



Members Respond to the Coronavirus Challenge

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What's the biggest work/COVID-19 challenge you're facing this week?

The biggest challenge we are facing this week is collaborating with our members in creating a return-to-work plan that is feasible and ensures their safety is their top priority. The team has been safely maneuvering their way around getting our office ready for our members despite Manila being on lockdown. Constant communication with our team and members is key.

What's the current situation in your city relative to opening non-essential businesses?

Manila is still on a fairly eased form of lockdown called General Community Quarantine (GCQ).

Under GCQ, the following can operate up to 50 percent capacity: Financial services, legal and accounting, auditing services, professional services, scientific services, technical services, non-leisure services, non-leisure wholesale and retail.

Malls have started to re-open, except for businesses that fall under leisure.

How do you think COVID-19 will bring about permanent changes in corporate real estate and workplace strategy?

We will see a further rise in flexible workspaces. In times of uncertainty, flexibility and agility is key. With companies having adapted quickly to the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19, many have invested heavily to facilitate their team's remote work and implemented business continuity plans. While some have begun to reap the rewards of their newfound working model, the future of work will have to involve policies that encourage employees to work remotely while also protecting and supporting their work. Perhaps most notably, because of the economic slowdown, in the short-term, we will see businesses seeking to recoup capital by minimising costs, particularly those tied to high-ticket items such as real estate.

Reducing long-term fixed leases will be a significant avenue that companies around the world will explore. For example, supplementing existing real estate with flexible workspaces is not only a viable short-term investment but an effective long-term solution to maintaining a healthy cash-flow. Other examples include the use of Satellite offices for project-based teams, hot desking options for highly mobile employees, and having access to diversified locations and environment types. All of these are examples of how some our Members are already employing flexible workspace trends into their portfolios, and we predict that these will become more mainstream commercial real estate strategies in the future.