

ABM *for* CRE

Total Building Health

PERSPECTIVES



Healthier Buildings & Occupant Experience

How the pandemic will reshape how buildings factor into occupant, tenant and employee experience

By Tony Piucci,
SVP of Enterprise Sales Solutions, ABM

The long-awaited return to the office is finally here with more companies starting their summer reopenings and Labor Day being termed as the unofficial start date for many others. Occupancy rates have climbed above 30% according to the weekly occupancy report barometer from Kastle Control Systems which monitors keycard data.

After 18 months of teleconferences, in-person meetings are beginning to take place again. There is a refreshing energy that comes from seeing people and collaborating in the same room.

However, even with these first steps, uncertainty remains which creates an opportunity to take demonstrable steps to protect people's health in the critical months ahead while planning to make healthier places and spaces an essential amenity.

HIGHER EXPECTATIONS


Pandemic-related health implications add to a series of higher expectations that occupants have for their employers, their workplaces and for remote work.

Health and wellness was already a primary focus before the pandemic and the stress of the past year has increased the emphasis on a range of concerns, including mental health, stress management and adapted workplace design.

These expectations have been elevated by the popularity of working from home. According to a May survey, 39% would consider quitting if their employers weren't flexible about remote work. That percentage increases to 49% of millennial and Gen Z employees, according to the poll by Morning Consult on behalf of Bloomberg News.

The safety of buildings, high touch surfaces and indoor air quality are now essential for both

occupant health and employee retention. People expect to see and know that they are returning to safe workplaces for now and into the future. It's about delivering total building health and not traditional cleaning and climate control.



The safety of buildings, high touch surfaces and indoor air quality are now essential for both occupant health and employee retention.

THERE IS NO ZERO RISK

Throughout the pandemic, occupants and tenants have expressed caution about the return to their workplaces. With approximately a third of the population still unvaccinated and 13% expressing unwillingness to get vaccinated, most offices will have elements of risk.

With a new, more infectious Delta variant of the coronavirus in the U.S., infection rates are starting to see a slight increase after months of steep declines. As facilities, HR and corporate leaders work toward summer and fall office reopenings, they will need to maintain an integrated set of protocols and controls to help ensure health and safety.

EMPLOY A HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS

Controlling exposure to occupational hazards is the fundamental method of protecting workers.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the CDC leverage a hierarchy of controls as a means of determining how to implement feasible and effective control solutions.

Control methods at the top of the graphic are potentially more effective and protective than those at the bottom. Following this hierarchy normally leads to the implementation of inherently safer systems, where the risk of illness or injury has been substantially reduced.

HIGHER EXPECTATIONS



Source: Centers for Disease Controls, The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)



Elements of these controls are reflected in ABM's approaches to both disinfection and indoor air quality control through our data-driven EnhancedClean™ and EnhancedFacility™ programs.

BUILDINGS THAT DRIVE HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

"Amidst the chaos, one thing is clear: We will all go back to work with new expectations about the buildings where we live, learn, work, and play," writes Harvard professor Joseph G. Allen and senior lecturer John D. Macomber in the Harvard Business Review.

In a just published book, *Healthy Buildings: How Indoor Spaces Drive Performance and Productivity*, Allen and Macomber bring together the science of Harvard's School of Public Health with the financial insights of the Harvard Business School. They reveal the "9

Foundations of a Healthy Building," including ventilation, air quality, thermal health, dust and pests, and other factors.

Macomber projects that business leaders and property owners will begin to leverage healthier indoor spaces as recruitment tools and sources of competitive advantage with anxieties over COVID-19 likely to accelerate these trends. He foresees that "offices with the premier health story will get the premium rent and get the tenants, and the offices with a lagging health story will lag."

THE CRITICAL NEXT 12 MONTHS

Throughout the summer and fall, property management, facility and HR teams will monitor to ensure that health and safety protocols are maintained as more people return to work and accommodate in-office, hybrid and remote working arrangements.

As we work with clients on their re-entry plans, here are our points we continue to reinforce:

- 1 Emphasize health and safety on surfaces and in the air
- 2 Visually demonstrate and provide assurances of safety people can see throughout your building
- 3 Practice an abundance of caution until you have data from occupants, tenants and employees and your building health before increasing capacity
- 4 Have plans in place in case a coronavirus variant increases health risks
- 5 Ensure healthier buildings are part of long-term strategies and projects

Occupants, tenants and employees have high expectations for both safety and for retention. Your demonstrated response is critical to both safely welcome people back and maintain healthier buildings now and for years to come.

Tony Piucci is SVP of Enterprise Sales Solutions at ABM.

ABM provides single-source services for more than four billion square feet of commercial office buildings, serving many of the top commercial real estate, property management and corporations in the country. From janitorial and disinfection to HVAC, energy management, parking and guest services, ABM helps maximize facility service budgets, streamline operations and simplify vendor management. We enable you to provide total building health to elevate experiences for your occupants, employees and guests.

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