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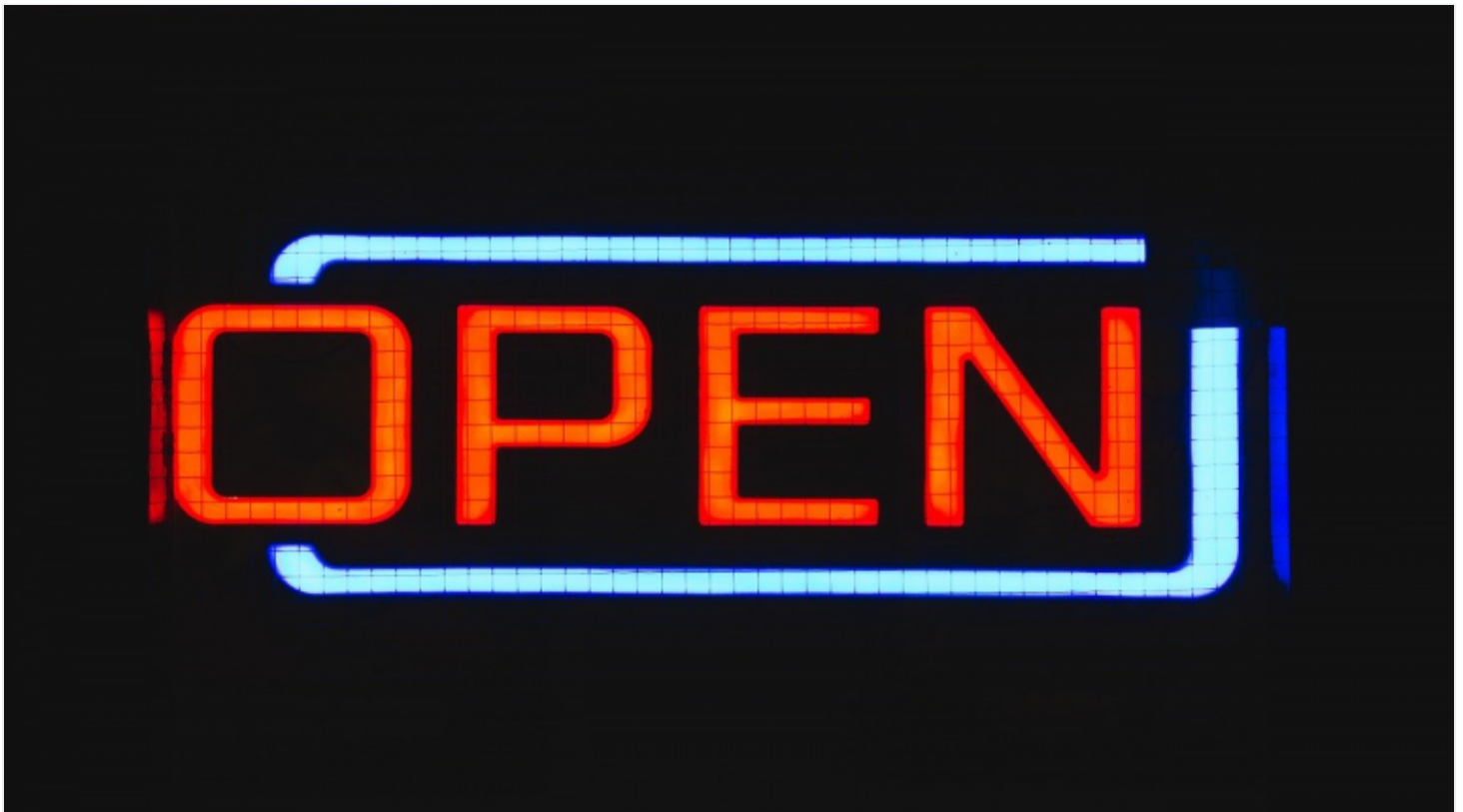
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AMY VETTER

Is There a Right Way to Reopen Your Office?

At the start of the year, would you have ever expected to work so many days from home? Did you bet on an emergent pandemic shutting down businesses and leaving the future of office spaces in flux? Had you ever even heard of Zoom?

Amy Vetter, CPA • Aug. 27, 2020



At the start of the year, would you have ever expected to work so many days from home? Did you bet on an emergent pandemic shutting down businesses and leaving

the future of office spaces in flux? Had you ever even heard of [Zoom](#)?

Nobody could've predicted what this year has done for firms and their clients, and many people are aching to get back to normal as soon as possible. However, it can be a risky decision to try to force things back to the way they were, especially when it comes to reopening offices and bringing teams back to the office. If you are engaged in that process right now, you know how much depends on getting it right.

The best strategy forward will be different for every business, and every factor is worth considering. Weighing public health and business operation concerns, as well as gauging the feelings of your team and assessing the stability of your finances is important. It's a lot to consider, taking it one step at a time and breaking it down can help to make it achievable.

Healthy and safety

The first question to ask with regards to opening is whether it is [safe](#) to do so. If you are a two-person firm working at a spacious office in a rural area that hasn't experienced many COVID-19 cases, you're a lot safer than a crowded office in a hard-hit city that's trying to bring dozens of team members back on site.

When it comes to this topic, each person may gauge safety differently as well. It is important to give people options that will not only keep them safe if they come back into the office, but also keep their family and friends that come in contact with them safe as well. What is for sure is there is not a one size fits all. When coming up with a plan providing people options on what safety looks like in the office or providing the option to stay remote is important if you want to keep your team happy.

Finance

Unless you're in a truly exceptional circumstance, your office space will be among the biggest costs for your business if you decide to reopen. At a time when businesses of all sizes and types are looking for ways to decrease spending without letting go of people, commercial real estate is a great place to find savings.

You may already be taking advantage of a rent relief program, but why not use this time as a chance to renegotiate more favorable terms? If you're nearing the end of a lease, you may not want to automatically extend terms and instead negotiate based on the current status of the business. You've learned you can work outside of the office if need be so there's no harm in waiting for the ideal situation.

Operations

At the beginning of 2020, most business owners would've said that their physical offices were essential to their ability to get work done. Now, many are singing a different tune. Huge companies like Twitter and Facebook have announced they will no longer require employees to come to an office. People have learned to leverage **tech** to facilitate a work-from-home strategy. You may have some teams that could benefit from a physical space where others can do their job just as well from anywhere.

It's up to you to decide who needs to be in the office, how frequently they'll come, and what they do when they're there. As an alternative, you may want to look into shared office space offerings where you can fractionalize the cost and leave the health, safety and operational considerations to their expertise.

Team member well-being

The final piece of the puzzle is making sure your team is onboard with the strategy you put in place. You may find that some folks are itching to get back to the office while others have adapted to their new **environment**. It's a great idea to start by bringing back the people who are most willing to, evaluating how it goes, and progressing from there. Sending an anonymous survey to your staff to allow them to provide their comfort level on returning to work will give you a good gauge on how to progress and plan from there.

At every turn, being agile and making changes if decisions don't serve your company, your team members, your clients, or the wider community, is key. There is no one right way to reopen an office, but there are approaches that will ensure you go about it in the right way for your business. Things may never go back to how they were for your business operations, but that doesn't mean you won't learn new ways of working that may improve your culture overall and be for the better.

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