



# The Post-COVID Workplace.

Re-size

Educate

Make the most Out of it



In times of uncertainty, what's for sure is that we've managed to efficiently work from home and find a way to be productive in this new context. This shift is now accelerating the already-existing activity based office trend and makes us wonder what is the need for coming back to the office and how to design a flexible office after the pandemic.

Role and goals clarity gives a productive employee the freedom to choose where to work from: the office, from home or anywhere else. Can you picture this future?

## Dear friend,

The current crisis and the extended lockdown have been challenging for most of us, in every sector or industry and in every country across the globe. Moreover, this experience had its effects on everyone's wellbeing - physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing. There isn't anywhere to go to get away from it. It's everywhere, it's invisible, and it's nowhere, too.

There is no doubt that the keyword defining the last two months and the following period is **CHANGE**. We experience it in every aspect of our life. We were forced to change the way we work, the way we interact with our colleagues, but also with our families and friends, the way we look at some aspects of our lives that maybe we took for granted in the past - our health and happiness being the most important ones.

Now, as we arrived at the end of the lockdown, we must set our expectations and get prepared for the new normality and for our return to the workplace. The modern office was meant to engage people, foster communication and interaction between them. The pandemic has erased it all. The virus spread control is now the only thing we think about when we speak about our return to the office. People have fears, their expectations are different, from generation to generation, and times are still uncertain. The workplace we will return to will look different, the atmosphere will be different and even our behaviour at the office is expected to be different. We will be forced to unlearn old behaviours and learn new protocols.

We all know that WFH was already an evolving trend, but most of us were too afraid to push the limits of the status quo. Now, it will become a reality. And, when we physically disperse work environments, we lose a lot of what was in the office. We may lose the leadership that many leaders do only by their presence and direct interaction with the team, we may lose some of the learning process for those people who are learning from their peers only by watching them and we may also lose some of the motivation.

We must design a new office layout that is safe for all the employees, but also offers the community feeling, supports productivity, flexibility and creativity as these elements are competitive advantages for all of us in the near

future. These are dynamics that, in a workplace, are easier to recreate. When we separate people, the bond is not automatically recreated. We have to watch the teams and understand how they are working in the new reality in order to recreate the atmosphere of the old office.

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In the last 3 years, Morphoza helped companies get prepared, embrace the change and make out of it throughout our own organizational transformation methodology, Trust2Work. We are now sharing with you some ideas that can help prepare the return of your employees at the office, in a responsible way. An office that is safe, flexible and more resilient in the face of eventual changes. Some of them are meant to be put in place now, before the first wave of employees return to the office, but some are also oriented towards the future.

You may have already implemented some of the following advices and safety guidelines in your workplace. Some of them may be on the list and others completely new. We're also sure that you and your team will discover new needs as you gradually return to the workplace and we are here to discuss new insights and help you to effectively address them.



Stay safe & healthy,  
**Diana Calfa**  
Managing Partner Morphoza

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After leaving our offices, factories, stores and other facilities near empty for more than 2 months, it is time to design our way back to the workplace.

But how will our new workplaces look like in the post-pandemic era?

While you may decide to use a hybrid model of work until the end of this year and more, combining flexible work (from home or anywhere else) with work-from-the-office, employees are counting on you to help them get back to work safely. Your employees will benefit perhaps from an extended liberty to work from where it feels it's safer. And, what's

sure is that both you and your employees will need time to adapt to new ways of working post-pandemic.

Based on our experience, observations of our consultants in psychology and sociology, and all the scientific resources we have access to through our affiliation to international office design clusters, we started thinking about how our own return to the office will look like. In the past 2 months, our company switched from an almost-always-work-from-the-office mode to remote work and quickly adapted our infrastructure to our employees' needs in this unprecedented context.



**“Normal” changed before we even realized it and will continue to change in the next years for our company, as well as for yours. That’s why, we developed a 3 phase program that will allow both of us to get prepared for what’s coming next.**

And we divided them into  
3 measure packs:



## Safe Return.

It includes practical and mandatory social distancing measures, developed based on the national and international authorities recommendations. These measures target space and behaviours and are designed to be quickly integrated in your current space, health and safety procedures and protocols. This pack applies for the first wave of employees returning to the office.



## Facelift.

As we peel of the first layer, we arrive at the second phase of the change, which includes more complex decisions and more permanent adjustments in your workplace and organizational culture. It targets changes in your current space layout, new furniture, new technologies in the workplace, digitalization and IT infrastructure to support a hybrid way of working which includes WFH (or anywhere else), activity-based work and work-from-the-office. This pack covers an increased headcount within the office.



## Re-design Your Office.

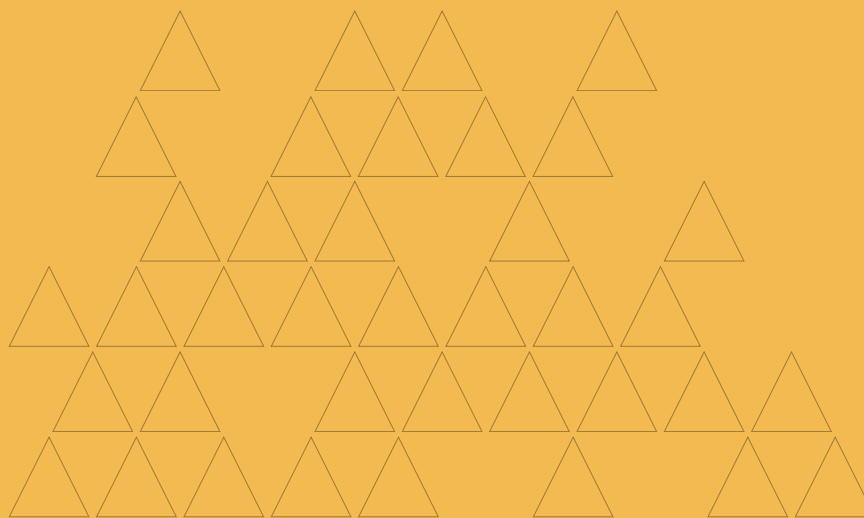
This stage is designed to support your long-term vision of your business in the new normality. It implies a more in-depth redesign process of all your areas, focused on space efficiency and meant to help you reduce your property costs and, if needed, prepare even for an eventual relocation. This pack implies a multidisciplinary approach from our part and a wider team of designers, architects, workplace consultants and change management professionals.

# Safe Return



**Two months ago, when you decided to adopt a work-from-home scheme for your employees, their health and safety were the top motives behind this decision. Health and safety should be the driving factors now, when you're preparing their return to the office.**

- ✓ Increase the availability of disinfecting wipes and virus-killing hand sanitizers, and be sure everyone knows how to use them effectively and where to find them in the office;
- ✓ Where possible, rely on touch-reducing amenities, such as double-swinging push doors, motion sensor lights, and other hands-free amenities that reduce germs in high-traffic areas.
- ✓ If flexible seating is an option in your office and people share desks, require everyone to clean equipment, workstations, and surfaces as soon as they leave or move to a different spot;
- ✓ Temperature scanners are one non-invasive screening method to test for fevers and illness and should help with the psychological barrier of employees feeling safe at the office.
- ✓ Provide masks, gloves, and other protective equipment and make sure people understand that they have to use it even at their desk in order to avoid the spread of the virus. Consider on-site virus testing to catch outbreaks quickly.
- ✓ Educate employees regarding best practices for hygiene in the workplace. Do it with visual materials as well.
- ✓ Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection of the office and make sure employees are informed about all these measures you take in order to keep the space safe and virus-free. Improve the air quality of the office space as well as increase the flow of outside air into the office.
- ✓ Focus on the indoor air quality: redesign the air-filtration systems to bring 100% fresh air into spaces;
- ✓ Add UV lights to purify the air influx; Increase the regularity of the HVAC system maintenance works;



Surely, your level of organizational communication rose during the work-from-home period. Be sure to maintain the same level of communication after employees are coming back into the office.

- 1 Openly advertising protocols for visitors and employees, social distancing and cleaning policies will establish a sense of trust that employees' health and safety are top priorities.
- 2 As things will be different around the office on their return, you will need a strong communication and training plan in order to make sure they discover and understand the "new normal".
- 3 Establish back-to-the-office change champions/ambassadors that are able to explain the new rules and instructions to their colleagues, organize tours in small groups for explaining the space if it is newly reconfigured for social distancing;
4. Prepare communication materials such as "Stay Safe Etiquette @ Work" or informative blog articles with Frequently Asked Questions (anticipate employees questions if you didn't receive yet questions from their part). Use analogies so people can visualize better what 1,5 meters mean. There are also apps that can alert people when they are too close to other persons.

Visual communication materials all over the office will be important because what employees perceive is what they will believe is happening. So, being transparent and keeping communication at high levels will help you prevent misinformation and build trust among your team.





Workstation areas will no longer have the crowded café feel, rather they will be de-densified to maintain social distancing. Here are some recommendations regarding the actual space:

#### Reception Area:

1. Consider no-touch options for badge readers, elevators or doors.
2. Install temporary plexiglass screens at the reception desk or at the check-in points. Reconfigure the seating scheme in the reception in order to ensure social distancing.
3. Remove magazines, corporate brochures, branded pens or other objects that may get contaminated and replace them with hand sanitizers dispensers and single use towel dispensers.

#### Desk Area:

1. Rethink the floor plan in order to insure 1,5 meters of physical distancing between desks / employees.
2. Remove chairs and monitors from the unusable desks to be sure people follow the 1,5 meters rule.
3. If you're not able to ensure the required distance between coworkers, install suspended plexiglass screens between the workstations. Or simply use them as an extra safety measure for those employees who need it for psychological comfort.
4. Introduce the clean desk policy. People must take their personal stuff and leave their desks clean at the end of the day so the nightly work surface cleaning process is not affected.

#### Collaboration Areas:

1. Reconfigure your conference, meeting rooms, focus rooms or huddle up areas. Remove the extra chairs so that you can assure the 1,5 meters physical distancing and use the extra space to store the chairs until you'll need them again.
2. Always be sure to install visual signage to communicate the maximum number of persons allowed, depending on the existing space. It is recommended to use 1/3 of the total capacity of the space.

#### Training Rooms:

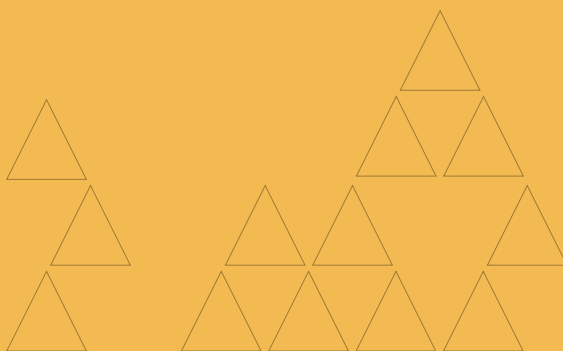
1. Even if part of your team will be at the office, you'll still have some colleagues working from home. Therefore, you may want to keep trainings online for a while. If so, rethink the configuration and usage of these rooms. You can use the training rooms to accommodate small teams, taking into consideration social distancing or use the space to store chairs or other furniture pieces that you remove from other areas.

#### Eating Areas:

1. If you have a canteen, replace the diversified menu with pre-packed items and go for a no-cash policy;
2. In the eating areas, temporarily replace the fruits, pastry or freshly backed snacks with pre-packed goodies;
3. Consider single use coverings for the coffee machine and water disposals until the threat of transmission has diminished.

#### Circulation within the office:

1. Consider introducing a one-way circuit in the office (if your existing layout allows it) so you can avoid congestion and maintain the 2 meters physical distancing.





## Need more help with the Safe Return Pack?

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Depending on the human resources that you have in your team, all these recommendations can be implemented using in-house expertise. However, if you need more information about the process or some specific actions, let us know and we'll help you create the safest workplace for your team.

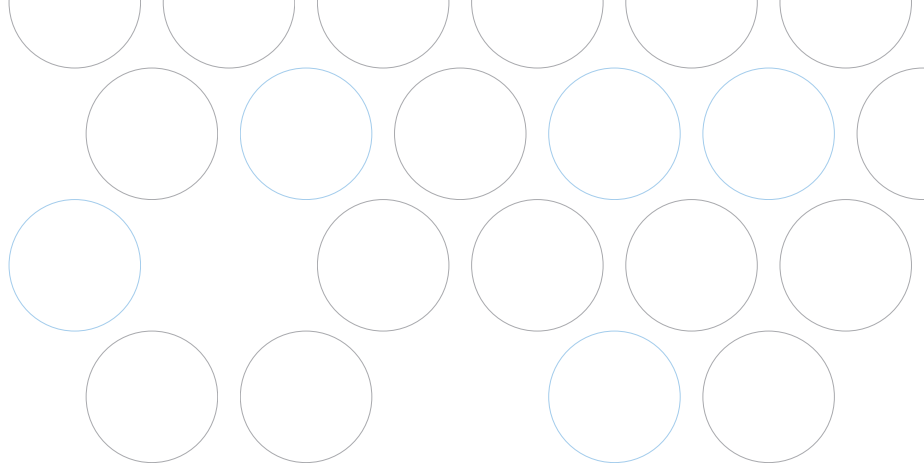


# Facelift

Following the first 2 months after the return to the office of the first wave of employees, you have to reconsider the space, analyze the impact of the first phase, with pros and cons, and get ready to bring more people back to the office. As you have already seen, the new flexible work model became reality. Therefore, you have to ask yourself why should your employees want to return to the office and respond to this question throughout space. It is very important to design the new configuration of the space taking into consideration the distancing measures but also the possibility to face a new period of disruption due to a second wave of infection. This phase should last 6 months.

- ✓ Develop a physical distancing plan; Consider alternating work days between the office and home, and schedule the start and end times of shifts;
- ✓ In order to maintain the recommended 1,5 m distance, consider a one-way traffic within the office. You can also place stickers on the floor to mark the direction of foot-traffic in main circulation paths: corridors, stairs, entries;
- ✓ Elaborate a WFH policy related to environment and ergonomic instructions. You may consider a purchase program for WFH tools and equipment;
- ✓ Develop a clear strategy that outlines the policies, processes, and technologies required to enable the 'new normal' and a permanent hybrid way of working: work-from-home & work-from-the-office;
- ✓ Invest in technologies that enhance the integration, visibility, and control of the workplace systems;





Even if a bigger number of your employees will be present in the office, continue to set up virtual meetings instead of using the meeting rooms, especially if there are many participants to the meeting. We've all experienced it during the lockdown and it's obvious it works very well. Therefore, you have to consider new investments in AV telecom upgrades and new technologies to support this new routine.

**Also, regarding the technologies in place, as many people will return to the office, be sure you replace some already existing technologies with touch-less systems, creating a more hands-free workplace. It will not only reduce the risk of infection, as our hands are a germs-spreading machine, but it will also help people feel safer at work.**

**There are already applications that allow booking rooms, for example, via your mobile phone. That's how you can make sure your employees don't have to touch reservation or access devices.**

As the space will be reconfigured and more flexible, you should make sure that you develop new way-finding solutions so people will find each other easily if they need to meet face to face. Maintaining the distance, of course. It would be also important that these new solutions could also tell if the employee works from home or from the office in a specific day. What is more, people will try to stay away from the so called "hot-spots" in the office and will try to find some less populated areas where they can work from each day.

**Develop or purchase a live map application for the office. This kind of apps use sensors to show real-time usage of the rooms, desks or**

**people density within an area. Employees are able to check the occupation rate in a certain area and head to the less populated ones if they feel the need to be extra-cautious.**

All these initiatives are meant to focus on the experience employees have at the office in the new context. Surely, they will set up higher standards as they return to the office and you have to be prepared to satisfy them not only for their mental comfort, but also for their health and safety.

As change is the only constant we know for more than 2 months and will continue to mark our existence for an undefined period of time, you should control the changes at least in your office. It means that you may think about starting a change management process in order to give people the feeling that you control the change and bring the best out of it. Together with your office design and change management consultant, you'll be able to help people understand the new configuration of the space, the new behaviour you expect them to have at work and constantly inform them regarding any new changes that may appear as a result of the evolution of the virus. Developing a change management process will help executive managers and team leaders to adjust their management models to the new reality.

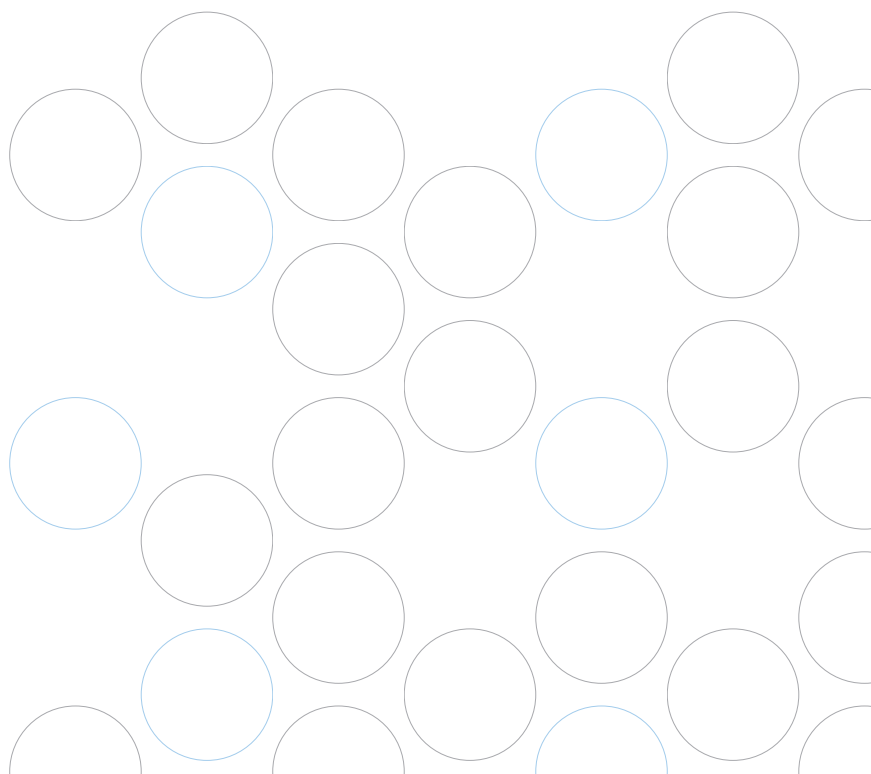
**For example, as you'll mix remote working with work-from-the-office, managers who were used to evaluate their teams through presentism will be forced to adapt their strategies and set clearer objectives for the teams and more agile ways of working to respond to the new context. Change Management trainings in this regard will be very useful.**

## Need more help with the Facelift Pack?

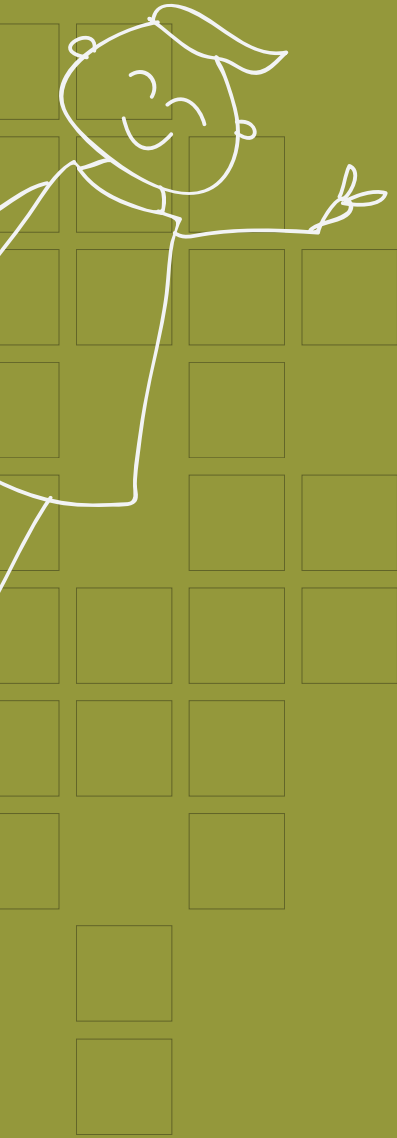
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# Re-design your office



If after the Facelift phase you decide that the flexible style is working for your organization, step forward and fully integrate it in your space configuration. Keep what's compatible with your new processes and way of working and redesign the rest of the space to support the new organizational culture. Paul Romer said that a crisis is a terrible thing to waste! We simply say that you should make the most of the change.

We, at Morphoza, focus on understanding the client in order to create an extensive design process that engages all the client's stakeholders in creating their own office. That's how we manage to generate valuable ideas from within the client's team, to keep the associates involved during the entire project and to come up with an interior design project that has real added value for the client. The result is a tailor-made workplace which tells the client's story and makes people feel part of the outcome - which is an important asset for the organization. We believe that, in order to achieve a successful office design project, we need to engage the client in all the stages of the project. That's why, we developed our team in various directions which allow us to generate a synergetic creative process, diverse and professional at the same time - **Trust2Work**.

**One of the most important objectives in an office design project is to use the new workplace as a tool to strengthen the feeling of belonging and pride for your associates. This is possible only if we engage to a comprehensive change management process**

**with the management teams. These actions will require dedicated resources and will not succeed unless the management aligns vigorously behind the reasons of the design process.**

One of the most common mistakes in change management is trying to change the working culture from the culture's end. The working culture of a group or organization is a complex phenomenon that stems essentially from the way the organization is structured and led. It cannot be changed through training or through setting people cultural change objectives. Since it is mainly a product of the company's values, systems and practices, if the above are not changed, the pressure for behavioural change will only result in frustration and cynicism.

**Now, more than ever, in the post-COVID era, people must understand what's the need for coming to the office. The physical environment of a workspace is more than a collection of offices, desks and technology. A physical environment can truly shape the way in which employees accomplish their jobs. It should serve as a foundation for the kind of culture that an organization dreams to develop.**

Physical space is not only where people physically work, but also how they work. When done thoughtfully and strategically, changing a physical workspace has the ability to drive cultural change within an organization in the way employees lead, innovate and work together.

Our trust-worthy process, Trust2Work, has a tailor-made approach, based on 4 stages:

**1.** Discovery: research, analyze, align stakeholders

**2.** Design & Engage

**3.** Implement & Communicate

**4.** Change & Influence

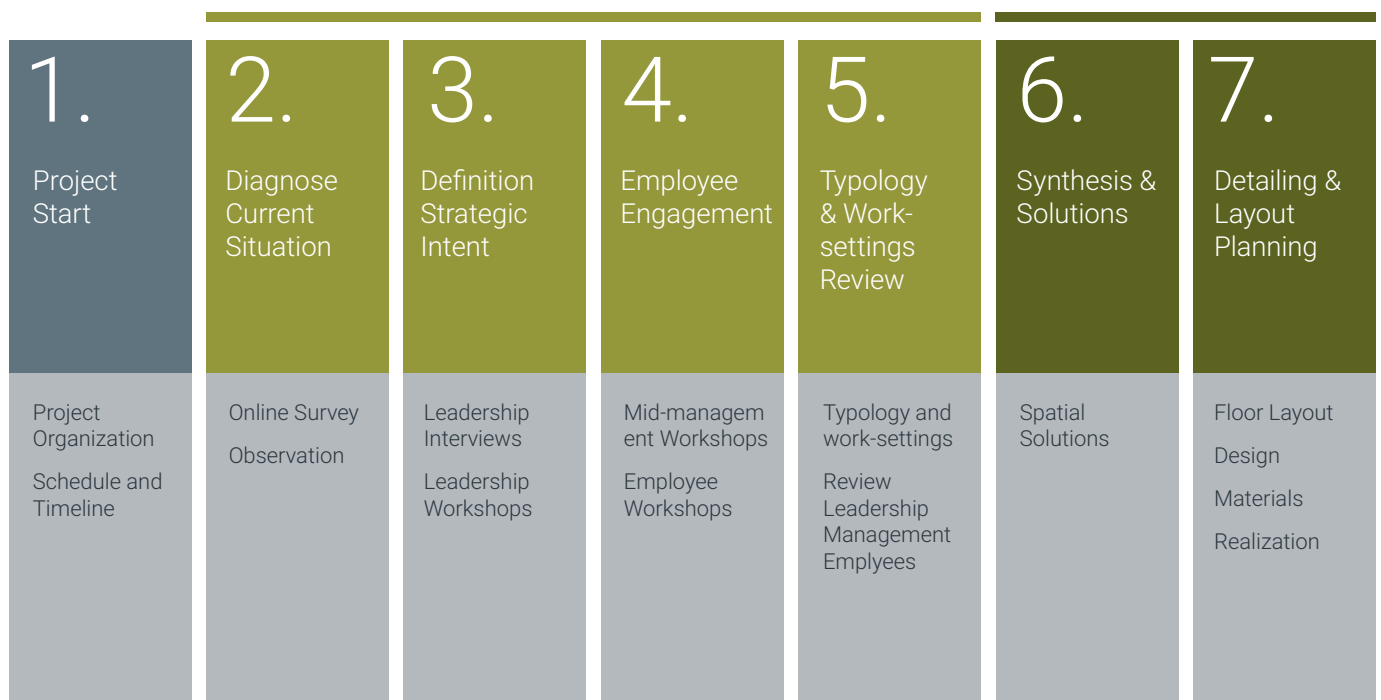
## Our Engagement Approach

### Analysis and Concept

Analysis and concept definition, in which profound understanding of the current situation and future aspirations are gained.

### Solutions and Realization

Solutions and realization development, in which the concept is translated into spatial solutions and these are applied to layout planning;



DO YOU WANT TO TAILOR YOUR OFFICE FOR YOUR TEAM? We can surely help you. Let's talk @ [office@morphoza.ro](mailto:office@morphoza.ro)

We will help you turn the need for change into something positive and implement necessary transformations with a lot of energy from your employees' part. We have the knowledge and tools to support your company and achieve a smooth transformation of your business.