GUIDELINES FOR THE RESUMPTION OF WORKPLACE OPERATIONS POST-MCO

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WITH THE Movement Control Order (MCO) ending, working places require standard operating procedures to be in place for a safe and rational resumption of operations.

As argued in Penang Institute's crisis assessment, *Covid-19: Extensive Lifestyle Changes are on the Cards[1]*, changes to working lifestyle and business operations are likely to be relatively permanent. On 1st May 2020, the Prime Minister announced a partial retraction of the MCO, allowing for a range of business activities to resume from Monday, 4th May.

The suddenness of this change in strategy by the federal government in the containment of Covid-19, makes rational guidelines for a safe implementation of Standard Operating Procedures for workplaces all the more necessary and urgent. It is in order to ease the transition for small-scale businesses in these unprecedented times that we have produced this document, and made it available to the general public. While keeping to the rules set by the authorities on movement restrictions, there are nevertheless additional measures that should be taken – and that are easy to take – to ensure that effective social distancing is practiced in the workplace.

Provided herein therefore, are general guidelines for managing the workplace as long as Covid-19 remains a public health threat, or in the event of similar threats to public health.
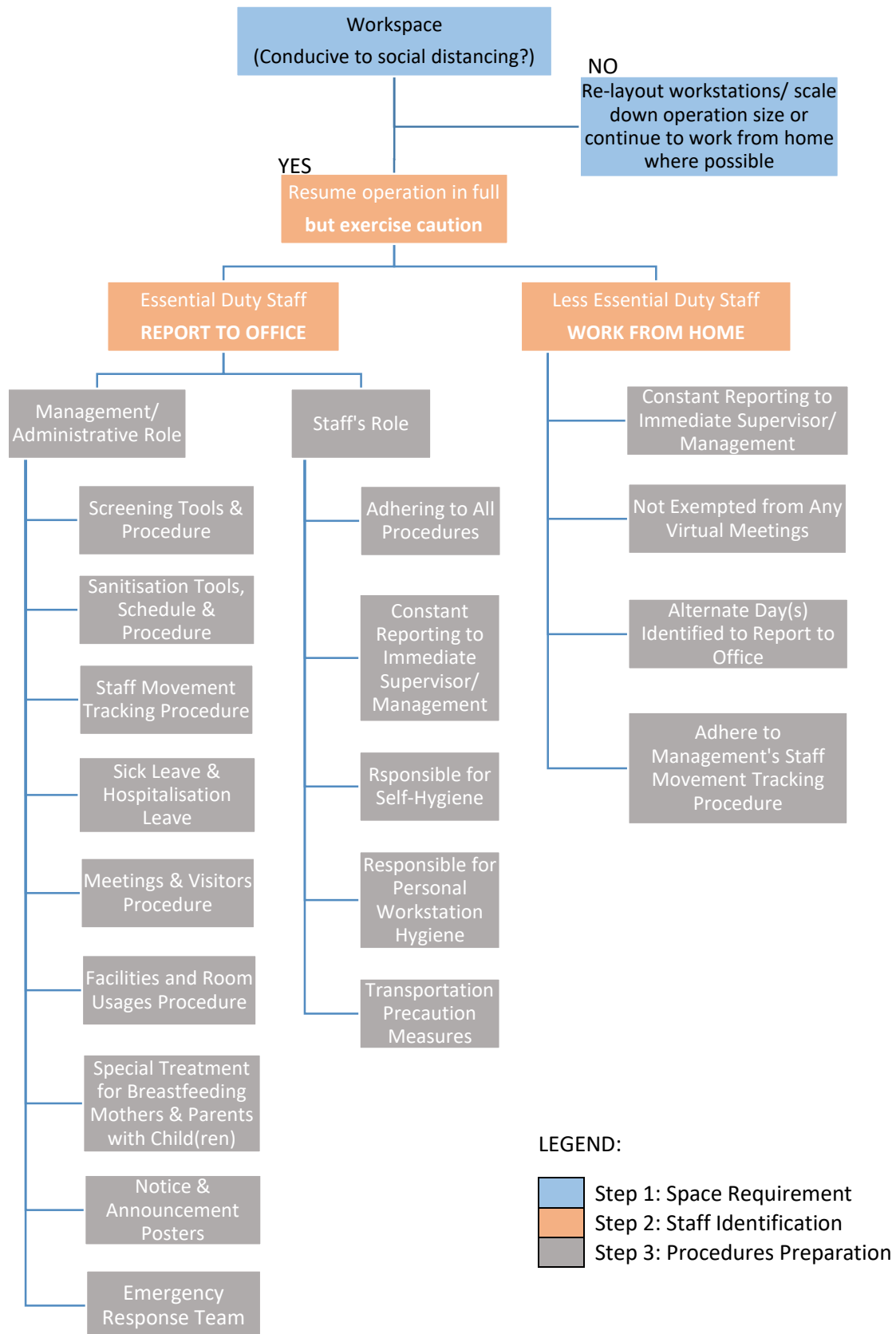
Three key steps are recommended to initiate the planning and decision making process prior to resuming business. These are:

1. Consideration for physical space requirements;
2. Staff identification for operations, and;
3. Putting procedures into place prior to resuming operations.

Since we attempt to cover as many scenarios and business operations as possible, some suggestions may not be directly applicable to certain specific businesses. At the end of the day, it is about balancing between keeping your premise and staff safe from the virus and keeping your business afloat financially. At the same time, apparent and rational preparedness on the part of the employer goes a long way towards easing fear and anxiety, both among staff on duty as well as clients and customers. The suggestions may err on the side of caution, but at the very least they draw awareness to the issues raised, and provide possible and concrete solutions. See Figure 1: Guide to Resuming Operations Post-MCO.

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[1] https://penanginstitute.org/publications/covid-19-crisis-assessments/covid-19-extensive-lifestyle-changes-are-on-the-cards/

Figure 1 : Guide to Resuming Operations Post-MCO

Workspace
(Conducive to social distancing?)

NO
Re-layout workstations/ scale down operation size or continue to work from home where possible

YES

Resume operation in full **but exercise caution**

Essential Duty Staff **REPORT TO OFFICE**

Less Essential Duty Staff **WORK FROM HOME**

Management/ Administrative Role

Staff's Role

- Constant Reporting to Immediate Supervisor/ Management
- Not Exempted from Any Virtual Meetings
- Alternate Day(s) Identified to Report to Office
- Adhere to Management's Staff Movement Tracking Procedure

Management/Administrative Role:
- Screening Tools & Procedure
- Sanitisation Tools, Schedule & Procedure
- Staff Movement Tracking Procedure
- Sick Leave & Hospitalisation Leave
- Meetings & Visitors Procedure
- Facilities and Room Usages Procedure
- Special Treatment for Breastfeeding Mothers & Parents with Child(ren)
- Notice & Announcement Posters
- Emergency Response Team

Staff's Role:
- Adhering to All Procedures
- Constant Reporting to Immediate Supervisor/ Management
- Rsponsible for Self-Hygiene
- Responsible for Personal Workstation Hygiene
- Transportation Precaution Measures

LEGEND:

Step 1: Space Requirement
Step 2: Staff Identification
Step 3: Procedures Preparation

DOCUMENT GUIDE

STEP 1: SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Social distancing is a key consideration. Management should study the workspace arrangement of the office and decide what percentage of the current workforce can return to work without radical changes being necessary. However, if the current settings are not ideal for social distancing, you may either re-layout your office workstations, scaling down operation size, or continue work-from-home. Step 2 will assist you in prioritising the staff you need to be present at the office. Even if your workstations are already generously spaced, it is still recommended that you read through the guide for further considerations.

Scenario 1 − Cubicle Settings

A cubicle[2] setting is where individual workstations are separated with a full partition between workstations. It also clearly defines the individual staff's space versus common space. If your office has a cubicle setting, technically social distancing can be practised almost immediately without much alteration. However, bear in mind two more factors − cubicles' cleanliness and the width of the walkway. The cleanliness of the cubicle, especially the surface of the cubicle partitions, can be unhygienic in that germs and viruses may collect there. According to the World Health Organisation, the novel coronavirus can survive up to 72 hours[3] on certain surfaces. In fact, some other sources suggest that they last longer than that[4,5]. It has been suggested that the walkway between cubicles must be at least 2.0m apart with reference to ergonomic measurements[6] to allow two adult males (estimated shoulder width of 60cm) to pass by each other with a minimum 80cm distance between them, shoulder to shoulder. However, this would mean that they would be extremely close to the cubicles while passing each other. But having walkways that are broader than 2.0m would not be practicable in most cases. We would therefore recommend that the walkway be used as a one-way circulation path instead. In fact, a 2.0m walkway is an ideal for one-way circulation, provided a minimum 70cm distance on both sides between the person walking in the middle of the walkway and the cubicle partitions. If space remains a problem for the adoption of such system, an alternating staff reporting schedule based on their respective cubicles proximity may have to be developed instead. If you still wish to opt for a full-scale operation despite being unable to achieve ideal social distancing between workstations, face masks should be made mandatory for all staff. Please refer to Illustration 1 and 2 for further details.

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[2] For sample of cubicle settings, please see https://www.branchfurniture.com/blogs/turn-key/history-of-office-cubicles

[3] https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses

[4] https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/leisure/2020/03/28/how-long-can-the-covid-19-virus-last-on-these-surfaces/

[5] https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200317-covid-19-how-long-does-the-coronavirus-last-on-surfaces

[6] https://www.standards.doe.gov/standards-documents/1100/1140-bhdbk-2001-pt3/@@images/file
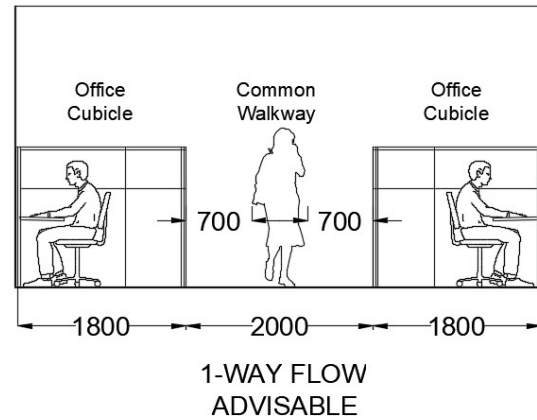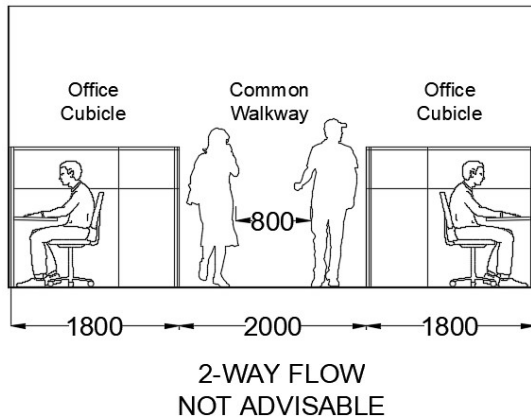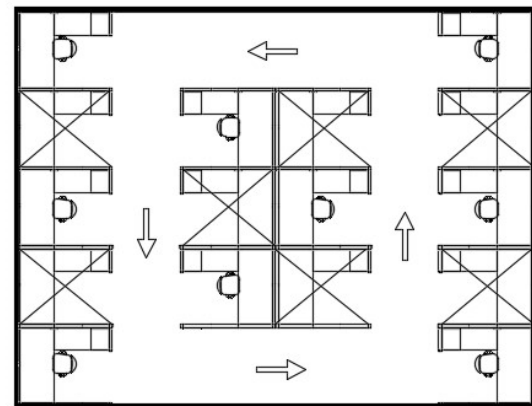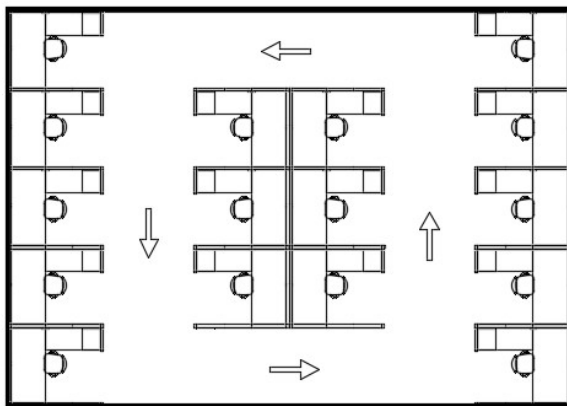
ILLUSTRATION 1
CUBICLE SEATING

2-WAY FLOW
NOT ADVISABLE

1-WAY FLOW
ADVISABLE

ILLUSTRATION 2
CUBICLE SEATING

1-WAY FLOW
if walkway can achieve 2m-width

ALTERNATE SPACING
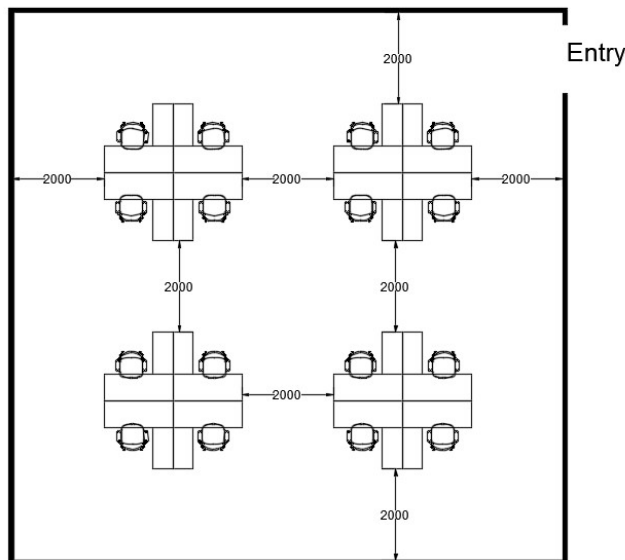if walkway less than 2m-width

Scenario 2 – Cluster Workstation Settings

A cluster[7] workstation setting is where workstations are clustered together with limited half partitions, and for some, none at all. This workstation layout is aimed at optimising office space by reducing space for circulation. The definition of staff's space is considerably vague for this layout is aimed at increasing interaction between staff while offering some form of privacy through a semi-partition. The ideal walkway width should remain similar to Scenario 1, i.e. 2.0m width. However, it is more challenging to alter a cluster workstation layout due to the table structure and installation. Often, in such cases, the office circulation space is maxed out already. Therefore, it is highly recommended that you implement an alternating staff reporting schedule based on the proximity staff seated next to each other. Alternatively, face masks should be made mandatory for all staff while reporting to work. Please refer to Illustration 3 for more details.

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[7] For sample of cluster settings, please see https://mnofficefurniture.com/products/workstation-elodia-concept-cluster-of-9-custom-made

ILLUSTRATION 3
CLUSTER WORKSTATION

IDEAL LAYOUT
Walkway allowed at 2m-width
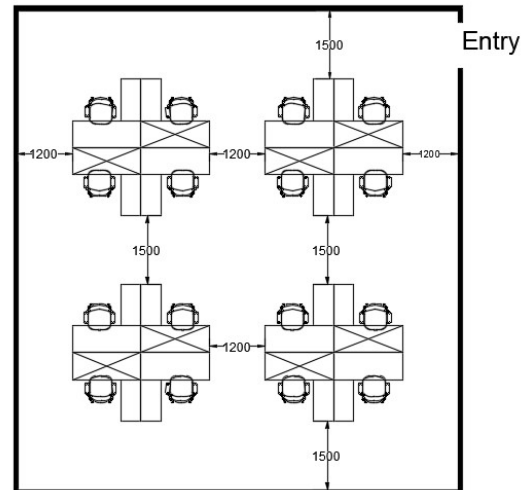
EXISTING LAYOUT TO CLOSE
ALTERNATE SPACING
If walkway less than 2m-width
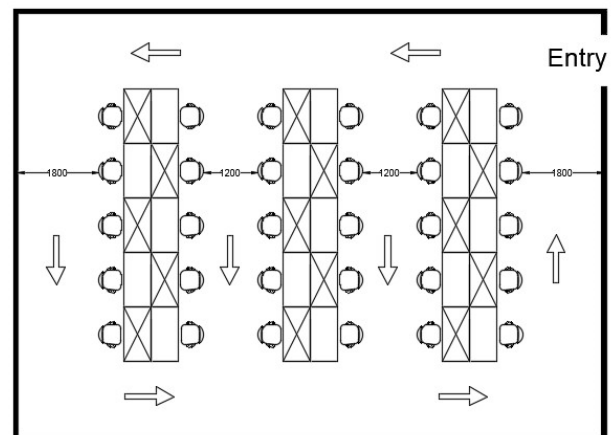
Scenario 3 − Open Office Settings

An open office[8] setting is one where the workstations layout can be easily maneuvered because it is usually set up without any form of partitions and allows for rearrangement of workstations almost at will, based on needs. Another concept an open office is the allocation for hotdesk(s), or a common workstation that any staff can utilise. It is recommended that the hotdesk facility be utilised with high precaution now, and users must sanitise the hotdesk before and after each use. It is all the better to temporarily halt the hotdesk facility and ensure staff are working only from their designated workstations to prevent cross contamination. It is also recommended that workstations in this setting should now be placed at least 1.0m apart, ideally to create a minimum 2.0m width circulation space in the name of social distancing [Tip: 2.0m to be calculated 60cm from desk for seating space]. Understanding that not all open office settings have the luxury of rearrangement due to complicated fixed wirings, we recommend the reassignment of staff workstations as the immediate next step to resume operations at full capacity. If a lack of space disallows rearrangement or reassignment of different workstations, alternating staff reporting schedule is highly recommended. Alternatively, face masks should be made mandatory for all staff while reporting to work. Please refer to Illustration 4 for more details.

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[8] For sample of open office settings, please see https://www.perkspot.com/blog/open-plan-office/

ILLUSTRATION 4
OPEN CONCEPT
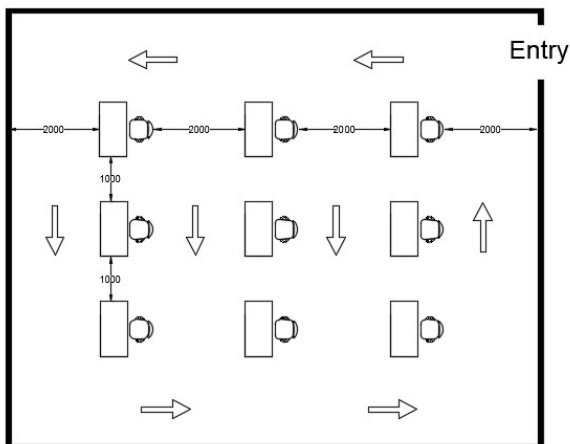
OPEN OFFICE SETTING
BASED ON 1-WAY FLOW
If walkway can achieve 2m-width

OPEN OFFICE SETTING
BASED ON 1-WAY FLOW
If walkway less than 2m-width
(Alternate Spacing Only)

### *Scenario 4 - Shared Office Settings*

The shared office setting is a facility that is offered by companies where the nature of their workers' job is such that they spend 80% of their time outside the office, or where their workers are allowed to work remotely. In order to save space, these companies usually create a shared office facility that is only used occasionally by the staff. The shared office workstation is usually equipped with a shared computer (or not), printer, and stationeries, where multiple staff members can use the same workstation at different times of the day. This is also the very same concept utilised for coworking[9] spaces. The notable difference between a shared office within a company versus a coworking space is that the shared office is often under-designed in terms of capacity in order to save space and operating cost, while coworking spaces often over-design the capacity of the space consumption in order to provide the freedom and space for startup entrepreneurs. It is highly recommended for the shared office within the company to be temporarily closed and for staff to continue working remotely. Should there be a need for the remote staff to report to work, the shared office can be utilised with the condition that sanitisation be arranged immediately after each use. As for coworking spaces where workstation capacity is often 50% above the actual space consumption for certain locations, it is recommended that a practice similar to that of a restaurant operation be implemented. For example, each workstation should sanitised after every use, alternate workstations must be closed and face masks be made mandatory in this facility.

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[9] https://www.chargespot.com/workspaces/coworking-spaces/

Scenario 5: Public Area/ Lobby

Public areas in an organisation are the areas where the public other than staff can present. These include waiting lounges, cafeterias, meeting rooms, conference halls and other facilities such as resource centres or libraries. Some business operations have a decidedly higher ratio of public area than other, such as higher education or continuous learning centres, cinemas or theatres, retail stores as well as galleries or museums. In these public areas, it is important to ensure that social distancing is practiced post-MCO to continue limiting the spread of the virus. It is highly recommended adequate face masks be provided for all staff on duty at the public area for their protection. It is also highly recommended that seating at the waiting area must be alternated to ensure sufficient space between guests. For auditorium seating in places such as cinema, theatre hall, and lecture hall, the seating capacity should be reduced by at least 60%. An option is the emptying of alternate rows alongside emptying every two seats on each row. Please refer to Illustration 5 for more details. Some soft rules are also needed, considering how walking to seats down a row can be a tight affair. For example, filling up seats in the centre of rows first may be a wise procedure. Additional precautionary measures such as regular sanitising schedule or simply a replaceable seat cover (single use or otherwise) can be considered in place of sanitisation, especially for auditoriums with high turnover rate. For waiting lounges or spaces with similar functions such as a reception lobby, customer care lobby, resource centre or museum, it is recommended that the Management limit the number of guests visiting at one time. A quick way of calculation is simply by deducting the available floor area by 30% for circulation[10] and divide the remaining area by approximately 2.0m² for each guest. For galleries or museums operators, consideration for circulation ratio might be much higher than 30%. For retail stores and libraries where shelves or rows of goods are displayed for browsing, it is recommended that the guest capacity be limited to a maximum of 1 guest per row.

ILLUSTRATION 5
CONFERENCE HALL

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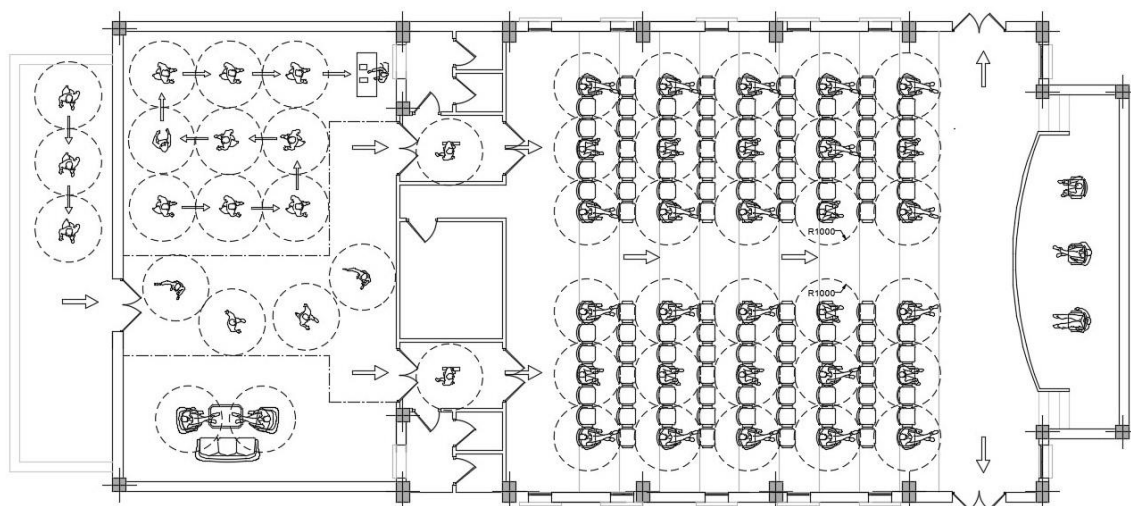
[10] https://web.iit.edu/sites/web/files/departments/academic-affairs/academic-resource-center/pdfs/arch_programming.pdf

Scenario 6: Elevators (Lifts)

To repeat, the 2 key standards that have been repetitively advocated by WHO and many other health practitioners are the practice of social distancing and the avoidance of face-touching. Therefore, in an enclosed space where the air is relatively still, such as in an elevator, it is crucial to identify the total number of users allowed per lift by area instead of by weight. Although various suggestions have been made for social distancing in elevators[11] already, we would like to suggest some alterations to the existing guidelines. Most designated standing areas within the lift are drawn to a nominal size per standing adult, assigned to face the elevator walls. This is in order to fit in the one extra person in the centre of the elevator. Based on our earlier suggestions where additional space is always recommended, we suggest that each designated standing area within the elevator be measured to a minimum of $1.5m^2$, if not, a $2.0m^2$ for an ideal buffer. The reason for this, as mentioned by various reports, is that droplets carrying virus can remain airborne longer in undisturbed air[12]. Thus, having elevator users closer together to achieve higher efficiency with each trip increases the risk for the users. Furthermore, standing too close to the elevator's wall may cause droplets to settle onto the wall surfaces, again raising the probability of contamination for the next users of the elevator. In buildings where elevator users' volume is high, the "ideal" designated standing area size may not be achievable. Therefore, it is highly recommended that in these buildings, it should be made mandatory for elevator users to use face masks. A frequent sanitising schedule for the elevator should be implemented to ensure the elevator buttons and walls are frequently cleaned and disinfected. Additional measures can be found in Step 2 and Step 3 for crowd control for these buildings.

STEP 2: STAFF IDENTIFICATION

Even when no MCO is in place, the battle against the Covid-19 pandemic will continue for some time yet. Therefore, identifying which duties are essential in your office and which can be performed remotely can definitely minimise the risk of your workforce contracting the virus. Extra measures to be taken to ensure that your workplace does not become the next epicentre of a virus outbreak include the sanitisation of areas beyond areas such as lobbies, corridors or workstations. Considerable attention and planning must be given to the usage of your office washroom and other facilities such as surau and nursing rooms. These will be detailed in Step 3. After identifying the measures to be taken in Step 1 related to workstations and space planning, you should develop a list of essential duties staff. This will help you initiate a duty roster that can be implemented where you see fit.

We suggest the following processes to be essential duties for most operations:

1. **Financial operations**
   Regardless of whether you have decided to continue working from home or to go back to full operation on your premise, all payments due must be processed and the bookkeeping record updated. It is suggested that your finance officers be allowed back to the office for filling, bookkeeping and related accounting matters to be sorted out accordingly. Even though most of the payment process has been shifted to online transactions, but due to present auditing procedures, hard copies of transaction

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[11] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/coronavirus-outbreak-world-uk-italy-spain-china-pictures/people-stand-designated-areas-ensure-social-distancing-inside/

[12] https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200317-covid-19-how-long-does-the-coronavirus-last-on-surfaces

records must be certified, filed, organised and kept for at least 12 months in support of the annual auditing cycle; and for 7 years to meet the taxation audit requirement. If your office does not provide any laptops for your finance officer, it is then even more crucial that he/she be allowed to report to the office.

2.   Building management operations

Premise management operators must be allowed to return to the office to ensure that all building management operations be taken care of. This may include those providing general janitorial and disposal services, landscape and building maintenance (such as electrical, mechanical, plumbing, networking and IT) services, as well as security services, especially the ones responsible to ensuring the premise is open for operation and also secured after operating hours.

3.   Front desk operations

Front desk operations should include all forms of operations dealing with walk-in guests and visitors. These functions may include the receptionist, registration officers, customer care service consultants, despatch officers, librarians and food servers, to name a few.

4.   Skilled-service operations

Skilled-service operations refer to jobs that must be performed in situ, for example those involving factory assembly line workers, skilled technicians and skilled builders whose absence from site would directly affect productivity. Unless investments have been made for automation of the factory's assembly processes or the construction process, staff handling skilled-service operations should be protected through more stringent procedures due to the spatial proximity between staff during work. On the other spectrum of skilled-service operations are services such as beauticians, hairdressers and makeup artists. These it may require an entirely different standard operating procedures altogether, closer to those of a health care facility where self-protection as well as frequent sanitisation of tools and consumables must take place.

The remaining operations would be those that can be either technically done remotely or done on-site occasionally. This simple categorisation method should help the Management and business owners develop their priority lists to meet economic concerns without compromising the general welfare of the staff.

STEP 3: PREPARATION FOR THE PROCEDURES

Procedures in this section may be adjusted according to your administration practices. Generally, we discuss 3 categories, covering the roles, responsibilities and procedures of the Management, of the staff reporting to office and of the staff working from home. For convenience, we will be sharing processes and procedures based on a preferred order from Penang Institute's perspective.

[Where the context so suggests and permits, pronouns imparting singularity shall also connote the plural and vice versa and likewise, words imparting the masculine gender shall also include the feminine gender].

Work from Home
Work from home can be defined as flexibility to allow staff to report to work from home instead of being physically present at office. Generally, a consensus must be achieved between the employer and the staff that the latter may work from home to the extent the nature of his job allows it. While working from home, he must adhere to the following:

a) He must be contactable during office operating hours on the days he works from home.
b) He must remain accountable for deliverables of quality.
c) He is not exempted from attending meetings or discussions.
d) He is to report to his immediate supervisor regularly.
e) He is to report to the Human Resource (HR) or designated officer regularly and transparently regarding his health status.
f) He is to adhere to company policy including the newly imposed Staff Movement Tracking Procedure (to be explained later).

For some staff, working from home might be a challenge where internet connectivity and affordability can be a real issue. There may be occasions where the staff is expected to dial in for certain clarifications as well. Therefore, it is suggested for the Management to consider offering the following support for staff working from home:

a) Laptop must be provided to the staff working from home for performance of his duty.
b) Telecommunication subsidy or allowance to support staff working from home for internet or mobile communication charges.
c) Platforms for secured virtual meetings (such as Google Meet, Skype, Microsoft Team, Zoom, Cisco Webex, etc) to be put in place.
d) (Optional) Considering some staff might be working on shared information within the company's server, secured remote access through Virtual Private Network or Cloud Server is recommended. It is, however, crucial that the connecting device be free from cyber threats, and controlled access from limited devices is highly recommended.
e) (Optional) Where there is a need for staff to report to the office, the reporting date of staff working from home can be coordinated based on purpose of meeting or fixed at certain intervals.

Getting Premises Ready Physically for Resumption of Operations
Ideally, below is the checklist to aid building managers or Management in preparing physically for partial or full operations, and in good time before the resumption of operations. If members of the current workforce are to be tasked for this duty, it is advisable that adequate time and notice be given for a thorough preparation to be done.

1. **Sanitisation of Premises**
   A thorough sanitisation of the premises must be done prior to resumption of operations. Areas mandatory for cleaning with soap and water followed by disinfection with disinfectant recommended by Ministry of Health or WHO include and are not limited to office floors, doors, windows, air-conditioning vent and/or filter, walls, interior of elevators and shelves. Additional attention should be given to door knobs, windows handles, balustrades, electricity switches, door access keypads and/or touchpads, as well as other common electrical fixtures in the building. Finally, all desk telephones, printers and fax machines surfaces, keyboards and touch screen panels should be cleaned and sanitized either prior to resumption or on the day of resumption of operations. For certain areas and equipment, such as toilets, lobby, common printer and desk phone, sanitisation of surfaces should be done regularly, and adjusted to the number of users and the usage rate. If your premises have carpeted surfaces, it is recommended that these be thoroughly shampooed on top of the usual vacuum process before the disinfection process.

2. **Screening Tools**
   There are 2 screening options that are recommended. The first is a handheld contactless infrared thermometer that can process one person at a time. A dedicated staff must be assigned for this if this is the chosen option. This tool is suitable for a moderately sized operation. Alternatively, a thermal camera surveillance system can be put in place for premises with multiple entry points or where a high volume of staff and/or visitors is expected. This system will be able to monitor a higher volume of people without multiple staff being designated for this duty.

3. **Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and Sanitising Product Procurement**
   According to Step 1 & 2, some operations may require mandatory utilisation of face mask (single use or otherwise). It is recommended that the Management prepares sufficient supply for their staff on duty. This may put additional financial burden on already-stretched finances of the operations and it is therefore recommended that the Management provides these to mandatory staff but only support with emergency supply (to be given out or loaned) to voluntary staff. This is a decision to be made by respective operations depending on the financial ability of both employer and staff.

   Other than PPE such as face masks, hand sanitizers should be provided in common areas. Sanitizers are crucial for areas with high flow of staff and visitors, for example at the lobby/ reception, near to elevators as well as outside meeting rooms or conference halls. If your premises have an auditorium, kindly place a number of dispensers inside the auditorium as well as along the corridor leading to it.

4. **(Optional) IT Services/ Updates**
   For operations where working from home is a plausible option, and where data, system/ software applications and access to the local servers are a necessity, it is recommended that some form of transition to a secured Virtual Private Network or to Cloud Servers be considered. If there is no sharing of system/ software applications,

a common cloud folder such as that provided by the likes of Google Drive and Dropbox can be a quicker and cheaper alternative. As discussed in the earlier section (Work from Home), all staff accessing the local servers, cloud servers or the cloud folder must ensure that their connection and devices are secured. It is recommended to seek further advice from cyber security or networking consultants for a more detailed cyber security plan.

Setting Up Emergency Response Team

As recommended by the National Security Council, an emergency response team should be set up if there are suspected persons under investigation in your premises. Below are recommendations for you to refer to:

1. Identify a room within your premises to be used as Isolation Room.
2. Identify at least 4 essential duties staff as members of an Emergency Response Team.
3. All members of the Team must have the nearest Crisis Preparedness and Response Centre's (CPRC) contact number at hand.
4. Each member should be assigned one key job and one alternative job in the event where up to two members happen not to be on site.
5. Job assignment 1: Upon identification of suspected person under investigation, contact CPRC representative immediately. Keep an eye on the arrival of CPRC representative and direct him to the Isolation Room immediately.
6. Job assignment 2: Upon identification of suspected person under investigation, direct him to the Isolation Room immediately. Prevent others from entering the Isolation Room unless they are representatives of CPRC.
7. Job assignment 3: Upon identification of suspected person under investigation, direct bystanders away from Isolation Room. Ensure that everyone remains calm.
8. A clear Dos and Don'ts Notice must be placed in the Isolation Room.
9. After the suspected person under investigation is transported out of the premises, initiate the sanitisation process of the Isolation Room.

Flexible Working Hours

Flexible working hours can allow for temporary adjustments in working hours without change to the specified number of work hours within each working day or working week. For operations with high volume of staff, it is recommended that staggering entry/ dismissal time and staggering recess be implemented.

1. **Entry/ Dismissal Time**
   Flexible working hours means that staff do not have to clock in and clock out at the same time. This reduces mixing and allows for social distancing at all times. Also, flexible entry and dismissal time allows staff who take public transport to avoid peak hours coming to the office and leaving from work.

2. **Staggered Recess/ Lunch Hour**
   It is suggested that organisations that normally practise fixed lunch hours to give more flexibility for lunch breaks. Depending on the nature of the business, not all organisations can easily allow employees to have a flexible lunch hour on workdays. For those organisations whose operations are not affected if flexible lunch hour is implemented, it is suggested that the employees avoid the usual lunch hour between 12.30 pm to 1.30 pm on workdays. This allows sufficient social distancing at eateries. Alternatively, encourage employees to pack their own food from home or order food delivery instead of eating out.

Regular Screening, Movement Tracking & Visitors Log

Some additional post-MCO procedures are highly recommended regardless of how big or small their operations are. Some of the measures here can ensure that the contact tracing for the suspected person under investigation is done with ease.

1. **Regular Screening**

   Regular body temperature screening can be done on a daily basis when staff arrive at the office and before they leave. The collected data should be recorded to monitor the trend. Suspicious trends should be reported to the Management and the staff is encouraged to visit a nearby clinic for a thorough check-up and for professional advice from a medical doctor, to work from home and to report to the administrative unit on his daily body temperature, and any other action deemed appropriate by the Management.

   It is also recommended that all visitors and guests to the premises be screened as well. It is important to note that the threshold for mild fever is at 37.5°C, as recommended by the Ministry of Health. If the staff or visitor had a walk under a hot sun prior to the temperature screening, it is recommended that he be allowed to cool down for 3mins before another screening. Finally, for anyone entering the premises, staff or otherwise, who are exhibiting any influenza-like symptom, it is recommended that his entry be denied and that he be advised to visit the nearest screening clinic. For those who are unable travel on their own, you may offer them the Isolation Room if necessary.

2. **Movement Tracking**

   All staff must keep a movement tracking record and this should be submitted to the Management upon request, should this be required by the relevant health authority. The Movement Tracking record should include information of where the staff have been, along with date and time of visit, and the names of the people they had met if any. This record should be kept for at least 30 days.

3. **Visitors' record logbook**

   All visitors to the premises including suppliers, clients, customers and etc are to be recorded with their names, contact number and home/office address, date and time of visit as well as the purpose of visit or person(s) they are visiting. It is a common practice to use pen and paper to collect this information. Alternatively, to practice social distancing and avoid any possible direct and indirect physical contact, you may use an online form assuming that most of the visitors have a smart phone with internet connection. First, create a Google Form with information needed as stated above. Second, generate a QR code online. Search for "QR code generator" on a search engine then visit any of the recommended websites to generate one. Print it out and let the visitor scan it using his own phone to fill up the necessary. This captures their information correctly without unreadable hand-writing and avoids any physical contact. This record should be kept at the office for at least 30 days and a disclaimer must be made clear to visitors that such information will be shared with the relevant health authority for contact tracing purposes.

Setting Up Procedures for Office Facilities Usages
Some precautionary measures are recommended for use where they suit your organisation.

1. **Virtual Meetings**
   Where possible, conduct virtual meetings with stakeholders to limit physical interaction. Various platforms are available for this, such as Google Meet, Skype, Microsoft Team, Zoom, Cisco Webex, etc. All meetings in person should be avoided as much as possible.

2. **Meeting Rooms Policy**
   If a meeting in person is inevitable, it is recommended that your meeting room facilities are arranged in a way as to allow social distancing to be practised. An alternate seating arrangement is highly recommended in the meeting room.

3. **Webinars and E-Learning in place of Seminars and Training Classrooms**
   Seminar and talks are encouraged to be held online in a webinar manner. Some of the common platforms which are user-friendly, easy to access, and widely used are Instagram, Facebook live, Zoom, and Google Meet. Alternatively, you may set up a Twitter talk by inviting a number of resource persons to initiate the discussion over Twitter entirely with tweets and hashtags. Many teachers and trainers have resorted to platforms similar to webinar to conduct e-learning lessons. Some additional functions from Google Classroom are utilised as well by many teachers where assessment and homework are concerned.

4. **Allowing Personal Purchase Delivery to Office**
   Allow staff to have their essentials delivered to the office to reduce the number of people shopping for groceries in malls and markets. This will also assist the staff in fulfilling their family obligations apart from employment obligations.

5. **Surau Policy (if applicable)**
   Subject to space availability and recommended buffering space of 2.0m diameter in Step 1, limit the number of staff or visitors allowed at any one time to perform their prayers at Surau. A quick solution is to place a manually operated number display on the entrance door to show the number of users currently using the Surau. As one user enters, the display can be shifted from "Vacant" to "1" and as the user leaves the Surau, the display can be shifted by to "Vacant". A hand sanitiser dispenser is recommended to be placed near the entrance of Surau to allow users to sanitise their hands before or after they have shifted the display panel.

6. **Pantry Policy**
   Subject to space availability and recommended buffering space of 2.0m diameter in Step 1, the Management may apply a similar limit to the number of staff allowed to use the pantry at any one time. It is also recommended that reheating facilities such as microwave or electric steamer be supplied in the pantry if the company's policy is to encourage staff to prepare self-cooked meals for lunch instead of eating out.

7. **Nursing Room Policy (if applicable)**
   Subject to space availability and recommended buffering space of 2.0m diameter in Step 1, the Management may apply a similar limit to the number of staff allowed to use the Nursing Room at any one time. A similar manually operated number display can be used to indicate if the room is vacant or full. It is also recommended that a

small refrigerator be placed in the same room for mothers to store their expressed breast milk. It is important to also consider supplying a steriliser for mothers to sterilise their equipment before and after expressing breastmilk. It is important that Nursing Rooms be equipped with tap and basin for equipment cleaning purposes.

8. **Washroom Policy**
Subject to space availability and recommended buffering space of 2.0m diameter in Step 1, it is suggested that some form of line markings be made at washrooms. It will also be beneficial if each cubicle is supplied with sanitizing wipes or disinfectant sprays to allow users to clean the commonly used surfaces on top of regular washroom cleaning schedule. It is also wise to put up a good toilet etiquette notice at the washroom.

9. **Elevator Policy (if applicable)**
Allow only the maximum capacity as described in Step 1 to enter the elevator. A notice should be placed on both sides of the elevator's door. Practicing flexible working hours with different entry and dismissal time helps to reduce the number of staff taking the elevator at one time. Alternatively, encourage staff to take the stairs as long as physical ability allows. This helps to decrease the number of people sharing the elevator. Regular cleaning and disinfecting of elevator panels and the elevator's wall is recommended. It is also important to educate and advise elevator users to wash hands thoroughly before and after taking the elevator. Avoid touching the face after taking an elevator as well.

Updating HR Procedures
Post-MCO operations will definitely affect the norm for many HR practises. For instance, working from home and staggering reporting time affect the definition of reporting to work late, departing from work early as well as the notion of failure to report for work. Such HR definitions must be updated to ensure there is no abuse of the flexibility. Some HR procedures worth updating are listed as follows:

1. **Definitions of absenteeism**
Defining absenteeism becomes a little tricky when staff work from home. Thus it is also the staff's responsibility to ensure high integrity, transparency and competence on their part while being allowed to work from home. Any failure to comply with the conditions laid out in the earlier section (Work from Home), shall be noted and a warning given accordingly. Repetitive misconduct may lead to the revoking of the right/ eligibility to work from home. Therefore, conditions and clear guidelines must be listed for working from home.

2. **Definitions of coming late and leaving early**
Defining time of work must be updated accordingly if flexible working hours are to be implemented across board. The definition of coming late and leaving early can, for example, be updated in terms of minutes allowed between designated reporting times instead of by time of the day.

3. **Annual leave for staff working from home**
Technically, staff allowed to work from home will have to abide by the requirement and expectations set out by the Management. On days when staff working from home have

applied and been granted annual leave, their immediate supervisor and other colleagues should refrain from contacting him for any work-related matters.

4. **Sick leave and hospitalisation leave**

It is unfortunate that many employers in Malaysia do not offer a generous paid sick leave allocation per year. This indirectly drives staff to continue to report to work despite feeling unwell. It should be noted that staff working from home who feel ill would not need to apply for sick leave. Therefore, it is suggested that post-MCO, the rules regarding sick leave be re-examined. Flexibility on such matters relies very much on trust between the employer and the staff; therefore integrity and transparency on both sides are very important. Staff who have been hospitalised, the post-hospitalisation convalescence period should be deemed as hospitalisation leave. However, due to the global economic recession, many employers may not be prone to be generous in such matters. It is suggested that discussions be held between employers and staff to achieve a more lenient handling of sick leave on the part of the employer in exchange for the work-from-home staff's to continue contributing from home, however limitedly, during the recovery period.

Special Treatment for Breastfeeding Mothers & Parents with Child(ren)

It is understandable that working parents would have concern to send their children, especially infants and those under the age of 12 years old due to the challenging social distancing practise, to childcare centres. At the same time, schools will remain closed except for SPM, SVM, STPM and STAM students. Therefore, it is highly recommended for the Management to offer special working arrangement for working parents especially breastfeeding mothers.

1. **Full Time Working from Home**

If the nature of the job allows, Management can offer working parents the option to work from home even after the resumption of operations. The duration of the work-from-home arrangement should end when schools and child care services resume operations.

2. **Alternative Reporting Schedule**

If the nature of the work of the parent is not suitable for working from home, allow the staff to report to office on alternate days or on a weekly basis. This arrangement must be coordinated with their respective teammates and supervisors.

3. **Childcare Facility within the Office**

Allowing staff to bring their children to work by setting up a playroom and appointing a babysitter (internal staff or outsourced) in the office may seem to be a considerate action if the operations and the nature of the premises allow for such an arrangement. It is recommended that the child's toys, bedding and utensils be provided by the respective staff. However, this should be deemed as a last resort since it may not prevent the spread of communicable diseases as shown in earlier cases where the transmission was rampant in schools and childcare centres of hand, foot and mouth diseases.

Hygiene Procedures

Hygiene procedures must not be taken lightly. We discuss this based on 5 different scenarios – common space, common properties, private space and properties, personal and transportation hygiene.

1. **Common Space Hygiene**
   Generally, the hygiene of all common areas within the premises is the responsibility of the building manager. The pre-MCO regular cleaning schedule must now be complemented with a regular disinfecting schedule. Additionally, putting sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace will help staff and visitors maintain higher personal hygiene. The dispensers must be regularly refilled. A regular spot check must be done at areas that often tend to be overlooked. This should also include landscaping furniture on the premise, not forgetting the water tank cleanliness, switch room cleanliness as well as cleanliness in the elevator's pit and motor room (if applicable). It would be useful if the building manager can set up a schedule for waste disposal to ensure all common spaces within the premises are kept at top-notch hygiene quality. Where possible, waste segregation at source should be practised by all staff to reduce the manual segregation work of the janitorial worker before disposal. Should the general waste collection bin be filled, the building manager should contact the nearest local government office or the designated waste disposal contractor for it to be cleared.

2. **Common Properties Hygiene**
   For common properties hygiene, which involves surfaces such as the armrest of chairs in the common area, doors, doorknobs, door handles, balustrades, elevators' panel buttons, doorbells, door access panels, etc, the responsibility for hygiene should fall to the building manager. However, for shared office equipment such as shared workstations, shared stationery, photocopy machines and printers, the responsibility can be transferred to designated staff based nearest to this office equipment. It is recommended that appropriate sanitising tools be placed at areas near the office equipment, should the responsibility be transferred to designated staff. It is also recommended that these surfaces be cleaned, disinfected and sanitized a few times daily, subject to the frequency of use. For operations using common microphones, such as lecture halls, seminar rooms, recording studios, and karaoke, it is recommended that the microphones be sanitized after every use or alternatively that a replaceable microphone cover (single use or otherwise) be used.

3. **Private Space and Properties Hygiene**
   To simplify the hygiene procedure of a premise, it is important to segregate private spaces and properties from the common ones to ensure that every person involved in the operations maintain high quality hygiene. Hygiene in private spaces and properties will naturally be the responsibility of each individual staff. It is also encouraged that staff regularly clean and disinfect their desk phone as well as mobile phone—phones, after all, are often placed against the face when in use, and this is not a recommended behaviour today. For call centres, it is recommended that each staff be assigned a private headset and that they avoid sharing. The microphone on the headsets should be regularly cleaned and sanitised as well because high respiratory droplet accumulation there.

4. **Personal Hygiene**
   Personal hygiene is the key to minimising the spread of the virus. It is therefore wise to always encourage staff and visitors to wash or sanitize their hands when they enter the premises and before they leave, before and after they use the washroom, and before and after they put on their face mask. It is also recommended that awareness notices to encourage good sneezing or coughing behaviour be displayed at publicly visible areas. The personal hygiene of staff at the front office or at the reception must be closely monitored. They must always put on their face mask at all times and replace the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp. They should not re-use single-use masks. Hand-rub sanitizer should be placed and regularly refilled at the desk and it must be ensured all visitors apply them. Staff are encouraged to avoid handshakes and any physical contact with visitors. If possible, avoid using shared stationery (pens and pencils); so one should have pencils and pens to give out to visitors if necessary. One could also replace paper records with digital records. It is also important to constantly clean and disinfect the reception desk.

5. **Transportation Hygiene (if relevant)**
   Public transportation operators of public bus, school bus, factory bus, interstate express bus, tour bus as well as taxis or e-hailing services must consider a regular sanitising schedule to be done for your vehicles. Standing or seating markings should also be done on the vehicles. A replaceable seat cover (single use or otherwise) can be used in place of regular sanitising schedule if the turnover rate is high. The extreme measure of removing seats from buses to allow for more standing space will not be viable for all buses, and affects the safety of passengers. The same procedures may be applied to companies with company vehicles. For staff who have to use public transportation to travel to work, it is recommended that they do so with a high sense for personal hygienic safety. At the individual level, practising social distancing is crucial on public transportation. It is recommended that staff or public transportation users in general carry around their personal hand sanitisers and sanitise their hands immediately after alighting from the public transportation. The staff may also put on another layer of light coat (or raincoat) when they travel on public transportation. This coat can be easily removed and cleaned before they settle down at their workstation or when they reach home.

Combating Social Anxiety and Social Depression in Office

The HR Department plays a vital role in bridging the gap between Management and employees. It is important for HR personnel to establish trust between Management and staff to combat general social anxiety and to prevent social depression in the office. Among the tasks HR has to manage are the following:

1. **Easing Anxiety**
   Encourage staff to seek counselling to cope with fear and anxiety. It is common for staff to feel mental instability during this period. This may stem from anxiety over job performance, fear of being retrenched, financial pressure, readjusting to social situations, concerns for family members, and many more.

2. **Preventing Panic**

   If there is a pay cut to sustain the business, HR will need to inform the staff in an understanding manner. Instead of saying that "the business is experiencing loss during this tough times", it should convey the sense that "we are all in this together", and "that the crisis has indeed hit everyone". Rather than a retrenchment, pay cuts could be considered. Staff would accept this better and be willing to strive once the business picks up again.

Awareness and Communication

Alongside homes and schools, workplaces function as a venue for information transfer; and a functioning atmosphere for open and serious discussions in a workplace is vital in creating a sense of common purpose. Some of the awareness needed at workplaces are the following:

1. **Digitisation of Financial Transactions**

   Although digital financial transactions have been practised in the country for some time now, it is nevertheless necessary to encourage, inform and educate employees about alternate payments other than cash to avoid direct physical contact with paper money and coins. Many businesses now use electronic payment such as GrabPay, TnG eWallet, Boost, FavePay, Maybank2u etc. Online payment methods instead of Cash-On-Delivery (COD) for online shopping including food delivery are now a common procedure. Although there is currently no evidence to confirm or disprove that Covid-19 virus can be transmitted through coins or banknotes, respiratory droplets expelled from an infected person can contaminate and persist on surfaces. One should in any case always wash hands regularly and thoroughly after touching any frequently-touched surface or object, including coins or banknotes. (WHO, 2020).

2. **Respiratory Hygiene Posters**

   Other communication measures include guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefing at meetings, and information on the intranet, etc. World Health Organization (WHO) has designed plenty of posters in high resolution which are free to download. https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public for public display.

3. **Counteracting Disinformation**

   Staff should be advised to refer to information and news from official channels, and be told not to spread unverified news received on social media and in text messages. In conclusion, when in doubt, don't share.

Disclaimer:

This article is a reference guide to the management and administration of an organisation in managing the workplace at the end of the MCO. Organisations are encouraged to be adaptive in applying the above suggestions depending on the nature of their business, the size of the organisations, the working environment and location, and any other relevant factors.

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