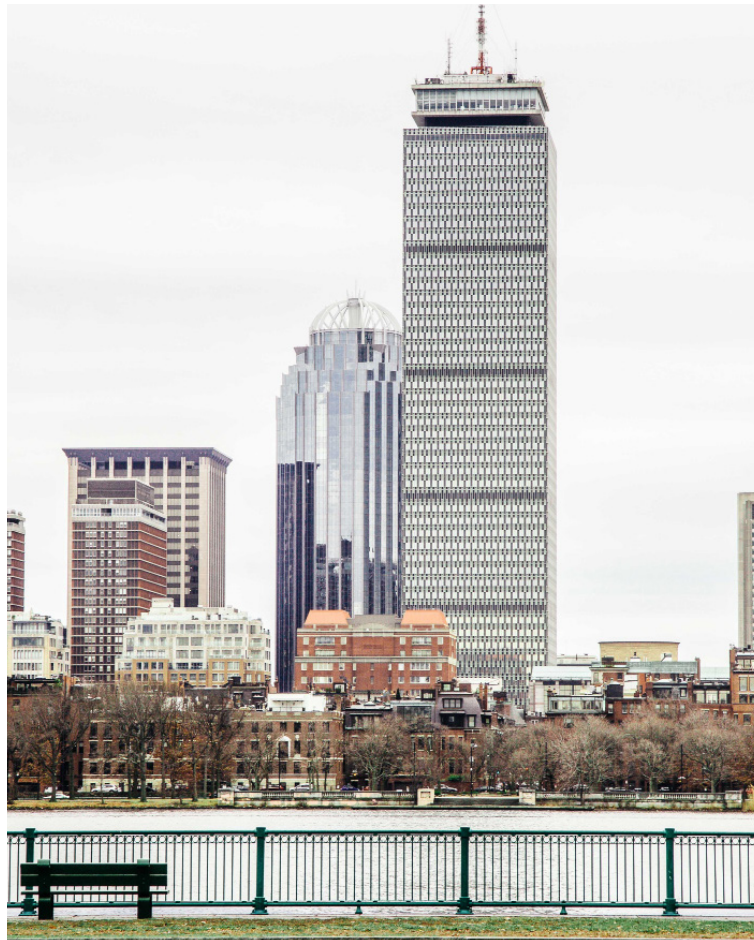


COVID CONSORTIUM



A knowledge share of current industry best practices and due diligence around workplace design and construction requirements adapting to changes in code and regulatory amendments in the post COVID-19 world.

OUR MISSION

Boston's Real Estate COVID Consortium's mission is to conduct a knowledge share of current industry best practices and due diligence around workplace design and construction requirements adapting to changes in codes and regulatory amendments in the post-COVID-19 world. Its members include professional multiple disciplines of real estate industry, including architecture and interior design, audio visual integrator, code consultants, commercial real estate brokerage, commissioning agents, environmental engineers, general contractors, furniture dealers, MEP/FP engineers and owner's project managers.

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU

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Since March 10th, when Governor Charlie Baker made the difficult decision to shut down large portions of Massachusetts, we have all been bombarded with a steady stream of COVID-19 impacts to the real estate industry, best practice guidelines and prognostications. Our mission is to curate this information and distill it down to the best of the best to help simplify & streamline your return to work planning process.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

We aim to be a trusted resource for our valued Boston real estate community. If you have any questions or ideas for content, please don't hesitate to reach out to Denise Pied (denise.pied@stvinc.com).

Please note, that although our current focus is limited to standard office space, we plan to cover special considerations for Life Science/Pharma, Healthcare & Academic markets in future publications.

ISSUE 07 RETURN TO WORK TOOLKIT:

Technology Considerations in the wake of COVID-19

As we look towards technology solutions and considerations in the wake of COVID-19, this issue will address the following:

- How to evaluate if the collaboration solutions at the office will now support the new habits your company has adopted in the work from home period.
- Implementing technology in conference spaces that substantially reduces the need to touch things.
- Understanding how digital signage can play a key role in communicating to people inside the building. Cloud-based solutions make it easy to have messaging updated as often as it needs to be to help ensure the wellness of the building population.
- The use of sensors outside of traditional conference rooms to give real time density information to help people make better decisions about their safety.

Future issues will take a deeper dive to spotlight relevant and timely topics including:

- Long Term Real Estate Strategies
- Coronavirus Legal Advisory Topics
- A Focus on Healthcare, Life Science, + Academic Markets
- A Look Back at the Construction Restart Process - How are we doing?

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TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS

Video Conferencing

There is a concept in video conferencing called the first click challenge. It describes the primary barrier to VC adoption, which is the willingness of employees to make that first step and make the first click. Working from home (WFH) because of COVID-19 has pushed most of us past that first click to seasoned veterans in a very short period of time. This shift will have very real and important implications for the office experience when we all return to the office in one way or another. Although video conferencing solutions have seen strong adoption in recent years by organizations, it hasn't necessarily translated into very high end-user utilization. Until now. Just think of all those video cameras that are now turned on in that Zoom call.

According to a recent poll conducted during the Bernkopf Goodman webinar "The Office is Not Dead," 88% of the respondents noted they were more likely to use video on a conference call now than they were before the WFH mandate.

Many IT departments scrambled to set employees up with solutions that would allow them to work at home using video.

In addition to addressing several important issues regarding video collaboration (such as making sure your in-office technology will support the new workflows employees have developed with greater use of collaboration technology), this article will also highlight:

- Equipment that can help reduce the need to touch things in conference spaces
- The role digital signage can play in communicating the information people need to stay healthy
- How sensor technology can be used to do things like signal density or signal when spaces need to be cleaned
- The appendix includes a few great articles on running a great virtual meeting, making sure your home office is optimized for video, and how to properly clean touch screens.

In our view, the most important takeaway is to fully embrace the fact that your end users' expectations have changed significantly, and understanding what they are now is critical. Virtual meetings have been consistently run with prospects, customers, suppliers, co-workers and other stakeholders and this will continue to be the case as travel is reduced. Employees are now consistently representing the brand of your organization through video and the experience needs to be a good one.

Analytics and surveys can play a key role in helping you make sure the right solutions have been deployed.

The video collaboration platform currently used by your remote workforce likely has built-in analytics capabilities that can provide data such as how well the technology is performing, how often the solution is used and by whom, number of calls and minutes, and more. This data will help you to determine the solution's adoption and value, and to what degree.

In addition, by surveying users you can gain insights into their satisfaction with the collaboration solution, capabilities that are important, and their expectations moving forward.

You can use a simple online survey tool to get valuable feedback by asking questions such as:

- Do you want to keep using this solution?
- Are there capabilities you would like to see?
- What you like most; least?
- Will you use this solution in conference rooms?



Thank You to this week's
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Employees have gotten used to the workflows facilitated by their new collaboration tools. They've experienced the ease of simply clicking a link to join a meeting, and they're going to want to see that in the conference rooms and the huddle spaces. The expectation will be that the conference room experience with multiple people (all sitting with appropriate spacing) participating will be as easy as the laptop experience in the living room. IT leaders need to ensure users can continue to start meetings with minimal effort or with one touch but still be able to utilize the large displays, high definition cameras, microphones and speakers already installed in huddle rooms and conference rooms. This will help keep people productive and reduce the need to have additional IT support need in the room to start meetings or resolve issues.

A good place to start is by documenting an inventory of your conference room technology so you can understand what needs to be true in order to optimally integrate given the demands of users' workflows. You will want to understand how people work, and the different ways in which you can facilitate different workflows.

A next step is to determine how the application will integrate with the conference technology. For example, if you rolled out Zoom, can you use Zoom in your conference rooms without issues? Or if your company uses multiple cloud video services, which ones are registered to the endpoints? Is your space even able to work with multiple cloud platforms (interoperability)? Do your users need to collaborate with people outside of your network? Are they using a cloud-based solution where bandwidth really won't be an issue?

It's very likely that a portion of your workforce will continue to work from home. According to Global Workplace Analytics, 20-30% of the US workforce will be working from home multiple days a week by the end of 2021.

Hardware

- Are all employees set up with the necessary equipment?
- Is the hardware they are using delivering a high enough level of quality? This applies to everything including desktop or laptop computer, camera, speakers and microphone.
- Do any users still need peripherals (or other equipment) in order to enable collaboration?

If it's a goal for employees to have the same high-quality, rich collaboration at home as they do in your conference rooms, you may want to consider deploying home-based appliances and/or a home endpoint – particularly for customer-facing users. You can also consider supplying some users with a higher-end web camera and USB speaker to optimize video and sound quality.

VIDEO WORK SETTINGS: BEST PRACTICES

Workspaces are often treated as an afterthought, but the environment is a key part of projecting a quality look – particularly important for customer-facing employees and executives. The at-home work environment is key to projecting a professional image, and not all users will have awareness into this issue and how they can address it. It can go a long way to distribute a simple best-practices list for users. Some of those best practices include:

- A dedicated workspace for video meetings
- No clutter behind the user, such as clothes on furniture
- No glaring windows behind the user
- Camera at eye level

Low Touch / No Touch Technology is Available

There is technology and equipment currently available that can substantially reduce the need to touch equipment in a conference room.

One touch solutions allow participants *walk into the conference room*, press a button, and the video collaboration process begins. The technology for one-touch or no-touch meeting control is just now coming into sharp relief given recent world events.

Occupancy Sensors

Occupancy sensors have been around for a while, and leveraging them for collaboration automation is not a novel concept. Spaces can be outfitted with simple controllers that can be tied to occupancy sensors. The controllers can then automatically power on the room's displays and power them off once it senses the room is no longer occupied for a period of time. Occupancy sensors can be coupled with control programming and corporate calendars to automatically cancel booked meetings that are not attended, freeing up the space in the process. In addition occupancy sensors can be used to easily signal whether a space is occupied or not- which reduces the need for someone to touch a doorknob unnecessarily or be programmed to alert cleaning staff that a huddle room that was booked for use is now open and available to be cleaned.

There are also tried-and-true hot-plug capabilities we use every day at our desks. If you have ever used a second monitor with your laptop machine, you know it's as easy as plugging in the HDMI, USB-C, or Thunderbolt cable to get that extended or mirrored desktop. The same concept can easily be applied in huddle or small conference spaces. Some large-format displays come with wake-from-sleep functionality, and there are other ways such as workspace controllers to emulate that functionality. Although this requires the touching of something like an HDMI cord having proper signage and wipes nearby will be useful.

One-Touch Meetings

One-Touch start solutions present a simple very low touch way to start meetings. The one-touch workflow contains three easy steps:

Book a meeting: Room resources in calendaring applications enable your team to reserve conference rooms and huddle rooms for their video collaboration meetings. It also eliminates the double booking of a room which reduce unnecessary human interaction caused by two parties thinking they have ownership of the room. A best practice to consider is to book each room with an additional 30 minutes to allow for congestion free entering and existing as well as time for cleaning crews to come in as necessary.

Set the meeting link: Before sending out that meeting invitation, make sure your meeting link is in there. Whether you have a virtual meeting room (VMR) that people can join remotely or a unique meeting URL generated by your calendar's add-in, ensure the appropriate information is in the invite. Software will scrape the meeting invite for meeting link information and allow for a one touch experience in your conference space.

Start the meeting: It really is just pressing a button on a touch panel.

[Alexa for Business](#), along with Google Assistant and other voice control systems, has enabled businesses to go touchless for more complex room functions, especially when it comes to video collaboration.

Simply stake out your meeting time and space in the calendar, ensure the meeting link is in the invitation, and give your voice command to join the meeting at the appointed time.

There is more going on under the hood in this scenario, and voice control has limitations and some potential pitfalls to avoid, but Alexa allows the user to bring the ease-of-use and familiar experience to the corporate meeting space. Again, without the need for touching anything.

The biggest concern with voice control solutions is [security and privacy](#). Not many businesses would want to have Alexa constantly listening to important, confidential conversations. One thing to note, however, is that Alexa for Business is not the same thing as Alexa. There are [certain settings and permissions](#) that you can set for users to ensure your data is secure. Other voice control platforms bring varying levels of tools and processes to the table to protect customer information, and it is important to understand what those are when integrating any digital voice assistant. We expect the functionality of Alexa in the conference room to increase substantially in the coming years.

[Bring Your Own Device](#) (BYOD) is another method of ensuring that your office is designed with collaboration and health in mind. There are two main ways that you can implement BYOD-enabled conference rooms to create a collaborative environment: the one-touch and the no-touch solution.

One-touch solutions, such as [ClickShare](#) and standard HDMI cords, enable your team to easily share content from their devices to the displays in the conference room (as well as to participants on the far end of a video call). These solutions are simple to implement.

There are other technologies that eliminate the need to touch equipment and have a completely hands-free experience, like Crestron Air Media. As with all technology there are trade-offs to consider that usually include ease of use, cost and network security. However really understanding how the rooms are used and by whom will help inform the choice.

The need for digital signage is more important now than ever. As people start to trickle back into the office, companies still need to be cognizant of the social distancing guidelines to ensure their employees work in a safe and healthy environment. Businesses are starting to need to find ways to relay messages and information to their entire workforce while avoiding face-to-face interactions as much as possible.

Additionally, not only does your team benefit from the implementation of this technology, but also any newcomers to your building, such as clients, benefit tremendously. Using the available signs, they can seamlessly navigate to their desired location without having to put themselves at risk by interacting with several people along the way.

Digital signage can play a very important role in your company's communication strategy. Cloud-based management services make it very easy to update and ensure the information remains current.

Digital signage allows for the ability to create multiple delivery points to reach additional people. IT departments need to figure out the best way to reach as many people as possible in an easy, safe manner. Digital information boards enable you to allow your users to communicate effectively due to the ability to post messages simply and scale to the size of your business. For example, if an employee or client walks into your entry space, a digital sign with messages and updates is super helpful in directing them where to go for meetings, which rooms to avoid due to conferences, and how to get there if they're unfamiliar with your building. The need for over-communication has become apparent during this time, and digital information boards allow your users to reach their teams with effective messages and added information.

As offices begin to fill back up, the focus of IT departments needs to be around making the office safe, healthy, and **secure**. A first step towards accomplishing this is implementing digital signage. How quickly will someone forget about the social distancing guidelines? Will people shake hands? Or forget to stay 6 feet apart? The eagerness of people to return may cloud their judgment. You should take this opportunity to implement signs around the office that constantly remind people of the COVID-19 guidelines. Being able to post these reminders on an office-wide scale at the touch of a button enables your team to remain safe as they go back to the office.

The goal of digital signage is to inform your users of pertinent information, whether it's navigating around the office or finding the conference room for their next meeting. For example, law firms constantly have clients in and out of their offices. It's important that they implement the necessary signage to be able to ensure their clients walk into the right rooms at the right times.

Furthermore, not only is digital signage easy for your users, but also it's easy for you to create relevant content for your team. You're able to customize your colors, fonts, etc. so that you can always stay on brand with your messaging. Additionally, templates exist that can ensure your messages look and feel consistent. Also, if you're not the one updating the information on a regular basis, it's simple enough that your team will get the hang of it in no time.

Combining digital signage with sensors and appropriate software can make for a very powerful tool.

Some examples:

- Digital screens with live feeds to high traffic areas can be used to provide employees a real-time look at how crowded the cafeteria currently is.
- Or digital signage can be posted outside spaces to provide updates on wait times.



Sensors can be used to convey simple Go/Wait instructions outside of different spaces.

SECURING REMOTE WORKERS

In the [2019 State of Remote Report](#), 91% of businesses surveyed now support remote work, up 3% from 2018. Since the onset of COVID-19, business leaders and their employees were forced to rapidly adapt to a remote work model, leaving their offices and infrastructure behind in favor of hastily reconfigured home office environments.

Prior to the current crisis, more companies had been embracing the perks of mobile employees - including greater productivity and lower overhead. Now that more of these benefits have been realized by traditionally “on premise” companies, our new normal will likely be a hybrid model in which many employees split their time between home and office and others never return.

With this in mind, your remote workers have very different IT needs than those operating behind the firewalls of corporate office space. Here are five common challenges, and strategies for supporting your remote employees while securing your intellectual property.



1. Remote Access to Sensitive Content

Not every business is ready to make the jump to the cloud. But if you want a mobile workforce, it's time to consider a hybrid strategy. If your line-of-business applications are in the cloud as well as on-premise, employees can access the content they need in real time. Platforms such as Microsoft 365 offer cloud versions of familiar applications such as Outlook, Word, Excel, etc. You can also develop a company intranet, with customized sites for teams, through Microsoft SharePoint. SharePoint provides secure content management and monitoring, archiving, retrieval, and reporting. Employees have access to the latest versions of their work, with encryption to keep everything safe on the move.

2. Mobile Device Security

Incorporating mobile devices doesn't have to broaden your company's attack surface. But you will need tools that secure your data at the device and application level. Intune, a component of Enterprise Mobility + Security, actively manages how company data is accessed and shared at the device-level. This cloud service sets rules for how employees interact with company information - from copying to saving to viewing. You can ensure data is only saved or transferred between secure locations. If an employee leaves, Intune will wipe your company's footprint from their device, without corrupting their personal information.



Thank You to this week's guest contributor,

Kirk Fackre

Vice President of Sales |
iCorps Technology
[email here](#)

Please see Kirk's bio in the appendix.

3. Shadow IT and Digital Sprawl

Even when your employees work onsite, it can be difficult to track all the resources they use. But if their applications come into contact with your company data, it's your responsibility to manage it. A recent report from IBM found that 1-in-5 businesses has experienced a cybersecurity incident due to unsanctioned IT resources. When employees use unvetted third-party applications, they are inadvertently complicating your ability to comply with industry regulations and develop a thorough disaster recovery strategy. If one of these third parties is hacked, and your data is exposed, the consequences can be financially disastrous.

You can minimize this risk by:

- Restricting access to unapproved third-party applications
- Creating a list of approved platforms and vendors for employee reference
- Implementing network monitoring to detect unknown devices and potential threats
- Conducting regular data audits for a thorough overview of content created, shared, and stored

4. Automation for Security and Productivity

If your employees are working from home, ensure they are running the latest, most secure systems. Microsoft 365 pushes automatic updates to Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, etc. Now's also the time to update your employees' operating system - especially if they're still running Windows 7. But automatic security updates aren't the only form of automation that would benefit your employees. Tools such as Microsoft's Power Automate give workers the ability to automate routine digital tasks. You can use these tools to build individual workflows, or implement a large-scale automation project, leveraging pre-designed templates for email, productivity, notifications, data collection, social media and more.

5. Smarter Collaboration Tools

Communication is central to the success of your remote employees. They need to collaborate with team members and demonstrate accountability outside the traditional office space. An intelligent chat platform, such as Microsoft Teams, does just that. Teams allows employees to communicate quickly, share files with one another, host meetings, and make phone calls with Voice-over-IP. The interface is very easy to use, and integrates with hundreds of Microsoft and third-party applications, from PowerPoint to Salesforce to ADP. Teams also curates integrations based on your employees' specific needs, such as Productivity, Sales and Support, Project Management, Analytics, Business Intelligence, and more.

Each of the above 5 challenges can be met with a combination of analysis, planning, procedure and execution, using enterprise-class tools now affordable and available to companies of any size. By so doing, you'll empower your employees to work more efficiently from anywhere, secure in the knowledge that sensitive company data is as safe outside the four walls of your office as it is within it.

Kirk Fackre

Vice President of Sales | iCorps Technology

Throughout much of his career, Kirk has concentrated on how technology helps organizations become more productive by managing, organizing, sharing and securing critical knowledge, information and expertise.

He is currently Vice President of Sales at iCorps Technologies, a boutique consultancy specializing in IT strategy and cyber security. Prior to joining iCorps, Kirk cofounded Airtime, a Mobile SaaS Solution provider and ResearchAgent Corporation where he pioneered a product line used to manage web content. Most recently, he built an enterprise-class sales team at Symtrax, an international software consultancy.

Upon graduating from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Kirk joined Equitrac Corporation, where he enjoyed a long and successful career in a variety of progressively responsible leadership and management positions

MEET THE TEAM

HEAR FROM THE INDUSTRY EXPERTS

STV|DPM has brought together a multidiscipline industry team (Project Management, Construction, Commercial Real Estate Brokerage, Commissioning, Code Review, Design, Environmental Engineering, Technology & Furniture) to conduct a knowledge share of current industry best practices and due diligence around workplace design and construction requirements adapting to changes in codes and regulatory amendments in the post-COVID-19 world. We strongly believe innovative project strategies & checklists around these disciplines could assist our active clients and other Real Estate leaders in assessing new in office & remote work requirements as they bring their employees back to work and going forward. The ultimate goal is to develop a "Toolkit" of best practices resources that could be rolled out as part of ongoing & new project work.



Owner's Project Manager

Denise Pied

Vice President, Project Executive | STV/DPM

Denise is a co-founder of the Boston Real Estate COVID Consortium. Denise leads STV|DPM's Corporate Market sector. Denise has over 20 years of experience leading project teams & advising clients' real estate project delivery strategies.

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Owner's Project Manager

Sandra Gucciardi

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Sandra is a co-founder of the Boston Real Estate COVID Consortium. At STV/DPM, Sandra is responsible for client strategy and development initiatives, and assists with the strategic direction to develop new business and product offerings.

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Owner's Project Manager

Eva Hamori

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Eva Hamori is an industry leader in the management of complex client relocation projects. With her experience as a certified Change Management Advisor, she is able to create and implement change strategies which maximize adoption and minimize resistance.

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

If you have any questions for the consortium or ideas for content, please contact

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Adam Meixner

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Adam's focus is on the Office Leasing and Sales sector within the Central I28/95-Mass Pike submarket. Assisting with space acquisitions/dispositions, lease renegotiations/extensions and strategic planning are among Adam's strongest assets when engaged as a Tenant Representative.

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Code

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Chris is a founding principal at Code Red Consultants and is a practicing fire protection engineer and code consultant. He excels at leading project teams and working with clients to ensure that new and existing buildings are safe and code compliant.

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Construction

George McCarron

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George has over 40 years of experience in the construction industry. As a Project Executive with Lee Kennedy, his ability to grasp the needs of the client and communicate with design teams make him an invaluable resource and asset.

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Commissioning Agent

Steve Rizzo

President | Synergy Consultants

Being involved in the design and construction industry for 45+ years, Steve's expertise is in Building Commissioning and operations for HVAC, Plumbing and Electrical Systems. He specializes in complex medical facilities ranging from Gene Therapy development Labs to Patient Care Facilities.

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Design Engineers

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Environmental

Stephan White

President | PES Associates

Stephan White is the founder and President of PES Associates, a national engineering and environmental firm with headquarters in Hingham, MA. Throughout his career, he has gained extensive experience in environmental consulting, property due diligence and industrial hygiene.

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Furniture

Amy Lalezari

Partner, Director of Client Solutions | Environments at Work

Amy has over twenty years of workplace consulting experience. She is passionate about people, well-being, and performance and is dialed into key business drivers, research, and trends impacting the workplace. Her background in design, facility planning, and contract furnishings gives her a unique perspective within the commercial real estate community.

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Furniture

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Tim King is a construction expert focusing on pre-fabricated, offsite modular construction for Interiors work. With a concentration on the healthcare market, Tim brings pre-fab benefits of speed, flexibility and higher functionality to all market segments.

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MEP Engineers

Mike Quigley

COO | WB Engineers

Michael has 18+ years of experience in the industry, leading projects and people. His natural talent for being able to motivate a team to do great work and address complex scenarios is why he is leading WB's COVID-19 remobilization efforts.

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MEP Engineers

Ray Doyle

Managing Principal, Life Sciences | WB Engineers

Ray is the Managing Principal of WB Engineers + Consultants' office in Washington, DC, and a Practice Leader for Life Sciences. With over 25 years of experience, Ray helps clients find solutions to improve indoor air quality and reduce tenants' exposure to COVID-19.

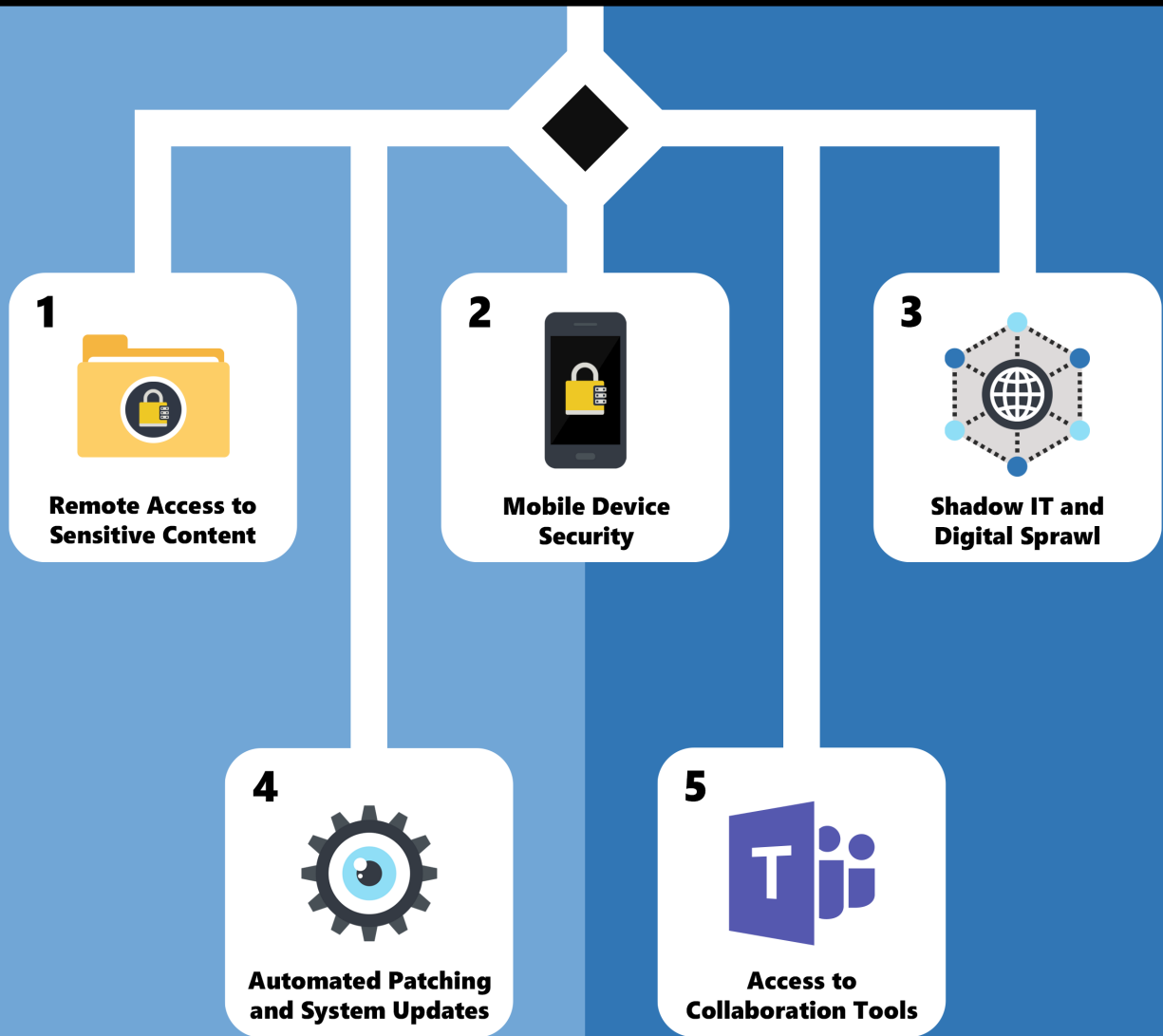
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Note: The resources provided in this guide should not be interpreted as legal advice. If you have any questions, please consult your legal counsel. Neither the Boston Real Estate COVID Consortium nor its individual members are responsible to anyone for the contents of this page and shall have no liability to anyone for the same. The views and opinions in this page are that of the author and not necessarily of the author's employer.

APPENDIX

1. 5 of the Most Common Cyber Security Issues for Remote Employees
2. [How to Pull Off a Professional Video Call From Home >>](#)
3. [What it Takes to Run a Great Virtual Meeting >>](#)
4. [With the COVID-19 Cleaning, Your Touch Screen System is Even More Important >>](#)

5 of the Most Common Cyber Security Issues for Remote Employees



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THE BOSTON REAL ESTATE
COVID Consortium

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