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# Seven Steps to Safely Reopen the Workplace

Elo White Paper 

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## Contents

1. Introduction: Preparing for a Return to the Workplace	3
2. Focusing on Employees & the Employee Experience	4
3. Technological Considerations for Reopening	5
4. Keeping the Workplace Safe	6
5. Managing Visitors	7
6. Protecting Employee Privacy	8
7. Preparing for Adverse Events & Shutdowns	9
About Elo	9

## 1. Introduction: Preparing for a Return to the Workplace

With the COVID-19 pandemic, most people in the world are working from home. But at some point, most employees will need to return to the workplace.

A study by Eurofound shows that close to 40% of workers in the EU teleworked full-time in April and May of last year, compared to just 15% of people regularly or occasionally teleworking prior to the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

At some point it's expected a trend back towards workplaces will take place - though this may be in hybrid scenarios that combine at-home and in-office to varying degrees.

56% would like to go into the office 3 to 4 days a week

Adaptive flexibility will be essential to integrate both modes of working - as well as to deal with the challenge of safely allowing visitors and other third

parties into physical workplaces. Fortunately, Elo already has the technology to support all of these scenarios.

While some have said the work-from-home experiment has been so successful that it will, at least to an extent, reduce the emphasis on traditional workplaces; others have pointed to a loss in productivity, communication and collaboration associated with working together within an office or other shared space.

Colliers International's "Exploring the post-COVID-19 Workplace" survey found that 56% of EMEA respondents would like to work home from 1 to 2 days a week, and work from the office on the other days. "As an organisation it is important to safely allow employees to return to the office in the short term with efficient and effective social distancing measures in place," the report notes.<sup>2</sup>

The New York Times recently spoke of this in an article titled: "The Long, Unhappy History of Working from Home"<sup>3</sup>, in which it cited a history of organisations from Yahoo, to Reddit, to IBM, over the years trying, and then abandoning or reducing, work-from-home programmes.

The Times quoted Patrick Pichette, former Chief Financial Officer at Google, as saying whenever he was asked, "How many people telecommute at Google?" he liked to answer, "As few as possible."

While anticipating at least a partial return to the traditional workplace, the immense challenge will be doing so as safely as possible. Consider:

"It's clear that the challenge of returning to the workplace isn't just an operations challenge; it's a human challenge. As organisations try to reopen their physical locations and get back to some form of 'normal,' leaders have to collaborate to promote health and safety in and for the workplace."

- **Caroline Walsh, VP, Team Manager, Gartner<sup>4</sup>**

"Organisations must protect their workers by ensuring safe and healthy workplaces. The strategic repositioning of workplaces to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic calls for the development of comprehensive and robust occupational safety and health management systems."

- **African Union<sup>5</sup>**

"The TUC poll shows that three-quarters of workers have at least one concern about returning to work outside the home. More than a third (34%) said they were concerned about not being able to socially distance from colleagues, while a similar number (32%) said they were worried about exposing others in their household to greater risk as a result of returning to work."

- **Britain Thinks survey carried out for the TUC<sup>6</sup>**

This white paper provides an overview of best practices for workplace reopenings, with special emphasis on the critically important roles played by mobile apps, automated kiosk temperature checks, self-assessment health screening software, and the roles these play in enhancing overall safety for workers and those with whom they interact within the workplace environment.

We'll look at seven key steps to reopening:

- Focus on Employees & the Employee Experience
- Prepare the Workplace
- Keep the Workplace Safe
- Manage Visitors
- Protect Privacy
- Preparing for Adverse Events, Including Shutdowns
- Leverage Technology

Along the way, we'll also look at how Elo solutions can help you keep your employees, workplace and visitors safe.

## 2. Focusing on Employees & the Employee Experience

Reopening a workplace is all about the employees and the employee experience. You need to create a safe and welcoming work environment, not just physically but psychologically as well. Here are some guidelines for success:

- **Gain an Executive Sponsor.** Your first step should be to gain an executive sponsor – preferably the CEO. Tell him or her that you need them to clear any roadblocks you encounter along the way. Reopening during a pandemic is going to be challenging and stressful, and you will need someone who can make things happen. A Forbes article, “Before Starting A Project, Get Your Sponsor On Board,” notes: “Having an executive-level sponsor can be crucial for shepherding major projects, particularly those that cut across functions.”<sup>7</sup> And reopening will certainly cut across functions – from HR to Operations to Security and beyond.

- **Acknowledge and Address the Stress.** We are living through a once-in-a-century event that is shaking the world. It is disrupting the lives of your employees in ways you will never know. Your employees may be experiencing financial stress, deep fears or emotional turmoil. They may fear that a return to work could raise the possibility of carrying the virus home to their spouse, children or extended family, including elderly parents. They may have an underlying health condition that increases their own risk. Clear communication is required that acknowledges anxieties, while explaining all of your safeguards. Let them know that everyone is stressed, and that your organisation is on their side, working diligently to keep everyone safe. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has issued the helpful guide “Safe return to work: Guide for employers on COVID-19 prevention”, which notes: “The concerns that workers have during the pandemic are likely to vary from person to person. Thus, the first step in supporting workers’ mental health is to understand how they are feeling and what the factors influencing their well-being really are.”<sup>8</sup>

- **Prepare Managers for a New Emotional Environment.** Managers should be prepared for what will be a new emotional environment. In addition to their own stresses, managers will need to be sensitive to the stresses and anxieties their employees are carrying. Again, clear and frequent communication about what is being done should be helpful. The Harvard Business Review, in the article “Help Your Employees Manage Their Reentry Anxiety,” notes that “While workforce reentry certainly includes logistical and operational planning, it is not just physical well-being that employers must take into account. Equally important is how organisations will respond to employees’ emotional and psychological health – a topic that, regrettably, is discussed far less frequently.”<sup>9</sup>

- **Accommodate Variations in Employee Comfort Levels.** Some workers may be overjoyed to be back in the office, while others might be terrified of becoming ill – especially if they are sole breadwinners fearful of what would become of their families if they were to become severely ill or worse.

Expect there to be a spectrum of anxiety and be prepared to accommodate all. The World Economic Forum notes: “The crisis is a chance to be there for employees when it matters most, building trust and demonstrating empathy. Employers may also consider using communications technology that enables them to push personalised communications and content to employees that addresses their specific needs and concerns.”<sup>10</sup>

- **Embrace Employee Communication.** Communication is paramount during and after a reopening. Employees want to – and need to – know what is happening to keep them safe, and to be alerted when something has gone wrong – such as a colleague testing positive for the virus. Transparent communication helps employees see that their organisation is deeply invested in keeping everyone safe. McKinsey & Company, in its report “Communications get personal: How Leaders Can Engage Employees During a Return to Work,” writes: “Clear and inspiring communication is central to making this next unsteady phase a success.” With a nod to the uncertainty we all face, the report concludes: “Leaders will not know all the answers, but as long as they communicate openly and candidly, employees will respect being brought into the conversation.”<sup>11</sup>

## 3. Technological Considerations for Reopening

As we've seen, managing a workplace reopening is a major undertaking. Fortunately, technology can provide assistance. The European Parliament, in its October 2020 decision to adopt mandatory temperature checks for visitors to its buildings, notes that “detection of an increased body temperature before entering the Parliament’s buildings and subsequent denial of access can further reduce the spread of and infection with the COVID-19 virus.”<sup>12</sup>

As noted earlier, Elo manufactures devices critically important to reopening:



Elo Temperature Sensor Pro on Elo Access provides non-contact temperature sensing.

- **Elo Temperature Sensor Pro.** Elo Temperature Sensor Pro utilises an infrared bolometer, 2D camera and heatmap temperature-reading technology – all in one of the easy-to-attach Elo Edge Connect touchscreen accessories. The temperature sensor can detect faces, automatically adjust based on height, and output temperature data for each person detected in the field of view.
- **Elo Access App.** Elo can help simplify visitor management with wellness-check access control solutions. With Elo’s modular platform, you can easily deploy a wellness questionnaire, mask detection and temperature screening using EloView to provide initial, real-time checks prior to entry for self-service employee and guest screening.



- **EloView.** EloView allows you to deploy and securely manage your entire network of Android-powered interactive temperature sensing and self-assessment kiosks remotely. From anywhere around the world, you can deploy content, manage settings and maintain the OS to reduce operating costs while increasing up-time and security. EloView's modular system is designed to integrate with your business to enable smarter content distribution and device management abilities alongside your existing CMS platforms and Master Data Management tools.

## 4. Keeping the Workplace Safe

Community spread has been the primary path for COVID-19 transmission, and social distancing has emerged as the single best prevention. The workplace is a community, and social distancing was never part of how collaboration worked in the past. So special steps are required to prepare the workplace for reopening, and to keep it safe after opening.

- **Preparing the Workplace.** Each workplace provides its own set of challenges when it comes to reopening. Considerations can include HVAC and air filtration, increasing flow of outside air, extending the height of office cubicles, increasing the spacing between workstations, reducing occupancy rates, staggering arrival times, providing hand sanitation systems, establishing new cleaning and sanitisation regimes, providing personal protective equipment (PPE), and a spectrum of other measures. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) provides a good baseline with its publication "COVID-19: Back to the Workplace: Adapting workplaces and protecting workers."<sup>13</sup>
- **Temperature Checks.** Everyone entering the building – whether employee, supplier or customer – should be required to have their temperature checked. While not fool-proof, checking temperatures has proven to be an effective adjunct in protecting against community spread. Amazon, for example, checks temperatures upon arrival for more than 100,000 employees a day.<sup>14</sup> Ideally, the temperature sensor should be non-contact and

automated, such as built into a free-standing kiosk. This provides privacy for the person being screened, while also protecting the person who would otherwise be assigned to take the readings in person – exposing them to a steady flow of close encounters with arriving employees and visitors. We created our Elo Temperature Sensor Pro non-contact temperature reader to provide initial, real-time checks prior to entry for self-service employee and guest screening.<sup>15</sup> And with advanced integration options, this system can be integrated into access control systems or backend employee databases for added protection and to provide early warning should temperatures trend upwards.



Elo Access provides a user-friendly and efficient platform for completing health check self-assessments.

- **Automated Health Check Self-Assessments.** The health check self-assessment, such as the one created by Google, should be used for screening all employees, suppliers, and visitors prior to entering the workplace. The self-assessment asks about proximity to others who have been confirmed as

positive for COVID-19, and also asks about the most common symptoms such as fever, trouble breathing, chills, muscle aches, loss of smell or taste.<sup>16</sup> Although some organisations use paper forms and clipboards, a better way is through use of an interactive screen, ideally dedicated and free standing. That's why we created Elo Access,<sup>TM</sup> our modular platform for hosting wellness questionnaires.<sup>17</sup> This frees personnel from handing out and recovering clipboards, and automatically provides electronic storage of forms, which is easier and more efficient than dealing with paper-based forms. And with an edge-to-edge glass design, Elo touchscreens are much easier to sanitise than traditional clipboards, pens and pencils with a design meant for rigorous cleaning protocols.<sup>18</sup>

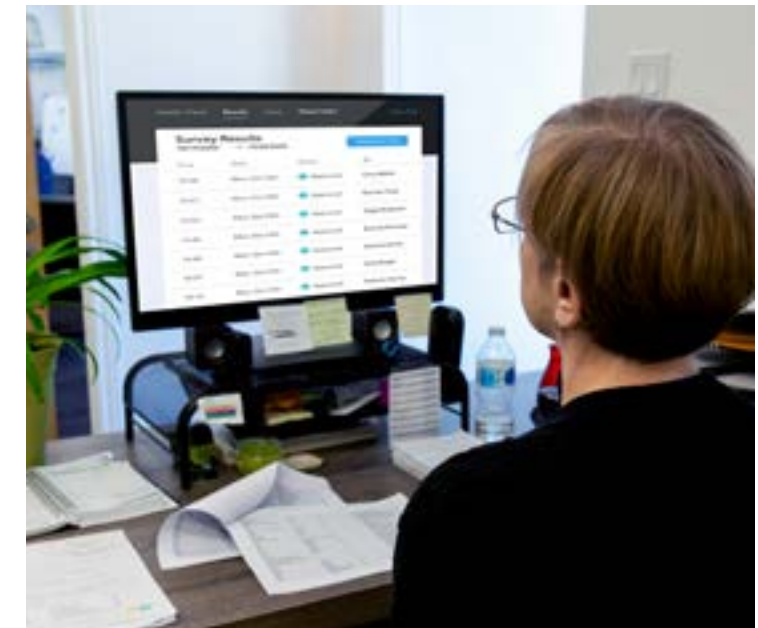
- **Controlled Points of Entry.** Every point of workplace entry must be controlled in order to maintain a safe environment. As noted above, each entry point should have a non-contact temperature sensor and a screen for completing the health check self-assessment. The temperature sensor kiosk and self-assessment screen can be integrated with door lock access to ensure completion at entrances not staffed by a receptionist or security. Limiting points of access can result in unwanted crowding. And there should be a sufficient number of temperature-sensing and self-assessment devices – spread safely apart – so the flow of arriving employees isn't adversely affected. Multiple devices, safely distanced, also help ensure user privacy.
- **Monitoring Temperature Sensing and Self-Assessment Results.** Part of the reopening planning process must include procedures for monitoring and reacting to adverse temperature sensing or self-assessment results. Ideally, an employee or visitor registering a fever, or recording multiple COVID symptoms on the self-assessment, would not enter the workplace. But you should also consider the potential for someone ignoring warnings in order to make an important meeting or complete a critical task. Your devices should be able to integrate with dashboards that can be monitored in real time or issue alerts to designated HR, management or security personnel who can intercede to keep your workplace safe.

## 5. Managing Visitors

Visitors should be managed in much the same way as employees – with temperature sensing and health check self-assessments. As noted above, planning and policy is required for dealing with potential positives.

While all visitors should be required to wear a face mask, a visitor with an elevated temperature, or a self-assessment listing symptoms, might be directed to undergo a second, employee-facilitated screening utilising a handheld thermometer to verify the kiosk result. If the elevated temperature is validated, the visitor may be asked to reschedule.

While a variety of actions can be taken, it all begins with threat detection through use of temperature sensing and health check self-assessments.



Elo Access provides admins with the information they need in one location. Know who visited, their results, when they occurred and what was inputted.

## 6. Protecting Employee Privacy

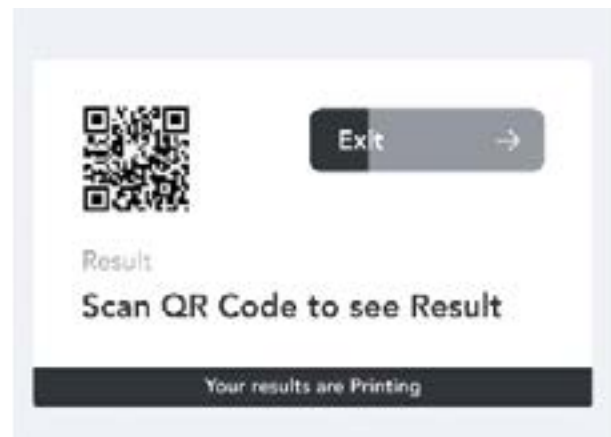
COVID-19 has paradoxically put an emphasis on the importance of the health status of all we come in contact with, while creating, at least in some, a hypersensitivity about their own health status. The fears can be exacerbated by articles about the virus lingering and rebounding, making it difficult – without repeated testing – to be sure just when recovery has been achieved. A recent academic article by researchers at Cairo University and Ain Shams University in Egypt notes that “The government should request employers to prevent and curb discrimination against confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 within the business.”<sup>19</sup>

Steps to ensure employee privacy include:

- **Respecting the Employee.** Having plans and procedures in place to protect employee privacy – and clearly communicating this – is important to building trust with employees that their information is secure. Missteps will cause loss of trust, which can be difficult to rebuild. Much of this is already covered by existing employment law, but the pandemic introduces new complexities such as dealing with employees leaving for – and returning from – quarantine, or treatment for the virus. HR and Legal should be key players in this area.
- **Protecting Information Captured by Temperature Sensors and Self-Assessments.** Again, HR and Legal should play key roles in formulating policy and practices for handling information generated from temperature sensors and health self-assessments. Local or regional health agencies may require record storage for use should contact tracing later be needed for public health efforts. This is why temperature sensors and self-assessments should be performed using computerised devices that can automatically transmit data for electronic storage. HR and Legal should guide how readings that may indicate potential for infection are handled. Basic questions include who sees the data, and what actions are taken and by whom. A protocol issued by the Italian government underscores what should seem obvious: “In the event of temporary isolation due to

the temperature threshold being exceeded, ensure arrangements to guarantee the confidentiality and dignity of the worker.”<sup>20</sup>

- **Ensuring Privacy while Using Screening Devices.** Ideally, temperature checks should be self-administered from an automated kiosk such as EloAccess.<sup>21</sup> Having an employee perform the temperature check requires a dedicated person equipped with PPE, and also results in a direct conversation that could be overheard by others: “Your temperature reading is high. You have to go home.” Another benefit is that the kiosk reading is seen as a screening measure, not a medical one. Best practices dictate that a temperature-screening kiosk should be positioned so that others waiting for entry can’t see the reading. And, of course, you will want a sufficient number of safely spaced kiosks to handle your anticipated traffic flow.



Protect privacy with the option to view results on a personal device by enabling employees and guests to scan a QR code on the display with Elo Access.

- **Ensuring Privacy while Using Self-Assessment Devices.** A kiosk-style self-assessment device such as our Elo Access solution is ideal for health check screenings.<sup>22</sup> And, when paired with your third-party software of choice, can automatically save records to accommodate local or regional health mandates,

and all devices can be instantly updated should the WHO update symptoms, as was done when loss of smell and taste were identified.<sup>23</sup> A kiosk also does away with passing clipboards and forms from one person to another, and the need for that person to review the form. From a privacy standpoint, self-assessment kiosks should be positioned so that others awaiting entry can’t see the screen the person is working from. When multiple devices are used to facilitate traffic flow, the devices should be safely spaced apart from each other.

## 7. Preparing for Adverse Events & Shutdowns

Your reopening plans should include policies and procedures for dealing with adverse events – such as employees contracting COVID-19, including protocols for which workers would need to self-quarantine, or at what point a department or other segment would be shut down. And, finally, your plans should include policies and procedures for events beyond your control. No matter how efficiently you have prepared and safeguarded your own workplace, a spike in infections beyond your walls could cause city, regional or federal health officials to order a sweeping shutdown.

### About Elo

As a leading global supplier of interactive solutions, #EloIsEverywhere. To date, we have deployed more than 25 million installations in over 80 countries. A new Elo touchscreen is installed every 21 seconds, on average, somewhere in the world. Built on a unified architecture, Elo’s broad portfolio allows our customers to easily Choose, Configure and Connect & Control to create a unique experience. Choose from all-in-one systems, open-frame monitors and touchscreen monitors ranging from 10 to 65 inches. Configure with our unique Elo Edge Connect peripherals that allow use-specific solutions. Connect & Control with EloView®, a secure, cloud-based platform for Android-powered devices. EloView enables secure deployment and management of a large network of interactive systems designed to reduce operating

costs while increasing up-time and security. In addition to access control solutions, consumers can find Elo touchscreen solutions in self-service kiosks, point-of-sale terminals, interactive signage, gaming machines, hospitality systems, point-of-care displays and transportation applications – to name a few. Learn more at [EloTouch.eu](https://elo-touch.eu). ■

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EloTouch.eu | EMEA.Sales@EloTouch.com

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\* Screening questions for the Elo Access App are the responsibility of the user, who must confirm compliance with applicable data privacy, medical data privacy, and employment laws and regulations, including HIPAA compliance. Not available in all areas.

\*\* The Elo Access Temperature Sensor is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, mitigate, or prevent any disease or health condition, including COVID-19. An indication of an elevated body temperature should be confirmed by a secondary evaluation method (such as a non-contact infrared thermometer or clinical grade contact thermometer). Use only as directed; various environmental and methodological factors can impact thermal imaging. HIPAA compliance is responsibility of user. This is not an FDA-approved device. Not available in all areas.

