

A Path Forward: Ready for What's Next



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A Path Forward: Ready for What's Next

Few times in history have there been enormous changes on a global scale like we see today. Our daily lives and human behavior have been adjusted dramatically, resulting in new societal and cultural norms formed out of a willingness to iterate and experiment.

Collectively, we are faced with overcoming adversity and finding balance in an unknown world. The world is thinking differently, and we are taking action to respond. As companies look to bring employees back to the office, it is important to assess the built environment and understand the level of readiness to support teams physically, emotionally, and mentally. Now more than ever, we have to make sure employees feel safe, healthy, and valued in their place of work.

Research has shown that employees still retain a strong desire for the office, especially as it relates to providing a sense of community and belonging. They strongly appreciate human interaction over digital for team building and manager access.

Taking Action

Confidence and clarity are crucial to a safe and effective return to work experience. Employees now expect a human-centered approach that intensely focuses on wellness. They will also expect the workplace to have been modified with appropriate safety and security measures that will carry beyond the current crisis.

What is the best way to prepare this new environment?

Every organization must examine their purpose and priority areas of their business, especially as they relate to their employees. Flexibility and the ability to adapt as this pandemic evolves are critical. Organizations should prepare for both the short and long-term impacts on the business and employees.

This was extremely important as Kimball started bringing our employees back to the office. Kimball was committed to flexibility and to supporting our employees throughout this process, carefully planning a strategy to gradually repopulate the HQ Campus.

At our Kimball International headquarters, a dedicated team was created with representatives from multiple departments to plan and communicate the journey of bringing employees back to the office. Plans were structured by immediate, short-term, and long-term approaches. A big component to ensuring confidence in returning to work was building trust with employees that decisions for cleanliness and safety in both individual workspaces and common areas were made with the health and best interest of employees in mind.

Several factors were evaluated as the plans were being developed, including how and where work was done by different employees, what employee work preferences and health needs were, how to adapt to the new needs but still maintain company culture, and how to ensure resiliency for the future.

In the immediate, the focus was on creating a confidential, communication hotline staffed by HR experts to answer questions or report symptoms, supplying cleaning supplies and PPE for employees at multiple areas around the building, and incorporating space division into existing workstations to help create distance between employees.

**Now more than
ever, we have
to make sure
employees feel
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and valued in
their place
of work.**



“You need to have empathy to understand how people are feeling and to be able to adjust your style to the myriad of ways they process.”

- Chris Kempczinski, CEO, McDonald's

Xsede Height Adjust desks at many of our workstations allow users to raise or lower their worksurface, supporting fluid, natural movement throughout the day. Our added screens also move with the worksurface for continued privacy and protection. This option is available to ship in 5-10 days as part of our Kimball Ready program and works anywhere from the Open Plan to Private Office, supporting people no matter their personal preferences or style of work.



Workspace Design Modifications

When evaluating our workspaces, providing lasting solutions that help bring a sense of safety and peace of mind to employees was our top priority.

Purposeful Solitude

When working alone or collaboratively, these spaces must support individual focus work while giving employees a sense of grounded security. As our employees return to the workplace, offering an ecosystem of thoughtfully designed and socially distanced spaces was crucial in supporting their needs. An array of spaces that incorporated cleanable surfaces, visual privacy, and enhanced acoustics also helped employees take an active role in their workplace wellness. Whether a workstation, touchdown area, focus space, or quiet room, our solutions can help drive productivity up and keep stress down.

We reviewed the overall footprint of the building to assess if our current work areas met social distancing requirements. For those areas with a higher traffic flow, we utilized our newly designed and easy-to-install Divider Screens to retrofit existing workstations along common corridors.



The Narrate collection provided the ability to maximize flexibility without compromising design. Stackable frames and transition posts allowed the panel height to be changed without having to dismantle the system for ease of re-configurability.



We added flexible products to unused space that allowed us to quickly adapt and adjust to evolving recommendations. This configuration allowed for our employees to find a quiet space to relax or focus using our mobile KORE Work Cart.

Common Area Modifications

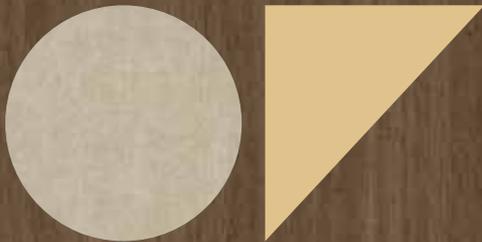
For the open dining and conference spaces, we reduced density by removing some seating or modifying furniture configurations. Huddle spaces in some of our neighborhoods that were not used for small meetings were also reduced to one person usage for additional privacy. Hands-free door openers were placed on all restroom doors so that employees can open the doors with their feet, and the frequency of cleaning was increased for both common and private areas to mitigate the spread of germs.

This is an on-going journey that continues to be evaluated as the pandemic progresses. At the time of this publication, we made the decision to keep some high traffic or more susceptible common areas such as the Hub and WELL fitness room, at a restricted use or closed completely until our county reaches a lower advisory level.





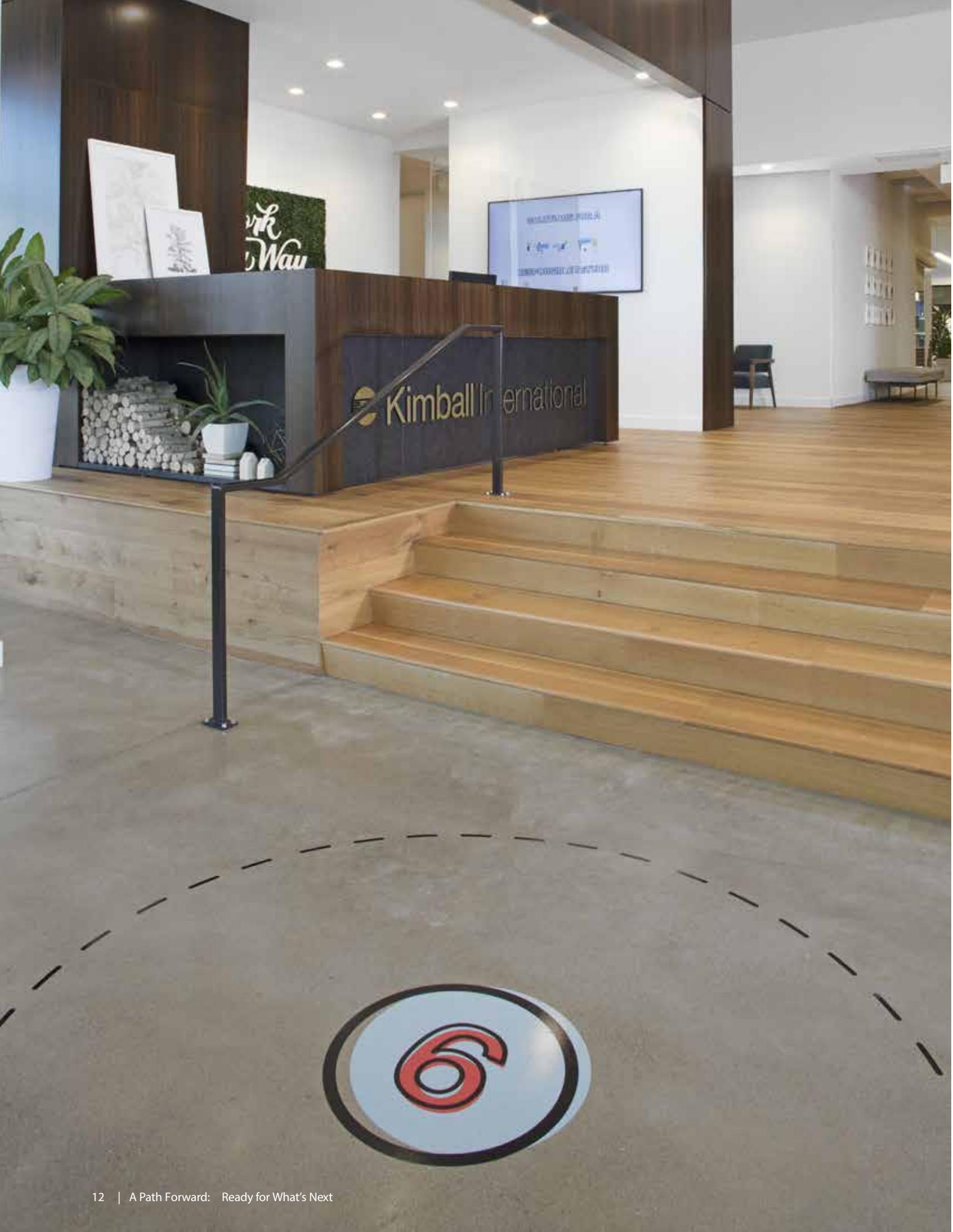
In bringing the majority of our people back, we have seen employee morale, collaboration, and productivity rise, as well as an increased emphasis put on flexibility for our employees.



“While offices will evolve, they will remain the beating hearts of the central business districts in major cities across the globe, supporting a lively hinterland of retail, leisure and cultural attractions.”

– Christian Ulbrich, CEO JLL





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Kimball International



Employee Guidelines & Support

With so many varying viewpoints and comfort levels around this pandemic, we wanted to be sensitive to individual employee needs and concerns – not forcing anyone to come back who may be at higher risk or has special family circumstances. We surveyed our employees to determine their comfort level or desire to come back and used that to develop our phased approach of bringing back 30 to 50 employees at a time.

Clear Communication

As we began to bring people back, we made communication and distribution of information a top priority. We established several guidelines for employees as they returned to the office such as wearing masks unless seated at their workstation, social distance guidelines, and the use of hand sanitizer before entering a shared space or disinfectant wipes on any surface they touch. A bi-weekly, campus wide newsletter was implemented to ensure information was shared as timely as possible, and a New Workplace Toolkit was provided to each employee with information on what has changed, PPE, and other necessary communications before their return to help them know what to expect and create a positive experience on their return.

Visual Cues

Throughout our headquarters, new signs and graphics were implemented—both physical and digital—to communicate new practices and reminders.

Signage was placed across campus on walls, floors, and monitors to ensure employee safety. These visuals also communicated seating locations, hygiene best practices, maximum occupancy, and more.

Digital signage keeps our employees and visitors current regarding office protocol and general safety measures we are implementing.

Research indicates that some people will depend on the workplace as a place for focused work as much as for collaboration.



“I enjoyed some of the perks of working from home but as time went on, I wanted to return to the office. As a marketing professional, having that ability to collaborate again has been a breath of fresh air. Overall, I feel that my creativity, productivity, stress level, and mental health have all benefitted from returning to the office.”

– Chelsea O'Brien, Communications Specialist

Looking Ahead

We envision a purpose-driven office—a place that adapts and responds to how people work, both individually and in groups. As we welcome the new workday, we see a world of opportunities. Employees across the country are shifting to a more hybrid way of working, making the office more important than ever.

Research from our partners at Kuchar indicates that people will depend on the workplace as a place for focused work as much as for collaboration. When polled, 56% said they would like to work from their company's office at least 50% of the time.

That same survey identified that the top three things people want in their office space going forward are: cleanliness, safety, and social distancing put into practice, better design with different places to safely work, and their own dedicated workspaces. This means that workplace furnishings will require the utmost flexibility and adaptability to shift, grow and transform as new employee habits and workstyles become established.

As a company rooted in reinvention, we are proud to have a history of facing challenges and responding with inspired solutions. We will continue to challenge ourselves to think outside the box as changes arise, and lean into this new way of working.



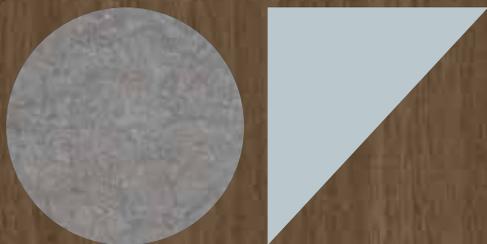
Commitment

In demonstrating thought leadership and commitment to the health and safety of our employees, Kimball was one of the first companies to register our corporate headquarters for The WELL Health-Safety Rating. An evidence-based, third-party verified rating for all space types, the WELL Health-Safety Rating is focused on operational policies, maintenance protocols and emergency plans to help organizations prepare their spaces for re-entry in a post pandemic environment.

In addition, Kimball has registered to have our corporate headquarters WELL™ v2 certified, a standard established by the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI). The IWBI WELL Building Standard is the premier standard for buildings, interior spaces and communities seeking to implement, validate and measure features that support and advance human health and wellness.

Kimball has a continued commitment to not only being a company that focuses on innovation, knowledge, and adaptability, but also a workplace that is committed to the well-being of our employees.

**In a time of
unprecedented
change, we
have an equally
momentous
opportunity to
shape the future
of work.**



Looking for assistance?
We are here to help!



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