

Uber for Business

Uber's workplace VP shares how the pandemic has changed offices



Michael Huaco, Uber's Vice President of Workplace and Real Estate, has been busy juggling global building projects, remote work structures, and office reopening plans. In reflecting on the past year, he notes the challenges but also acknowledges that a forced reset has brought positive change. As Uber reopens its offices around the world, Huaco shares what the pandemic has revealed about where and how employees work.

1 Working in an office is still relevant.

For Huaco, the pandemic has reinforced the importance of working in an office. Even though employees may have to relearn how to operate among others, many are also searching for a sense of connection and structure.

An Uber employee survey also revealed that people are ready to get out of their home offices and back into real offices.



“ What Huaco says:

Social isolation has become a much bigger issue towards the end of the pandemic than at the beginning of lockdown. The office plays a pivotal role in collaboration and engagement and is part of your daily social fabric.



2 Health and safety must still be taken into consideration.

Decreasing COVID-19 cases and more vaccines in some regions are helping to curb the pandemic, but the world is still battling the virus. Because of this, Huaco and the Uber team are approaching reopening slowly and in phases.

They rely on the guidance of local governments and are letting employees return to the office on a voluntary basis. In the buildings themselves, there are also social distancing guidelines, mask mandates, and cleaning protocols to help keep everyone safe and healthy.

“ What Huaco says:

As things turn on, our number one rule is that we don't open an office, whether it's in the US or anywhere else in the world, until we get the approval of the local regulatory agency.



3

The pandemic has reshaped the way offices look and feel.

COVID-19 has allowed businesses to re-evaluate how their offices function, especially as some adopt models that balance remote and in-person work.

When designing Uber's new global facilities, Huaco and his team included features that cater to a variety of working styles. From quiet library spaces to team rooms with digital whiteboards, employees can choose the places that meet both their job and personal needs.

“ What Huaco says:

What we've done is create space that has much more focus on collaboration and engagement—less individual seating and more areas where people can gather. We're also trying to create a fun environment where people can work with their comrades to create great products and come up with great ideas.

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Employee well-being is core to office design and workplace success.

Uber's offices are living entities that focus on the whole employee. Wellness-inspired food programs, more natural light, and dedicated fitness spaces are several of the features Huaco says were added to prioritize happiness and well-being at work.

Some offices also have specialized air flow and outdoor spaces, features that are helpful in the pandemic and beyond it.



“ What Huaco says:

When we started implementing our current real estate strategy, we decided to be much more sustainable, and part of that is also health and wellness. We thought about all of these ways to improve employee health that had nothing to do with the pandemic.

Whether you're just starting to think through return-to-office plans or are already back to business as usual, we can help. Learn more about customizable commute or meal delivery offerings, or reach out to an Uber for Business team member here.

