

INSPIRING EMPLOYEES IN THE POST-COVID-19 WORKPLACE

With offices set to reopen over the coming months, some employees may be chomping at the bit to meet up with their workplace colleagues, while others may need to be coaxed back, writes Dan Harding, CEO of 'Sign-In App'. Here he outlines the steps which companies may take to ensure that all employees will want to re-establish collaboration and connection.



A recent survey *'THE RISE OF THE HYBRID WORKPLACE: A Global Survey of Executives, Employee Experience Experts, and Knowledge Workers'* confirmed that nearly every employee is worried about returning to work, with concerns about touching shared office devices, social distancing, cleanliness, and more. Yet, just nine per cent of workers expect to return to the office full time.

It's clear that both employees and employers alike are keen to explore the opportunity of hybrid working, keeping face-to-face contact within some form of an office environment – or touchdown space – a core part of the working experience, even if only for a few days each month.

If companies want to re-engage employees with the physical workspace, they need to start planning now. Instead of waiting for the current restrictions to end, it's time to brush off the office and policy cobwebs and put plans in place ahead of the long-awaited return to the office.

Employers need to consider the steps required to make employees feel safe, supported and motivated in the new hybrid environment, and to check employees' physical and mental wellbeing, and intervene if necessary.

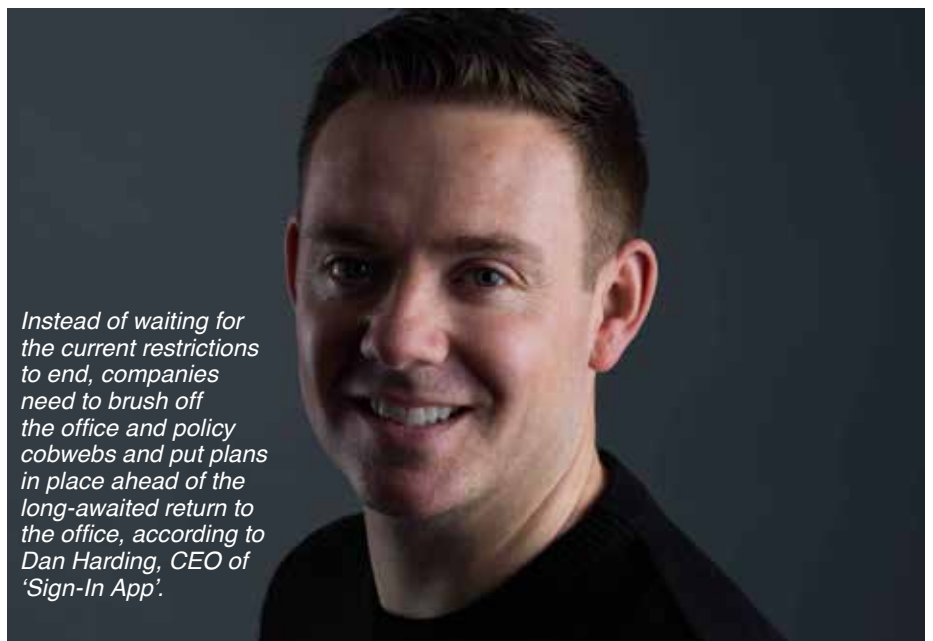
This is not about extra hand sanitiser or one-way systems. Companies need to actively communicate plans with their employees on how they view the new workspace – including how and when it is used.

This is about reimagining the office concept for the better – employer duty of care must receive the same treatment.

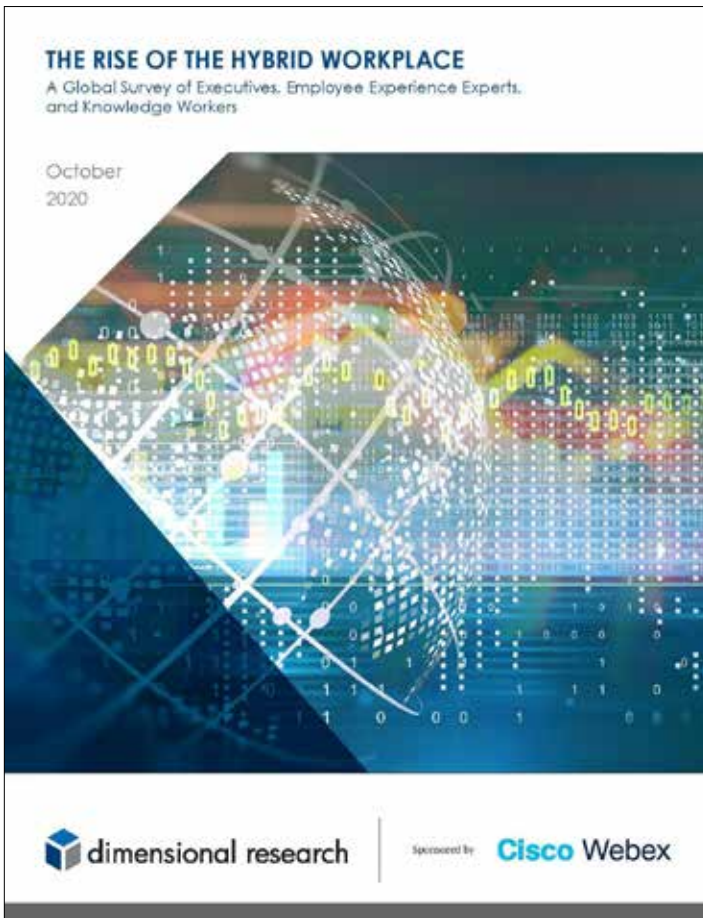
KEEPING EMPLOYEES IN THE LOOP

From recreation rooms to shared working spaces, employees need to feel confident that the business has a handle on social distancing.

They want to know how their employer plans to keep track of both staff and visitors on site at any time to meet contact tracing requirements.



Instead of waiting for the current restrictions to end, companies need to brush off the office and policy cobwebs and put plans in place ahead of the long-awaited return to the office, according to Dan Harding, CEO of 'Sign-In App'.



The survey outlines the impact COVID-19 has had on the work environment, the current state of remote workers, their concerns about returning to the office, and the role technology can play in supporting businesses in their transformation to the hybrid workplace. To download a copy click on link <https://bit.ly/3zvWe7G>

And they want to be able to seamlessly collaborate with colleagues regardless of their location in a flexible way. These factors need not be overwhelming for businesses, as innovative, cloud-based technology solutions that are straightforward to deploy and operate hold the key to unlocking the hybrid working future.

Simple apps can be used to sign in to the building, using contactless technology to minimise interactions. This provides a company with accurate and up-to-date information about every employee, visitor and contractor on site at any time. If any individual becomes ill or tests positive for COVID-19, the business has immediate access to the contact details of anyone who has been potentially exposed, allowing effective contact tracing and isolation.

In addition, the app can be used by employees to book desks in advance – with clear rules set to control capacity in every area. For example, in a pod

of four desks, only two can be made available at any one time – all done electronically.

Meeting spaces can be limited to specific numbers – enforcing the rule of six, for example. Showing employees that the space is safe and controlled is a great way to boost their confidence about returning to the office, especially for the first time.

ENSURING STAFF WELLBEING

Adding health questionnaires to the sign-in and out process is also a simple and effective way of keeping track of mental and physical wellbeing.

Obviously,

essential COVID-19 questions such as whether someone is running a temperature or has a cough will be standard requirements within most offices for the foreseeable future.

However, this facility can also be used to check an individual's mental wellbeing, especially if they are using the app to sign in and out of work at home, as well as in the office. In addition to checking that employees are not working excessive hours at home – something that has raised concerns over the past few months – managers can use the app to gain a better understanding of how people are coping with the changing working world.

How are they managing working from home? Do they have ideas about how to improve the collaborative workspace? In a working world that is in an unprecedented transition towards a hybrid environment, this information can provide companies with vital insights to



THE SIGN-IN APP: Marketed as the smart and safe way to sign in, the app allows staff, contractors and visitors to sign in and out of the workplace, in addition to booking desks and meeting rooms. From smartphone contactless sign-ins to RFID and QR code scanning, users may choose a sign-in option that suits their needs. For details visit <https://signinapp.com/>.

inform new policies and procedures that will help to safeguard employees and create a productive workforce.

It's important to keep in mind that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, no set framework for the new working environment and what will work for one organisation may require further process iterations for the next.

So, what better time than now to consider how the office can be changed for the better, to improve morale, collaboration and productivity through a flexible culture that works for all, underpinned by innovative and adaptable technology solutions.

CHANGING EXPECTATIONS

Few companies expect to welcome the entire workforce back to the office on day one, but many may well be surprised by the reluctance of some individuals to return to any co-working space. Employee expectations of the working world have changed for good so employers need to not only adapt working spaces accordingly, but also their approach to HR and duty of care.

Technology is set to play a key role in this strategy, not only in managing the capacity and safety within the physical office space but also in building confidence and providing a chance to check in with employees and understand what they need to be productive and happy in the office or at home.