PREPARING FOR THE NEW OFFICE NORMAL BY EQUIPPING A DISTRIBUTED WORKFORCE

This year, the "normal" office setting has been completely turned on its head. As workers transitioned to a fully remote work environment in response to the pandemic, hallway and cubicle chats or meetings held around a conference table were quickly replaced by virtual communication and video conferencing platforms. As much of a challenge as it has been to try and operate "business as normal" during widespread lockdowns, technologies like these have stood in the gap to keep teams connected and productive.

For those companies that already leveraged virtual workforce-connecting platforms prior to COVID-19, there wasn't much of an IT learning curve in the transition. But even as offices re-open, the importance of these offerings will not diminish. For example, as U.S. states enter different stages of reopening and workers can cautiously return to the office, notable tech companies such as Twitter and Facebook have already announced that their workforce can continue to work remotely indefinitely, or that they will reorganize some roles within the company to be permanently remote. Additionally, several companies are giving their

employees a choice to remain remote as long as desired, in an effort to ease anxieties of employees concerned about increased social interaction and associated risks.

While the evolution of work was increasingly moving towards more digitization pre-pandemic, the current environment has further cemented the concept of a distributed, tech-enabled workforce. As such, it's essential that companies continue investing in technology, including in-office features, that will support these distributed workforces and help them succeed moving forward.

Consider Your IT Team as you Invest in the Right Tools
Because the continued use of virtual meetings is inevitable, having the right tools in place is critical to support a mix of in-office coworkers and a substantial number of remote colleagues. However, a disparate approach will not serve this new normal long-term. While racing to set up new collaboration technology to accommodate communication between returning and remote employees, organizations must do so thoughtfully.

Because the most immediate concern is the health and safety of returning staff, companies should prioritize enterprise-ready technology to withstand necessary sanitization procedures and continuous in-office use. And while the workplace will look and feel different for those who return, providing any sense of normalcy will be appreciated. For that reason, choosing a software-agnostic collaboration tool will enable IT to continue supporting necessary enterprise applications and third-party software used before remote work began. That familiarity will go a long way in the user adoption of new in-office tools.

Lastly, to ensure that no time is wasted in connecting to a meeting, companies can install an integrated AV tool that includes features like a touchscreen, PC, conference camera, and wireless presentation software, free of messy and confusing cables needed to connect separate make-shift pieces.

Implement AV solutions in Creative and User-Prioritized Ways
With a lot still unknown about the future, many in the industry are speculating the return of the "cubicle farm," so to speak. Open-concept floorplans and collaboration-building communal areas may not feel appropriate for these early days. As companies navigate the reconfiguring of office space, we'll see several changes, including the creation of huddle rooms that accommodate fewer people than traditional large conference room. Displays mounted to the wall can serve as a virtual whiteboard to replace traditional high-touch

surfaces (and the associated dry-erase markers and erasers), while also seamlessly connecting individuals with remote counterparts for video chats.

To minimize the need for people to move about the room, bring-your-own-device connectivity supports wireless screen sharing from an individual's seat. Additionally, notification screens outside the door of a meeting space can aid in contactless room reservations, with lights set up to visually indicate whether a room is accounted for.

As we begin to see these mixed work environments emerge, physical and easy-to-use AV technology must be in place, now more than ever. The support of the "new normal," or increasingly distributed teams, depends on it. Creating an environment that bridges the physical and digital divide and can facilitate a company's ability to easily set up their employees for collaborative success, no matter where they are located. As **Forrester's Andrew Hewitt** put it, "It's not just collaboration tools. You need to think holistically about technology enablement."

About Elo

As a leading global supplier of interactive solutions, #EloIsEverywhere. To date, we have deployed more than 25 million installations in over 80 countries. A new Elo touchscreen is installed every 21 seconds, on average, somewhere in the world. Built on a unified architecture, Elo's broad portfolio allows our customers to easily Choose, Configure and Connect & Control to create a unique experience. Choose from all-in-one systems, open-frame monitors and touchscreen monitors ranging from 10 to 70 inches. Configure with our unique Elo Edge Connect peripherals that allow use-specific solutions. Connect & Control with EloView®, a secure cloud-based platform for Android-powered devices. EloView enables secure deployment and management of a large network of interactive systems designed to reduce operating costs while increasing up-time and security.

Consumers can find Elo touchscreen solutions in self-service kiosks, point-of-sale terminals, interactive signage, gaming machines, hospitality systems, point-of-care displays and transportation applications—to name a few.

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