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## Desk separators, disinfection tunnels, face mask dispensers — Architects offer solutions for offices

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Tanushree Venkatraman



How do we get back to crowded offices with colleagues sitting in close proximity to each other? How do we assemble in common areas and have lunch with several others seated in the cafeteria? As firms prepare to resume work, Mumbai-based architects have now created an open-source handbook for businesses to adopt affordable, easy-to-execute solutions that can be retrofitted in existing office spaces post lockdown.

The 'Back to Work: Rethinking, re-evaluating, retrofitting for safer workplaces' handbook has been created by the co-founders of The Blank Slate, an architectural firm. The guide includes interventions to be adopted at entrances, lobbies, workstations, conference rooms, cabins, dining areas, and restrooms.

For workstations, the handbook suggests reserving chairs and tables for use by a single person, eliminating alternate desks from usage or setting up panels to divide the desks, if elimination is not possible, and creation of solo-work corners.

It also suggests making use of foot-operated sanitiser dispensers at entrances to limit contact, disinfection tunnels to sanitise those entering the building, face mask dispensers, face

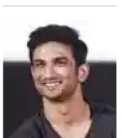
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recognition systems, and automated doors.

For conference rooms that are frequently used for meetings, the handbook suggests the use of single-seater sofas or fixed chairs at a distance, protective sheets to cover contact areas, one user to operate the projector, and immediate cleaning after the meeting is over.

Bina Bhatia, principal architect and founder, The Blank Slate, said, “We have looked at providing two types of solutions – one is design-based and the second is problematic where we also look at densities and staggered timings as a solution.”

Co-founder Pratik Daulat said, “We have also looked at simple solutions like signages that look at one-way circulation of employees so there is adherence to social distancing.”

While the handbook can be referred to by all offices of different scales, it can also be adopted for hospitality spaces, they said.



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