

2021 Workplace Planning Guide

Facilities, Flexibility & the New Normal



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The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt work, business and our personal lives in ways that no-one could ever have imagined. Employees and employers alike have entered the fourth quarter beleaguered and perhaps a little worse for the wear yet equipped with new work-from-home skills and more intimate knowledge of PPE than they ever thought possible. Leaders would normally be diving into 2021 planning by now, but this year feels a bit different. With so much upheaval and uncertainty, it's hard to know what exactly we should be planning for. Real estate executives and facility managers are finding themselves facing tough questions about employee safety, business continuity and strategic portfolio management.

This 2021 Workplace Planning Guide will walk you through key considerations in planning your space, setting goals for utilization and determining the tools and technologies required to support your employees next year. With an emphasis on cross-departmental collaboration as a key to success, the guide is designed to support the work of a hybrid planning team consisting of FM, HR and IT as the trifecta of the digital workplace representing the physical space, the employee experience and the digital solutions that keep organizations connected and productive.

From taking stock of your current situation to planning for effective communication with employees, this interactive workbook will give you practical guidance on creating your workplace strategy. This includes potentially significant changes to how organizations work including more flexible work arrangements, a greater emphasis on working from home, heightened health and safety precautions, and flexible, hybrid workplaces. With a focus on balancing cost-savings and effective change management, this guide will help you look beyond the current crisis and prepare your organization for the paradigm shift that will accelerate your recovery. Let's get started!



Areas of Focus:

Section 1

Get Current →

Section 2

Get Your Bearings →

Section 3

Get Down to Business →

Section 4

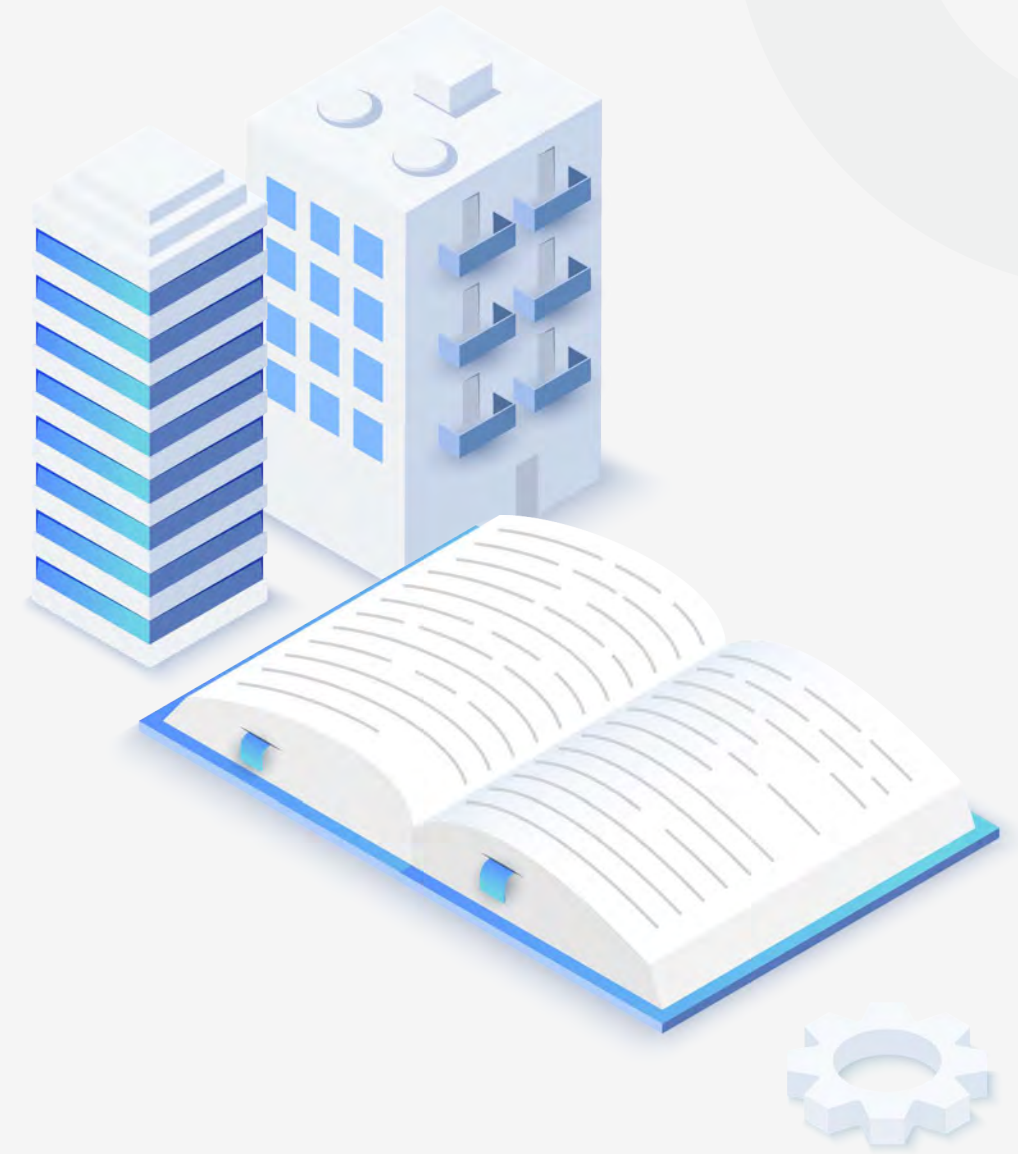
Get Smart →

Section 5

Get the Numbers →

Section 6

Get Ahead of the Curve →



This guide is interactive!

There are clickable buttons throughout for easy document navigation and downloadable resources.



The Reality

Many employees spent a portion of 2020 in a holding pattern. There was a sense that our lives were put on pause, and we collectively waited for someone to push play again. As we pass eight months of living in a global pandemic, people are coming to terms with the fact that there will not be a future time when things return to “normal.” Resilient organizations must embrace change and more than ever, find ways to recover and grow by making decisions based on what they do know now and what they can surmise about the likelihood of future scenarios.

Remote work is a core part of how many organizations have maintained productivity during the pandemic. The current conditions have shone a spotlight on the possibilities of flexible work to achieving substantial cost-savings in lease and operating costs while simultaneously improving employee work/life balance. Forward-thinking organizations will lean into this change and adopt policies and technologies that give employees greater autonomy in their day-to-day work environment. As a significant percentage of the workforce transitions to more or even permanent remote work, there is an opportunity to right-size the portfolio and adopt flexible work as a long-term organizational strategy.



From a recent survey of FMS customers: 73% had a pre-pandemic workplace strategy of traditional, assigned seating. Post-pandemic, only **5%** of respondents will return to a traditional workplace. **72%** are planning a hybrid strategy and **23%** are still undecided as of October 2020.

1. What is your current state?

2. What's working?

3. What's been a challenge?

4. What is your most pressing current objective?

The Lessons

2020 has presented us with workplace scenarios few organizations were prepared for. Take a few minutes to think about the lessons you, your team and your organization have learned during the COVID-19 crisis.

- 1. What is the most [important lesson](#) you've learned during the pandemic?**
- 2. How has remote work impacted your business?**
- 3. What surprised you during your organization's response to COVID?**
- 4. What was your weakest area in compiling a response strategy?**
- 5. What data was missing as you tried to respond to the pandemic?**



[Additional Planning Resource]
**Measuring Workplace
Performance in 2021**





The Goals

Setting short and long-term goals and establishing specific targets within those goals are essential to keep your organization moving forward. A goal is typically more aspirational, for example “to improve efficiency of space utilization while improving employee experience”. Associated targets might include “increase utilization from X to Y in 2021” or “increase employee survey score Z to W in 2021.”

1. Based on current conditions, what are your core assumptions for the next 3, 6 and 12 months?

3 Months

6 Months

12 Months

2. What are your driving business goals for the next 3, 6 and 12 months? For each goal, try to set one or two quantifiable targets.

3 Months

6 Months

12 Months

3. What state and local regulations are shaping your plans?

4. What is your target utilization for 2021? How does that compare to your utilization rates in 2019?

5. How many employees will remain virtual? Do you anticipate that number changing over 2021?

6. In collaboration with HR and IT, what are your cross-departmental goals to enhance or expand your digital workplace?

7. What employee experience do you want to create?

8. What does a healthy digital workplace look like at your organization?



Quick Ideas for a Digital Workplace: Online/mobile visibility to resource availability, online/mobile reservations, interactive floorplans, digital signage, IoT or Beacon technologies and sensor technologies. Essential employee systems include collaboration tools, video conferencing platforms and knowledge sharing platforms.

Facility Portfolio Priority Matrix

To begin your workplace strategy planning, assess each facility based on its capacity to serve the goals of the organization and effectively support employees. Then focus your re-opening efforts based on their priority/criticality ranking.



Consider the following questions to plot your facilities in the Priority/Criticality Matrix:

1. Does the facility help to support the mission of the organization?

2. Does the facility provide good financial value?

(Effective vs. ineffective cost to operate and it is under or appropriately utilized?)

3. Does it provide a positive experience for employees & visitors?

INVESTMENT

GOOD PORTFOLIO FIT

IDEAL

WORSENS PORTFOLIO

STRENGTHENS PORTFOLIO

DANGER

POOR PORTFOLIO FIT

DEBT



The Details

This section addresses the essential components of physical distancing, sanitization, health monitoring and flexible work management that are key areas that all organizations must account for in their workplace planning strategies going forward. Some of these requirements will lessen in time, but others will endure. Keep a steady cadence of communication with your HR team to ensure you are making the right adjustments as conditions change.

Please refer to our [Safe Space Playbook](#) for a comprehensive overview of precautions and protocols that can protect employees.



Quick Ideas for Physical Distancing: Semi-private workstations with employees in checkerboards or facing out from one another are a common solution. Ensure adequate spacing around the workstation and provide directional indicators for traffic flow through aisles. Some organizations are reconsidering the high-walled, traditional cubicle as the vertical barriers disrupt the flow of particles thereby slowing the transmission of viruses and other airborne contagions.

Physical Distancing & Controlling Congestion

- 1. How are you planning for physical distancing?**
- 2. What parameters do you have in place to limit congestion?**
- 3. Do you anticipate a reduction or expansion in workspace?**
- 4. Do you expect your parking requirements to change?**
- 5. How will you monitor and quantify your utilization metrics so you can refine your strategy as conditions continue to change?**

Sanitization

- 1. How are you managing sanitization schedules and protocols?**
- 2. What are your goals for environmental factors such as air quality and humidity?**
- 3. Can you manage your cleaning requirements with existing staff?**
- 4. Can you currently stock necessary PPE and sanitization supplies by location?**



“Our overall approach is circling the problem. You want to communicate. You want to enable them with technology, so they know they have a place to work, and then we want to reinforce the experience in the office by offering a safe, clean process that is as touchless as possible. That way we keep them coming back.”

- Reeves Davis, Executive Director,
Client Solutions, JLL Technologies



[Additional Planning Resource]
**Indoor Air Quality Considerations
(IAQ) During COVID-19**



1. What is your health policy for employees returning to the office?

2. Do you have a health acknowledgement form that an individual must sign or accept prior to entering the building?

3. What is your policy on visitors?

4. What is your plan if an employee comes to work sick or becomes sick while in the office?

5. What is your plan for contact tracing and exposure notifications?

6. What is your policy on returning to work after an infection?

When it comes to establishing a health policy for building access or contact tracing after an exposure incident, it is critical to work with your HR leadership to ensure your teams are aligned on the best ways to protect employees and communicate effectively.



Flexible Work Management

An enduring result of the COVID-19 pandemic will be the widespread acceptance and adoption of remote and virtual work. Some employees may be asked to work from home permanently to save costs and enable lease consolidations. Others may not feel comfortable coming back to work depending on their personal risk level. Still others will have discovered they are far more productive from home without the burden of lengthy commutes and stressful schedules.

Senior leadership teams and the collaborating sponsors in FM, HR and IT must now decide how to incorporate this new reality into company policy and culture, how to efficiently manage it against real estate costs and how to effectively communicate an agile plan to a distributed workforce.

Key Considerations for Creating a Flexible Workplace

1. Managing a Hybrid Workplace
2. Rethinking Policy
3. Cost-Savings Potential
4. Communications



42% of U.S. workers are now working from home full time, accounting for more than 2/3 of economic activity accoring to [Stanford survey](#).

Key Considerations for Creating a Flexible Workplace:

Managing a Hybrid Workplace

The ideal hybrid workplace will offer a mix of spaces that are each uniquely suited to specific tasks: collaborative space, focus rooms, phone booths, touchdown spaces. Also known as Activity Based Work, employees have access to the appropriate space and necessary resources for the task at hand. Availability and utilization are managed through software applications, mobile apps and digital signage.

There are typically four types of workers within a flexible, hybrid workplace:



Stationary

In the office at least 3.5 days a week. 60% of the day spent in workstation.



Externally mobile

In the office 1-3.5 days a week.



Internally Mobile

In the office 3.5 days a week. Less than 60% of the day spent in workstation.



Remote

In the office 1-4 days a month.

Assess your population for their preferred work style to start making strategic decisions about the type of workers you have and the type of spaces you need to accommodate them. Our [Hybrid Workplace e-book](#) gives guidance and insight into key factors to develop a hybrid workplace that works for your organization.

Rethinking Policy

HR leadership must consider the inherent shift from time-based work to output-based work, where the measure of the employee is in the quality of their production, not the hours logged. Remote work principles should be incorporated into formal company policy, and lines of communication with employees must remain open to understand what is working and what isn't.

Cost-Savings Potential

One of the strategic benefits of a flexible work strategy is the possibility for cost-savings via real estate consolidation and optimization. Section 4 of this workbook looks at technology solutions to identify and monitor these metrics. Section 5 includes a cost-savings calculator that allows you to manipulate different factors such as average workplace density and employee-to-desk ratio. Given the economic constraints of the current crisis, an effective flexible work strategy combined with a real estate optimization strategy could be an important step in moving your company into recovery and beyond.

Communications

Clear, frequent and bi-directional communication with employees is a necessity in these uncertain times. A collaborative approach by FM, HR and IT is essential to ensure policies and technology changes are clearly and consistently communicated across the organization. Identify the right channels and cadence to keep employees up to date without overwhelming them.

Additional Resources:

1. [How Working From Home Works Out](#) - Stanford University
2. [Prioritizing People Over Place](#) - FM:Systems
3. [Three Essential Truths Driving Workplace Change](#) - JLL



1. What is your vision for a hybrid workplace?

2. What is your plan for implementing a flexible work strategy?

3. What changes are needed to support a newly mobile workforce?

4. What is your communication strategy?



* Survey Tips:

1. Surveys are a powerful way to track employee sentiment as you make decisions and introduce change. Surveys can help you gauge direction with simple yes/no questions. If you want more insight into a scale of sentiment, you can offer questions with a ranked answer (i.e. 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree).
2. For specific feedback or to generate ideas, use free form answers. It's important to follow up post-survey to let employees know the general response and actions that are being taken as a result.
3. A regular cadence of surveys and feedback will communicate to employees that their feedback is valuable, and it will give them a sense of control in their workplace experience

The Technology

The advent of cloud and mobile technologies over the past decade put us in a unique position to respond and adapt to the onset of COVID-19. Many companies were able to seamlessly transition to a fully remote workforce with very little disruption to their business continuity. The future state will be a hybrid of the pre- and post-COVID experiences with increased flexibility and a digitization of the physical space that empowers employees to access workspaces in real time for fluid work experiences.

Smart building, smart devices and the Internet of Things create new opportunities to gather data, automate processes, and optimize systems, realizing significant cost savings through improved efficiencies and increased visibility to utilization and trends. Adopting the right technologies and implementing the right strategies will accelerate your recovery by creating a digital workplace that augments your physical space, increasing visibility and access for mobile, distributed workers.

Do you want more ideas on innovative technology solutions? Check out the featured keynote speaker from our 2020 Building Insights User Conference, Lynn Allen, Global Technology Evangelist.



[Additional Planning Resource]
**At the Forefront of Change
in Uncertain Times**



2021 Technology Checklist:

IoT sensors - for real-time data on utilization and strategic insights into planned v actual utilization

Environmental sensors - monitor and maintain healthier environmental levels in your physical office

Desk Reservation Software - to limit available spaces for employees to only sanitized ones

IWMS Software - to enables effective planning of floor plan layouts with physical distancing guidelines

Mobile Apps - for contactless solutions

New and emerging sanitization technology - like self-cleaning door handles and improved air filtration

“With a lease management tool, we can easily view our current lease portfolio and think strategically about expiration dates and future needs.”

-Dan Yohey, Space Manager,
University of Delaware

Building a Digital Workplace

The trifecta of FM, HR and IT represent the primary components for a successful digital workplace strategy encompassing the physical space, the employees and the systems and apps and networks that keep them all connected no matter where they are. Collaborating with these teams and involving them in your decision-making process will align priorities and result in solutions that have broader impact.

1. Who are the key stakeholders in your digital workplace management strategy?

2. What is your communication plan with that group of stakeholders?

3. How will you collectively manage changes to the strategy over time?



[Additional Planning Resource]
**Today's Digital Workplace:
Optimize Your Office Space
for Maximum Productivity**



1. Conduct a digital solutions audit. Where do you currently have technology installed and what kind?

2. How does this technology support your digital workplace goals? Your utilization goals?

3. Are you effectively utilizing your tech stack to track, manage and improve your overall operations?

4. What is on your technology wish list?

5. What single technology investment do you think would have the biggest impact on your workplace and business recovery?

6. How can technology serve your cost-cutting goals? What manual processes could be automated?

Building A Business Case for Technology Investments:

- Quantify Potential Savings
- Share Case Studies
- Present a strategy for communication and change management
- Clearly define the benefits to employees





The Potential Savings

A Gartner, Inc. survey of 317 CFOs and Finance leaders on March 30, 2020 revealed that 74% will move at least 5% of their previously on-site workforce to permanently remote positions post-COVID 19.

“This data is an example of the lasting impact the current coronavirus crisis will have on the way companies do business,” said Alexander Bant, practice vice president, research for the Gartner Finance Practice. “CFOs, already under pressure to tightly manage costs, clearly sense an opportunity to realize the cost benefits of a remote workforce. In fact, nearly a quarter of respondents said they will move at least 20% of their on-site employees to permanent remote positions.”

CFOs and real estate executives alike are keenly aware of the potential cost savings of converting employees to permanently remote working. But not every role or every employee is suited for or desires to be fully remote. Flexible work strategies give you a middle ground: flexible options for schedules and seating and IoT data to understand true utilization lets you fine-tune a cost savings strategy. Not only can you consolidate the real estate for those employees who are now permanently remote, you can optimize the remaining portfolio for employees who are no longer tethered to expectations for the traditional 9-5 workday. As the pandemic subsides and requirements for physical distancing are lessened, a hybrid workplace can accommodate future growth within the existing footprint by adjusting the workplace density and the desk-sharing ratio.

In the current economic environment, cost-savings will be a key driver in decision making as organizations look for ways to recover losses or plan for a decline in revenue streams. Understanding your workspace utilization is the first step to identifying cost-savings opportunities within your real estate portfolio. You should also want to gather data about workspace operating costs, such as utilities, janitorial cleaning, security, and maintenance. By breaking these costs down by the square foot, you will be able to more accurately predict the total impact of plans to expand or reduce your workspace.

Many organizations use benchmarking to establish points of comparison. Ultimately, you want your changes in workspace management to provide your organization with competitive advantage, so it is important to find out what is “average” for a company of your size or within your industry. Many real estate management companies publish regular benchmarking surveys, giving you access to global utilization data as well as insight into agile work strategies and workplace trends.



[Additional Planning Resource]

**Leveraging Data-Driven Insights
to Create Value & Manage Costs**



1. What is your target average daily utilization?

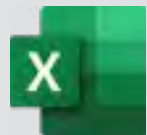
2. What is your current cost per person?

3. What is your target cost per person in 2021?

4. What elements of your portfolio offer the potential for cost savings?

Cost Savings Calculator:

This cost savings calculator examines three core components where tech solutions can result in a substantial cost savings from more efficient processes to more-informed portfolio decisions.



Download the Cost Saving
Calculator Template



“When you have good data and you have good floor plans, you have the control to be able to make very intelligent decisions, instead of trying to guess the right approach”

-Hugo Hernandez, Southwest Airlines



The Long-term Impacts

As you finalize your plans for 2021, it is crucial to consider how the decisions you make today can impact your success long-term. We are no longer in the response period of this crisis; we must move on to recovery and adaptation and consider the long-term impact of the current environment. Adopting forward-thinking strategies today lays the foundation for growth into a future state that is dynamic, flexible and resilient.

Building Trust & Securing Confidence

Building trust and gaining confidence will be key components of every successful organization's approach. Employees are assuming a new level of risk by coming into the workplace, and they are dealing with unprecedented challenges in their personal lives. A recent Mercer study shows that 60% of families are dual income, a reality that is not tenable amid widespread school closures.

Organizations that lean into this moment and take steps to empower and protect their employees will strengthen their culture as employees feel seen, heard and valued. A commitment to their health and well-being today will yield a return in loyalty and productivity that might otherwise be hard to achieve. Lead with empathy. Show your employees that you are [putting people first](#), and your organization will reap the rewards of their dedicated service.

1. What specific things can you do to help your employees feel safe?

2. How can you demonstrate your ongoing commitment to their safety?

Quick Ideas for Securing Confidence: Sanitization stations in common areas with hand sanitizer and other supplies. Care packages at workstations with masks and sanitizing wipes. Clear instruction and protocols for regulatory compliance. Clear communication and expectations for organizational compliance. A health acknowledgment form and building entry process. Clearly defined communication plan in the case of an outbreak or exposure incident. Communicate availability of mental health benefits and virtual doctor visits.

Get creative in finding ways to foster culture and keep employees connected: a virtual break room, online happy hours, exercise challenges and holiday charitable-giving contests.

Shifting the Paradigm

The sudden transition to remote work leveled the playing field in a unique way for flexible work strategies. The outdated stigma that 'remote work' is the equivalent of 'remotely working' was eliminated by necessity. Employers and employees alike discovered that productivity is not negatively impacted by the worker's location. In fact, 94% of organizations surveyed by Mercer reported that productivity was the same or higher after the shift to remote work.

Embracing flexible work as a company policy can have years-long positive impact on your organization in terms of short-term productivity and engagement as well as long-term performance, recruiting and retention goals. A 2016 Forbes study inside a Fortune 500 company found that employees who were placed on a flexibility program were both happier at work and less prone to burnout and psychological stress than their colleagues who were not on the program. Flexible work is often considered a unique benefit by HR leaders, an important part of a benefits package, especially when recruiting Millennials or Gen Z workers who have different expectations for mobility and technology. Studies over the last several years have consistently demonstrated the benefits of flexible work to both employees and employers.

Giving all employees equal access to both flexibility and a highly functioning physical space gives every individual the opportunity to work in the place and time that best suits both their work style and their lifestyle, optimizing their overall performance. The key is outfitting a digital workplace that connects the mobile worker to the physical space, offering fluid and productive work experiences both in and out of the office.



94% of organizations surveyed by Mercer reported that productivity was the same or higher after the shift to remote work.

Flexible Workplace Benefits for Employees:

- Better work life balance
- More autonomy over schedule
- Reduced commuting time
- Improved productivity
- Improved engagement
- Improved job satisfaction
- More flexibility for relocations

Flexible Workplace Benefits for Employers:

- Real estate optimization and lease cost-savings
- Expanded talent pool without geographic limitations
- Recruiting differentiator as younger generations seek out flexible schedules and a rich digital experience
- Competitive differentiator as productivity increases boost overall organizational growth and performance
- Reduction in turnover as improved job satisfaction limits retention

1. How has Covid-19 shifted your perspective on flexible work? Your organization's perspective?

2. How can flexible work make a positive impact in your organization?

Build your Case for 2021:

Ready to present your 2021 workplace strategy? Download our free PowerPoint template!



Download the free
PowerPoint Template



Conclusion

FM:Systems is proud to be a leader in global facility and workplace management, delivering innovative solutions to help over 1500 organizations worldwide navigate the challenging aftermath of COVID-19. We have collaborated with customers in every industry to develop tools that support the safe return to the workplace. Our [Safe Space solutions](#) can be implemented quickly to protect employee health, build employee confidence and promote utilization as your workplace re-opens.

FM:Systems is helping customers around the globe plan their workplace return and develop effective strategies to manage their workplace in 2021 and beyond. The right workplace management platform can achieve a variety of cost-savings and efficiency gains while the right flexible work strategy can boost employee satisfaction, morale and productivity. The combination of cost-savings and productivity gains promises returns that extend beyond the uncertainty of the moment. A thoughtful investment in your workplace strategy today can yield dividends in employee loyalty and engagement that will resonate for years.

Schedule a consultation with one of our experts and get started on your 2021 planning.



[Additional Planning Resource]

Safe Space Solutions

