bottles, but they also do not require any storage space, lowering energy consumption by eliminating the need to refrigerate water. In fact, the systems have a low power consumption due to the in-built cooling technology and have a natural refrigerant which also helps to reduce emissions.

Suitable for all

Both systems also come with an optional extra Easy Access Panel. This provides an additional control unit that can be positioned at a lower point, either flat to a surface or at an angle. This is ideal for wheelchair users as it enables safe access to drinking water without having to reach over the appliance or boiling water dispenser point.

Rebecca Fairfield, Head of Key Accounts at BRITA VIVREAU, said: “It’s a difficult and ever-changing environment for both employees and workplaces. BRITA VIVREAU’s new offer has this front of mind and these latest solutions will benefit workforces with great-tasting filtered water in addition to adaptable design-led innovation which keeps staff happy, hydrated and most importantly safe now and in the future.”

For more information on the Top & Extra water dispenser systems, please visit: https://www.brita.co.uk/top-50-85 or https://www.brita.co.uk/extra-50-85

For companies that have recently reopened, or are expecting to in the near future, and are interested in offering a modern, safe and sustainable water dispenser solution for your workforce, please head to www.brita.co.uk/water-dispensers/products or get in touch with the Dispenser Customer Service Team via 034567 496 555 or service@brita.co.uk
Communicating important safety & hygiene messages in a clear way is now more important than ever. The rules are constantly changing, and new measures are being put in place across the country. Businesses must adapt quickly to keep up with new regulations and inform staff, customers, or patients on these new measures. Choosing flexible and professional signage makes changing or updated posters and notices quick and easy, perfect for a world where messages are changing quickly!

The professional way to display signage is used everywhere for so many different reasons. These days, more and more businesses need to display coronavirus information, including QR Track & Trace codes, reminders to wear face coverings and signs to inform how many are allowed in to a space at a time.

Innovative Signage
The innovative DURAFRAME is an easy solution for displaying information clearly and professionally, without using Sellotape. Options range from self-adhesive, magnetic, and self-grip attachment options, so the frame can be applied to any surface. There’s no need for tools, and it leaves no sticky residue thanks to the fold-back magnetic frame. Simply attach the DURAFRAME to the desired surface, lift the fold-back magnetic frame, insert your poster – done! With over 80 different size and colour options, it’s the easy way to display messages in shop windows, staff rooms, warehouses, and restaurants!

Floor Signs
Floor Signs are equally efficient for highlighting key messages. Flexible floor stands can be moved easily to different locations and the anti-glare panel can be used in either portrait or landscape with an adjustable viewing angle. As quick as the DURAFRAME, inserts can be changed in seconds making floor signs the perfect solution to present information on shop floors and entrances to buildings.

Flexible Signage
The DURAFIX range is the latest addition to the DURABLE signage solution collection. The DURAFIX Clip, Rail and Roll keep notes, documents, and reminders close to hand whilst being reusable and easily interchangeable. Perfect for flexible workspaces, DURAFIX ensures nothing important is lost in the chaos of notes and files. This solution is clever as it is functional – and it’s easy to use:

- Peel off the protective film and attach to desired surface and position
- Open the strip, place the content inside
- Close the strip and the magnet hold it securely in place!

DURABLE is the one-stop-shop solution for all indoor signage needs.

Want to create better signage?
Here’s a handy checklist to help!

- We humans generally tend to look straight ahead - Make sure your signs are positioned in a direct line of sight from an entrance or at eye level
- It takes just 0.15 seconds for our brains to decide whether what we see is relevant - A picture paints a thousand words!
- Moving images are viewed more frequently than static ones
- How are signs attached? - This is one thing that viewers will notice, so professionally attached signs will make a good impression
- Integrating a logo boosts recognisability!
- Think big; bigger images attract more attention - DURAFRAME also comes in poster sizes
- Choose colour over black and white to grab attention
- Blue is the colour for mandatory signs - an ideal colour to use for offers
- Red is the colour for warning signs and draws attention - also ideal for special promotions
- Green is the colour of safety signs and should be reserved for emergency escape routes, first aid kits etc.

www.durable-uk.com  hello@durable-uk.com  01202 897071
NEW MD AT ARTHUR MCKAY

Atalian Servest’s building support services provider in the UK, Arthur McKay, has appointed Steve Wallbanks as Managing Director to spearhead growth. With more than 30 years’ experience in the FM Industry, Wallbanks will be responsible for steering the strategic direction of Arthur McKay and expanding the company’s service offerings. He brings a wealth of knowledge and technical expertise that will be fundamental in improving service quality.

Wallbanks joins the business following his role as Integration Director UK, US & Asia at parent company Atalian Servest for the last two years. Prior to this he worked for Servest SA, in Johannesburg, as CEO South Africa & Africa Business.

TWO KEY APPOINTMENTS AT CLOUDFM

As part of its accelerated transformation and growth programme, Cloudfm has made two key appointments to its senior team.

Haydn Mursell, an experienced CFO, joins the Group as an Advisor to the Executive Board, and Graeme Smith has been appointed as Group Business Development Director.

Mursell has 10 years’ experience at Plc Board level and has spent 30 years working in the contracting and services sectors. Mursell has held senior positions at a number of large, international organisations including Kier Group and Balfour Beatty, and specialises in business strategy, growth and performance.

Smith has over 25 years of commercial experience and has worked extensively in the facilities management and telecomms sectors. Mostly recently he was responsible for winning, retaining and growing regional and global corporate clients across various sectors within ISS Group. Bringing a wealth of experience spanning sales, bids and marketing, Smith will continue to develop Cloudfm’s facilities management business, as well as playing a key role in establishing the position of Cloudfm’s smart technology brand, Mindset, in the market.

ELIOR UK HIRES NEW HEAD OF DIETETICS AND NUTRITION

Contract caterer, Elior UK, has announced the appointment of Mandy Davies as its new Head of Dietetics and Nutrition.

In her new role, Davies will be responsible for a comprehensive nutritional and dietetic service – working with teams across the business to ensure evidence-based practice works in conjunction with the best commercial outcomes.

A former Sales and Marketing Director, Davies has extensive experience within the NHS, holds an MSc with Distinction in Clinical Research from the University of Manchester, a BSc 1st Class in Nutrition & Dietetics from the University of Chester, and a BSc in Hospitality Management & Business from the University of Central Lancashire.

BUILD RECRUITMENT

Build Recruitment are currently working with an exciting public sector company across England on an exclusive basis. We have plenty of positions available across the roles listed below:

- Site Supervisor - Mechanical
- Site Supervisor - Electrical
- Multi-skilled Engineer
- Combustion Engineer
- Electrician
- Senior Site Manager

For more information about the company or any of the roles listed above, get in touch with the Facilities Management team on 020 3434 4595 or FM@buildrec.com.

www.buildrec.com info@buildrec.com
Working from home isn’t a new concept, in fact before the pandemic changed how we view the traditional workplace, the number of remote workers had grown 173 per cent since 2005 suggesting that the appeal of working from home already existed. During this nationwide experience of remote working, we have learnt that the opportunity to offer flexible schedules and less supervision helps maintain productivity even during unprecedented times like these.

While getting back to the office is at the forefront of many employer’s minds, the majority of workers are still working from home and it is likely that future hiring will have an increased emphasis on remote working. For these businesses, now is the time to refresh hiring processes and less supervision helps maintain productivity even during unprecedented times like these.

Here are six competencies that every organisation should consider when hiring for a remote position:

Self-motivation and independent learning

The ability to self-motivate will be crucial for productivity in many roles that were once office based, but are currently undertaken at home. While the ‘new normal’ of remote working has brought the added challenge of juggling work-life balance in a vastly different environment, it has also enabled businesses to consider employees from all walks of life - so long as they can demonstrate the ability to adapt, and the drive to get the job done. It’s also still important to consider whether the candidate has the appropriate team working and collaborative skills, and the willingness to accommodate their colleague’s availability.

Communication

Communication is a crucial skill in the workplace and is the foundation of good remote work. It helps maintain a cohesive and motivated unit, helping us to navigate the unique situation we currently find ourselves in. However, hiring managers must understand that communicating well verbally and virtually are very different competencies. Look for someone who is proactive and consciously communicates early. It’s important that the candidate understands tone and their words are unlikely to be misinterpreted by clients and co-workers. But most importantly, an openness to try new communications models and a candidate that is happy to commit to your company’s communication practices.

Conscientiousness

When hiring new remote employees, hiring teams should look for those able to work in tandem with their teammates over communication platforms, and fulfill their roles as they would have done from the office. Conscientious candidates have been able to make the current remote working situation pay off for themselves and their teams, by blending their personal and professional lives under one roof. In interviews, hiring teams should ask candidates if they have worked remotely in previous roles, how they found it and what they were able to achieve.

Work Ethic

The pandemic has added a huge amount of stress to professional and personal lives. This should be taken into account in interview situations of course, but it also remains important to identify a strong drive and work ethic. During the interview stage, hiring teams should drill down into the candidate’s industriousness, exploring examples of times they’ve gone above and beyond and shown a willingness to get the job done, while still balancing their personal lives. For some, that might mean taking calls earlier in the morning or finishing some tasks into the evening. At every stage, employers should be transparent and explain what the particular role will consist of. Rather than making employees feel like they’re being monitored at all times (unless their organisation utilises that type of software), employers should make it clear that work ethic in the new normal is about dependability and having the ability to bring results-driven work to the business.

Self-management and independence

Businesses looking to hire remote employees should ask candidates about their performance within a “regular” work environment and invite them to offer a self-assessment of their skills and ability to meet the different presented by remote work. Besides their strengths and weaknesses, what’s their preferred working style? Are they adept at operating individually, or do they prefer to always operate as part of a team? Does your candidate take feedback well and can he/she/manage multiple projects in the timeframes that work for your team? What support do they need from the potential employer to be successful in a remote work environment?

Adaptability

Employers should aim to identify candidates who have a natural capacity to manage their time effectively and produce a constant and high-quality standard of work. Businesses that succeed in the era of working from home will hire individuals who can manage their output, schedules, and productivity, often without the need for a “hands-on” manager. The key for many organisations is to find prospects who possess a strong level of adaptability and possess an aptitude for remote working. The ideal work from home candidates are those who can balance their personal and professional lives, while learning the core processes and procedures of a new company. Essentially, organisations need to build a network of co-workers, team members, and leadership that can adapt to the new blend of work and home life.

SUMMARY

When hiring remote employees, hiring managers should look for evidence of independence. The best, most successful candidates, will demonstrate the ability to both work independently and as part of a team.

It’s also important to remember that working from home competencies are not necessarily the primary assessment criteria. Companies must first establish if the role requires working from home temporarily, as a result of COVID-19, or whether the move is more permanent. With offices remaining shut, people have little option but to work from home and not everyone can adapt. If you think a candidate would be a good fit longer term, but are not convinced of their aptitude at working from home, then companies should look at how they can provide support to the candidate, rather than immediately weeding them out.
Richard Anderson, Head of Learning and Development at High Speed Training, on how to promote positive mental health amongst their workforce by training them to adapt to their home working environment.

As a result of COVID-19 and the lockdown rulings imposed in March 2020, a reported 86 per cent of Brits have moved to working from home. After a turbulent summer it seemed that we were on the cusp of some sense of normality as the nation was encouraged to return to office life in a bid to reboot the economy. However, with the Prime Minister recently backtracking on his back-to-work plea, it seems probable that working from the home office will be the ‘new normal’ for the majority of the UK’s workforce until the new year.

As we settle back into this way of working for the long haul, business leaders are faced with the decision on what role the ‘office’ might have in the future and, in the meantime, how they can ensure their employees’ working environment at home meets the appropriate health and safety standards – whether that be for setting up a workstation ergonomically, or from the perspective of preventing workplace stress.

The shift in working practices has brought with it many positives, however we can’t ignore the negatives. Whilst nearly half (49 per cent) of workers revealed that their mental health has actually improved whilst working from home, with 22 per cent going so far as to say their mental health had improved ‘a lot’, those aged 18 – 24 were actually negatively affected by home working - with 45 per cent of people in this age bracket observing a marked impact on their mental health since lockdown began.

TRAINING PEOPLE TO WORK FROM HOME

From merely having a bad day to experiencing serious and lasting mental health issues brought on by the new world of social distancing that we now find ourselves in, employers need to have a sympathetic approach towards how they tackle mental health issues amongst their workforce, no matter how big or small they may seem. There are a handful of practices to encourage, which will hopefully make a difference to employee’s working lives, including:

● Embrace routine: promote the importance of maintaining a routine amongst employees. Whether it’s a pre-work run, or lunch time read, keeping a structured working week will help people maintain a more positive mind frame.

● Keep active: physical activity is proven to reduce stress, elevate moods, improve sleep and replenish energy, so encouraging staff to take time out of their day to get moving is a basic essential. In most cases, 30 minutes a day is thought to be enough to have a significant positive impact on mood and you can fill this time with any activity that makes you feel good. There are an abundance of home workout videos available on social media and via downloadable apps that offer both paid for and free services.

● Stay connected: social interactions and workplace friendships are thought to benefit levels of productivity. Putting in regular virtual catch-ups is a great and simple way of uplifting spirits. There are a number of ways to still conduct your regular meetings, team catch ups and 1-2-1s. Platforms such as Zoom, 8×8, and Google Hangouts are all reliable and secure. At work, you’d usually be able to turn to your colleagues to share jokes and stories at intervals during the day. In this situation, we encourage you to do the same virtually. If you use instant messaging services, such as Slack, they have a handy video call tool you can use if you need a brief pick-me-up.

● Be informative: whilst we find ourselves in this constant state of flux, it is imperative that business leaders are transparent and informative with their staff. This should provide some form of relief and reassurance for those having doubts about the future. Breathing is a very effective tool for managing stressful situations and overwhelming emotions. Many of the staff at High Speed Training have been using apps such as Headspace, Insight Timer and Calm to try out anything from a five minute breathing exercise to guided meditations.

● Remain educated: as the world around us keeps changing, it’s important to keep up to date with the latest advice from experts. It’s promising to see that here at High Speed Training, we’ve seen an 86 per cent rise in popularity for our Mental Health Awareness course during the first period of lockdown, as decision makers across the country realise the importance of keeping their workforce happy. As well as having a moral responsibility to care for their staff’s mental health, employers also have a duty of care regarding their staff’s physical health. It is a legal requirement to carry out a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment as part of health and safety law.

BE FLEXIBLE

Returning back to the office is inevitable for many British workers, albeit probably in a different way to before. Flexible working and the use of co-working spaces will be more widely adopted as we shift to a new style of working. When this time comes, it’s important we get it right from the outset. Business leaders should already be reviewing their ‘back to work’ strategies for the practicality side of things, but should also consider how to enable their staff to connect back into office life seamlessly. Encouraging staff to speak out about how they feel and what their potential anxieties are about returning to the office, offering support to those who may need it and implementing a training schedule so that managers are equipped to deal with issues that may arise are just some steps to take to get us harmoniously back into the office.
How did you progress through the profession to your current role?
I started my career in FM 12 years ago as an Assistant Administrator. Through my drive and determination to enhance my skills and progress my career, I gradually advanced into my current role as Regional Facilities Manager, South West & Wales. In my current role I am responsible and accountable for TFM service delivery to 1,800 buildings across the South West and Wales via a team of four Area Managers and 85 engineers, with a regional business value of £10 million per annum and additional projects revenue of £1.2 million.

What have you found the most challenging experiences working in FM?
The most challenging aspect of my role is balancing all the key requirements and allocating sufficient time to effectively manage and make improvements such as: customer communications, people management, finance and compliance.

Are you a member of any FM association or body and if so what benefits do you think they provide?
I am a member of IWFM and have been for several years. As a dedicated platform for workplace and facilities management professional development, IWFM hosts a number of conferences throughout the year with guest speakers showcasing the latest technology. These events and the IWFM is a brilliant platform for networking and sharing best practice.

What qualities do you think are most needed for a successful career in FM?
To be a successful FM professional, I believe the main qualities are to be; dynamic, resilient, innovative and have a collaborative approach.

What has changed about your job role since the COVID-19 crisis?
E.g. home working, furloughed, redeployed?
My job has changed a lot since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am now working from home 100 per cent of the time. Our reliance on technology is sometimes criticised, however, the pandemic has demonstrated – things can still happen, but in a different way. I have really enjoyed the benefits that come with working from home. This has resulted in greater productivity time allowing me to focus on my strategic plan for my region.

What is your organisation doing to ensure the wellbeing of staff – whether working at home or returning to the workplace?
We have appointed COVID Wardens across our main sites to monitor and manage behaviours. So far, we have undertaken 125 site reoccupation surveys and mapped out one-way systems and safe zones. Alongside this, 360 additional Housekeepers have been recruited who have delivered a huge 16,000 additional hours per week of touchpoint cleaning, we have installed a total of 4,515 hand sanitiser stations and implemented 28,000 new pieces of social distancing signage to help make our buildings a safe place to be.

Do you believe the pandemic has highlighted the important role of the FM sector and what areas do you see as most key?
Historically the FM industry has been somewhat invisible and under-recognised in terms of the part they play in keeping businesses running effectively. With the changing requirements of the workspace, businesses and customers, have recognised the pivotal part we play in making sure our buildings are fit for use and a safe place to work for our colleagues.

What advice would you give to someone coming into the profession now?
The FM industry is fast paced and requires determination, resilience and innovative ways of working. FM is an ever-changing environment now more than ever and our role is to predict the changing needs of our customers and the environment.

Which of your achievements are you most proud of during your career?
My proudest moment is winning Pattenmakers Young FM Manager of the Year 2020. Winning the award has given me the platform to encourage other young people to start and progress their career in FM.

What do you predict could be the main changes to the FM sector over the next few months and years?
With the economic hit to businesses across the UK, I foresee that demonstrating value for money will be one of the key priorities to all FM providers. In addition to this, our customers are working in a different way and we need to align ourselves to be able to deliver diverse service solutions.

Would you, or someone you know, like to be featured in our career ladder column? If you’re an operational FM with more than 10 years’ experience in the sector, then email sara.bean@kpmmedia.co.uk
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