

# ABOUT TIME

## SOLUTIONS

### 4 Changes to the Workplace Beyond 2020

The huge changes to working practices that many businesses and employees have recently had to make to comply with emergency legislation, are changes that would usually require weeks or months of planning to implement. Within days many are now embracing working from home and flexible working, relying on communication systems and connections that have never felt more important.

Going forward businesses will want to be more prepared to feel in control of any eventuality and there is no doubt this will feel a huge learning curve. About Time Solutions are ready to support you and we are already gearing up for the future with the experience and expertise to help you transform and future-proof your workplace across the four areas that we predict will be high on the agenda.

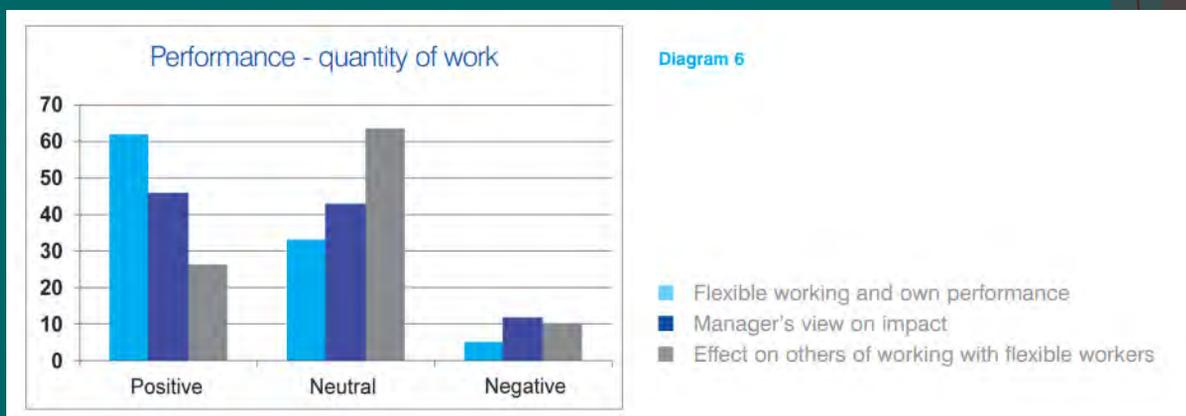


# Reaping the benefits of remote working

While many have dipped a toe or even immersed their business in homeworking, many more will now be utilising this as a necessity and if successful will be wanting to pursue this going forward. Our experienced team at About Time Solutions will help you plan for the best outcomes & provide you with the products you need.



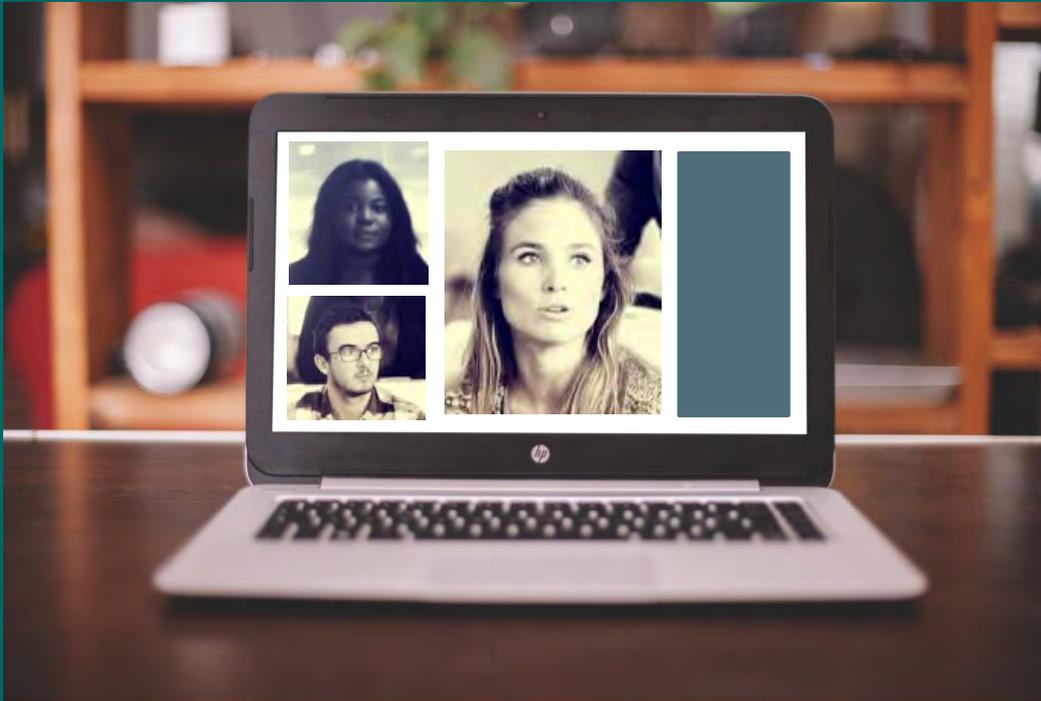
The good news is that enabling a flexible approach to working has been shown to increase productivity and employee retention, with improved job satisfaction from reduced commutes, and access to a wider pool of talent for the work you need. Often the offer of flexible working makes a job more appealing and there is evidence that staff even become more conscientious when working from home.



Research by Cranfield School of Management for Working Families [www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)

For many businesses allowing work from home offers a lot of advantages in reduced risk and financial outlay. It can also reduce your carbon footprint and improve air quality in cities through reduced commutes.

In order to make flexible working successful, the right processes & technologies must be in place. Your staff will need to feel they are part of the team with a focus on both formal and informal connections in and out of the office. Introducing simple communication software for a morning 'Hello' as well as the video conferencing you need to achieve full team meetings will enable the development of good team relationships and boost morale.



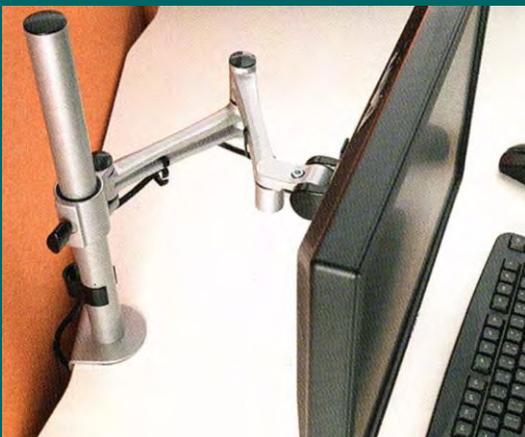
The innovation of cloud-based file sharing solutions will be essential to allow all staff to collaborate and work effectively wherever they are, and leasing your hardware will mean you can stay on top of developments in technology and rely on keeping your team connected.

This may lead to your office working in a very different way. The solution will be found in creative design which manages the potential for varying activities and numbers of staff throughout the week in a practical way. Flexible furniture, a focus on connectivity technology and multi-use work zones will continue to be key when designing for future-proof workspaces, and About Time Solutions can help from the initial planning to design and installation.

## Supporting the Flexible Workforce

Whilst it seems simple to allow the flexibility for staff to work in or out of the office, there is no doubt that the focus on their health and wellbeing should remain key. Employers are still responsible for protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and should accept the need to invest in that.

From ergonomic assessments of the home-working space, to risk assessing the tasks they will perform out of the office, supporting the health of your staff will both improve performance and increase staff retention. We can ensure you meet best practises in health and safety with a range of ergonomic products and individual assessments for your team.



It would be preferable to offer the same resources to support your staff ergonomically in and out of the office; assessment, training and products in the form of a suitable ergonomic desk chair, laptop accessories to enable users to work with the screen, mouse and keyboard in the correct position.

For those working at a kitchen or dining room table, the height of this may well be incorrect ergonomically – risers can be used but ideally of course a separate working area with a desk would take the health and risk to posture out of home-working in the long term. You may also need to think about adapting lighting to avoid extra eye strain. About Time Solutions can give you the specialist advice you need to avoid discomfort and injury.



*State of Remote Report 2019 - [www.buffer.com/stateofremote-2019](http://www.buffer.com/stateofremote-2019)*

Additionally, the smaller elements of working from home can easily be missed but should be considered as part of the ergonomic training. In a busy office natural breaks often happen with regular social interaction which is not possible working alone and the temptation is to put in long unbroken hours staring at a screen.

There are apps which can be downloaded to remind individuals to take regular screen breaks or exercise, drink water or make time to stretch, all of which will avoid unnecessary strain on the body whilst working, and improve morale.

We are happy to share our extensive knowledge of health and safety expertise so that your teams continue to work healthily.

Regular 'water cooler moments' in the office can lead to the best creative problem solving so considering ways to enable informal communication through technology will not only reduce the isolation for out workers but continue to build and strengthen your team.



Establishing simple company rules such as not eating at desks and providing ergonomic, adjustable work spaces can be encouraged both in and out of the office, with an expectation that managers check in on how staff are managing their own wellbeing.

The ethos of 24-7 wellness is already key to this generation of workers who want to work where a better work-life balance and a focus on health matches their own.



# The New Healthy Office

We're all onboard with the need for healthy workplaces, welcoming the benefits of natural light, natural materials and biophilia, and the introduction of flexible or sit-stand workspaces encouraging us to move and change our sedentary habits. We know that bringing nature into the workplace increases our sense of wellbeing with some plants even improving air quality but it's also true that office environments can trigger occupational allergies giving rise to headaches and even rashes.

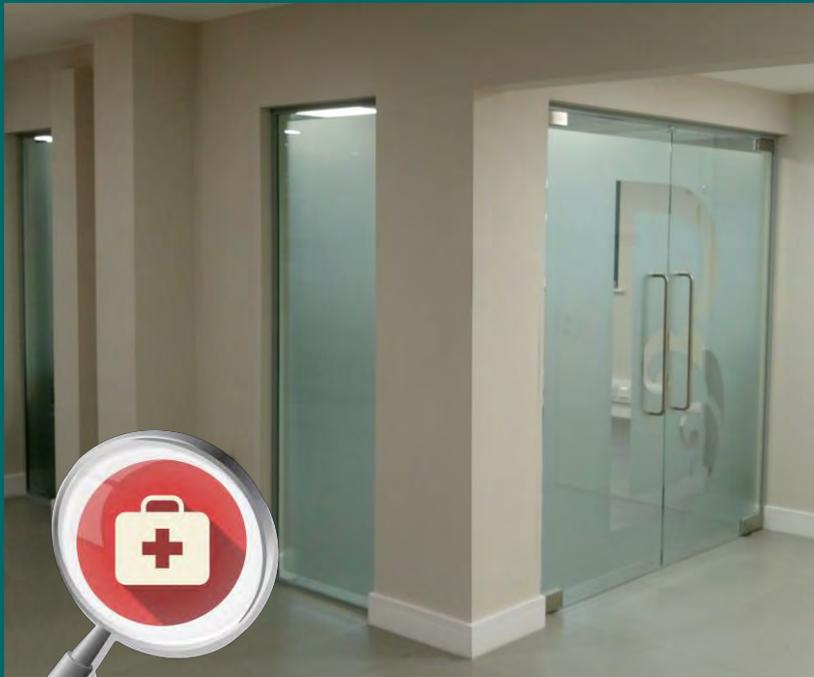
At About Time Solutions we are preparing for a new focus on hygiene and health that will impact the design of offices moving forward. These changes will need much consideration during the design stage, from layout and materials used to the M&E specification, all of which we have years of experience in across the team.



Sharing desk spaces, desk phones and keyboards in hot-desking situations exposes each user to more germs than otherwise and can only be counteracted by routine daily cleaning. Viruses and bacteria are easily transferred to surfaces around the office - door handles, shared machines and devices - so encouraging office-wide cleanliness is essential as we all head back into the workplace.

Whilst legislation for first aiders is in place most offices no longer provide a traditional First Aid Room with its benefits of a quiet, hygienic, easy-clean retreat in which staff can be assisted by the First Aider, and which in recent times could have been a welcome 'Isolation Space'. We would recommend making the choice to buck the trend for multi-use spaces here and instead place value on a single space solely for the health of staff.

Productivity losses due to absenteeism cost employers yearly so it would make sense to do what we can to limit the risk. About Time Solutions will plan health and hygiene into your office design from drawing to implementation so that you have everything you need to keep your business healthy.



Well-defined company policies, prioritising not just wellbeing but both personal and workplace hygiene, should be encouraged and a return to the standard provision of a cleaner's cupboard with dedicated cleaners sink and equipment would make sense to support this. The introduction of hand sanitiser stations by all entrances and a use of easy to clean materials throughout the interior must become integrated into the standard design process.



While a lot of workplaces have air conditioning the introduction of fresh air is not always considered, yet this has been proven to boost productivity as well as employee health with fewer absences due to sickness. The quality of air and ventilation in the office require effective solutions to create conditions to improve performance and health.

### *Relation Between Ventilation and Performance in Offices:*



Source: [www.trox.de/en/applications/fresh-air-for-offices](http://www.trox.de/en/applications/fresh-air-for-offices)- Seppanen et al 2006 / Die Volkswirtschaft

About Time Solutions work closely with specialist contractors and can advise you on the best solutions and specify an air ventilation system set to an agreed Cleanliness Quality which limits the contaminants circulating in the form of particles and gases, so that clean, fresh air is provided in sufficient quantity, enabling your teams to work with minimal discomfort.

This investment not only increases output but provides reassurance to your teams that you value them and thus encourages them to value where they work. We can install a cost effective and energy efficient system to suit your business.

# Creating an inviting workplace

If you're concerned that all this remote working will make your staff reluctant to return to the workplace it is crucial to start planning now to make certain they will want to be there.

At About Time Solutions we are ready to put our whole teams knowledge and experience together to create a functional and aesthetic workplace your staff will want to be part of.

Considered design and an understanding of the benefits will put you in a better position to show them the advantages of being in the office beyond the boost to morale and relationships, and create a positive space that encourages teamwork and creative thinking.



Improved lighting, creating a sense of community and introducing a mix of social and concentration spaces will bring your office up to date and make the transition back exciting. Thinking now about how your business works and any issues that need addressing can create a happier workplace going forward and we are happy to share our expertise with you.



There are many office trends that will work well to give people a choice of how and when to interact including provision of flexible workspaces, height adjustable desking, private work booths and open plan collaborative areas – all of which would not be available to them at home.



Free-standing booths for phone calls, meetings or solo work can alter the way the office looks and works without changing the structural layout. These are often acoustic, space efficient and easily moved or reconfigured as well as being more cost effective and convenient than building a fixed enclosed office.

With wellbeing high on the agenda for most young professionals, access to both ergonomic and exercise products - desk treadmills and cycles - as well as individual multi-use wellness spaces - such as sleep pods or yoga rooms - would be another incentive to go to the office.

We are here to help you select products that will work for you, plan them into your scheme and install them on time and in budget.



*About Time Solutions are experts in office refurbishment and design with a wealth of experience at your disposal across the team. To speak to an expert about your project please contact us:*

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