

Offices need to go above and beyond for health and safety

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As a number of offices around the country were reopened this week in line with the Level 4 lockdown regulations, companies found themselves scrambling to put in place the essential measures to ensure a healthy work environment for returning staff. David Seinker, founder and CEO of The Business Exchange (TBE) serviced office spaces, shares his thoughts on how companies can keep their employees safe during these unprecedented times.



1. Have a zero tolerance policy

Level 4 lockdown means that everyone is mandated by law to wear a mask when leaving home. Therefore, legally, companies must ensure that no one is allowed to enter their premises unless they are wearing one.

“We’ve also reopened our office locations for tenants who need to work, and we’ve implemented a zero tolerance policy,” says Seinker. “If you don’t have a mask when you’re entering one of our buildings, we’ve made some available for purchase at all our properties. We can’t put others in our offices at risk for one person.”

2. Make hand sanitiser easily accessible

The cleaning of hands on a regular basis has been the strongest prevention strategy highlighted by health specialists throughout this crisis. Employers should ensure that non-touch hand sanitiser is available all around the office, and that everyone knows where to find it.

“In our buildings, we’ve put hand sanitiser machines at all the entrances and in all communal spaces,” explains Seinker. “We are also ensuring that these spaces are cleaned on a more regular basis using cleaning chemicals and disinfectants that conform to SABS standards.”

3. Invest in temperature screenings

We can understand that in this climate, where everyone is struggling, there is little money to spend on extras that weren’t

part of the original budget plans. Companies should however prioritise fever scan thermometers so that everyone entering the premises can undergo a temperature check. Anyone with a higher than normal temperature should be sent home and asked to self-isolate until they are certain they will not infect others.

4. Provide regular training and information to all staff

There is so much information doing the rounds that it's easy to get confused about the specifics of the restrictions, and regarding the dos and don'ts applicable to the workplace scenario. As a result, employees should consider providing regular updates to staff around what precautions the law requires them to take, but also what extra precautions they need to take in your specific workplace. This can be done via email, webinars or even signage around the building.

Seinker believes that communication is key: "There is no such thing as overcommunication right now. We send out newsletters and emails with information as often as is required in order to ensure that our tenants know what we are doing to keep them safe, but also so that they know what they can personally do too."



5. Review all touch points within the office

In all offices, there are a number of touchpoints that could be hotspots for possible contamination. Office managers should do an audit of sorts to identify these, then investigate how to make the areas safer for people to use. Even better would be to assess whether or not this touchpoint is really essential.

Seinker advises that if you have entry points that require biometric scanning, disable these for now. "We're looking at implementing door openers that require your foot instead of your hand, and our receptionists are the only ones opening and closing doors for anyone entering our premises."

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